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# Current Administration of Indian Control of Indian Education in Alberta: Implications and Challenges

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Current Administration of Indian Control of Indian Education in Alberta: Implications and  
Challenges

by

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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

This mixed method, exploratory multi-site case study sought to understand the administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors in Alberta. The purpose was to find out whether (and in what ways) these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nation children and to identify the roles and responsibilities of education directors who directly administer First Nation schools. The theoretical lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) underpinned this study.

Survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 education directors in Alberta representing 34 First Nations. This study also found that the processes and procedures put in place, for newly hired education directors to work with, varied between First Nations and were deemed insufficient.

Some of the challenges education directors faced included: working with the general education system management, providing instructional leadership; negotiating change; working with a school board, council or oversight body; reporting to a range of internal and external authorities; recruitment and retention of effective teachers; being constrained by federal and provincial mandates, dealing with a perceived crisis in education within First Nation; community pressure for provincial schools to be the preferred schools for students to attend; and support from the parent, community, and agencies for schools was lacking. The most critical and chronic challenge as noted by education directors is the student achievement gap between FN students and other Alberta school students. Also, language and culture programs are not being adequately funded in First Nations.

This research revealed that education directors believe First Nations are supportive of Indian Control of Education but perceive the federal government as unsupportive. Critically, the

research revealed that the extent and nature of poverty experienced by students affects proper implementation of Indian control of Indian education. Further, the education directors strongly believed that core funding for schooling is grossly inadequate in light of school-based needs. In other words, the failure of the government to provide adequate funding for on-reserve schooling dramatically impeded the capacities of education directors to carry out their roles and responsibilities thereby inhibiting school improvement.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES.....	XIII
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XIV
AXIOLOGY.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	8
1.1. Background.....	8
1.1.1. <i>The Pre-European Settlement Era</i> .....	9
1.1.2. <i>Confederation to the Late 1960s Era</i> .....	9
1.1.3. <i>Transitional Phase</i> .....	10
1.1.4. <i>Present Phase</i> .....	11
1.2. Definition of Terms.....	13
1.2.1. <i>Abbreviations Used</i> .....	18
1.3. Study Purposes.....	19
1.4. Research Questions.....	19
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	20
1.6. Summary.....	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
2.1. Theoretical Framework.....	22
2.1.1. <i>Similarities between CRT and First Nations Education</i> .....	25
2.1.2. <i>Repercussions of Integration</i> .....	25
2.1.3. <i>CRT and Politics</i> .....	26
2.1.4. <i>CRT and Funding</i> .....	27
2.1.5. <i>CRT and Equal Opportunity</i> .....	29
2.1.6. <i>CRT in the Classroom</i> .....	30

2.1.7.	<i>CRT and Educational Leadership</i> .....	32
2.1.8.	<i>CRT in the realm of ICIE—Future Considerations</i> .....	33
2.2.	<b>Tribal Critical Race Theory</b> .....	34
2.2.1.	<i>Tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory</i> .....	35
1.	<i>Colonization is endemic to society</i> .....	35
2.	<i>U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.</i> .....	37
3.	<i>Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.</i> .....	38
4.	<i>Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.</i> .....	41
5.	<i>The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.</i> .....	42
6.	<i>Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.</i> .....	44
7.	<i>Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.</i> .....	44
8.	<i>Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.</i> .....	45
9.	<i>Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.</i> .....	46
2.3.	<b>Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE)</b> .....	47
2.3.1.	<i>Canadian Government Implementation of ICIE</i> .....	50
2.3.2.	<i>General Prevailing Issues Surrounding ICIE</i> .....	51
2.3.3.	<i>Preparedness of Education Directors in First Nations for ICIE</i> .....	52
2.4.	<b>Education Directors Training</b> .....	55
2.5.	<b>Summary</b> .....	57
	<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	58
3.1.	<b>Introduction</b> .....	58
3.2.	<b>Research Design</b> .....	58
3.3.	<b>Research Methodology</b> .....	60

3.4.	Generalization, Reliability, and Validity.....	61
3.5.	Data-Gathering Procedures .....	63
3.5.1.	<i>Seeking Chief and Council Approval</i> .....	65
3.5.2.	<i>First Nation Education Director Survey</i> .....	67
3.5.3.	<i>First Nation Education Director Semi-structured Interview</i> .....	68
3.5.4.	<i>Record Checks</i> .....	69
3.5.5.	<i>Document Analysis</i> .....	69
3.5.6.	<i>First Nation Education Survey</i> .....	69
3.5.7.	<i>Semi-structured Interview</i> .....	70
3.5.8.	<i>Informed Consent</i> .....	71
3.5.9.	<i>Confidentiality and Anonymity</i> .....	72
3.5.10.	<i>Language</i> .....	73
3.5.11.	<i>Raw Data Access</i> .....	73
3.5.12.	<i>Assumptions</i> .....	73
3.5.13.	<i>Limitations</i> .....	74
3.5.14.	<i>Delimitations</i> .....	74
3.6.	Data Analysis .....	74
3.7.	Summary .....	77
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA .....		78
4.1.	Introduction .....	78
4.2.	Alberta First Nations Multi-site Case Study .....	79
4.3.	ED1.....	81
4.4.	ED2.....	84
4.5.	ED3.....	86
4.6.	ED4.....	89
4.7.	ED5.....	91
4.8.	ED6.....	93
4.9.	ED7.....	95
4.10.	ED8.....	97
4.11.	Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta .....	100

4.11.1.	<i>Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity</i> .....	100
4.11.2.	<i>Education Directors Education Background and Years of Experience in Formal Education Roles</i> .....	101
4.11.3.	<i>Education Directors' Responsibility for Number of Enrolled students</i> .....	106
4.11.4.	<i>First Nation Process and Procedures in Place</i> .....	107
4.12.	Data Presentation: Research Questions .....	108
4.13.	Research Question 1 .....	109
4.13.1.	<i>Education Director Key Roles and Responsibilities</i> .....	109
4.13.2.	<i>Education Director Accountability</i> .....	110
4.13.3.	<i>Education Directors Most Important and Most Time Consuming Tasks</i> .....	112
4.13.4.	<i>Education Director Role and Responsibilities Difficulties</i> .....	118
4.14.	Research Question 2 .....	121
4.14.1.	<i>Administrative Challenges</i> .....	121
4.14.2.	<i>Economic Challenges</i> .....	123
4.14.3.	<i>Political Challenges</i> .....	126
4.14.4.	<i>Educational Challenges</i> .....	129
4.14.5.	<i>General Challenges</i> .....	131
4.15.	Research Question 3 .....	134
4.15.1.	<i>First Nation Support for Local Control of Education</i> .....	135
4.15.2.	<i>INAC/Federal Government Support for Local Control of Education</i> .....	136
4.15.3.	<i>Effects of Poverty and ICIE</i> .....	138
4.15.4.	<i>Leading to more Effective Implementation of Indian Control of Indian Education</i> 139	
4.16.	Summary .....	145
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS .....		146
5.1.	Introduction .....	146
5.2.	Study Summary .....	147
5.3.	Summary of the Findings and Conclusions.....	147
5.3.1.	<i>Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta</i> .....	147
<i>Finding 1</i> .....		147

<i>Finding 2</i> .....	148
<i>Finding 3</i> .....	149
5.3.2. <i>Education Directors Education background and Years of Experience</i> .....	149
<i>Finding 4</i> .....	149
<i>Finding 5</i> .....	150
5.3.3. <i>Student Enrollment</i> .....	150
<i>Finding 6</i> .....	150
<i>Finding 7</i> .....	151
5.4. <i>Research Question 1</i> .....	152
5.4.1. <i>Research Question 1—What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?</i> .....	152
5.4.2. <i>Education Director Accountability</i> .....	152
<i>Finding 8</i> .....	152
5.4.3. <i>Education Directors Most Important and Most Time Consuming Tasks</i> .....	153
<i>Finding 9</i> .....	153
5.4.4. <i>Education Director Role and Responsibilities Difficulties</i> .....	154
<i>Finding 10</i> .....	154
5.5. <i>Research Question 2</i> .....	155
5.5.1. <i>Research Question 2—What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?</i> .....	155
5.5.2. <i>Administrative Challenges</i> .....	156
<i>Finding 11</i> .....	156
5.5.3. <i>Economic Challenges</i> .....	157
<i>Finding 12</i> .....	157
5.5.4. <i>Political Challenges</i> .....	159
<i>Finding 13</i> .....	159
5.5.5. <i>Educational Challenges</i> .....	160
<i>Finding 14</i> .....	160
<i>Finding 15</i> .....	162
5.5.6. <i>General Challenges</i> .....	163
<i>Finding 16</i> .....	163

5.6.	Research Question Three.....	164
5.6.1.	<i>Research Question 3—In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?</i> .....	164
5.6.2.	<i>First Nation Support for Local Control of Education</i> .....	165
	<i>Finding 17</i> .....	165
5.6.3.	<i>INAC/Federal Government Support for Local Control of Education</i> .....	166
	<i>Finding 18</i> .....	166
5.7.	Leading to more Effective Implementation of Indian Control of Indian Education .....	168
	<i>Finding 19</i> .....	169
5.7.1.	<i>Implications of Poverty</i> .....	170
5.7.2.	<i>Poverty Impacts on First Nation Schools</i> .....	171
5.7.3.	<i>Parents’ Involvement</i> .....	172
5.7.4.	<i>Towards Effective Schools</i> .....	172
5.7.5.	<i>Programming</i> .....	173
5.7.6.	<i>Aboriginal language and culture</i> .....	175
5.8.	Concluding Summary .....	175
5.9.	Study Recommendations .....	176
5.9.1.	<i>Recommendations for Future Practice</i> .....	176
	<i>Recommendation 1</i> .....	176
	<i>Recommendation 3</i> .....	177
	<i>Recommendation 4</i> .....	178
5.9.2.	<i>Recommendations for Future Research</i> .....	178
	<i>Recommendation 5</i> .....	178
	<i>Recommendation 7</i> .....	178
	<i>Recommendation 8</i> .....	178
	<i>Recommendation 9</i> .....	178
5.10.	Study Implications.....	179
5.11.	Closing Thoughts .....	182
	REFERENCES .....	186
	APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER FOR FIRST NATION CHIEFS .....	197

APPENDIX B: TELEPHONE SCRIPT FOR FIRST NATION CHIEFS.....	199
APPENDIX C: TELEPHONE SCRIPT FOR EDUCATION DIRECTORS .....	201
APPENDIX D: E-MAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A SURVEY .....	203
APPENDIX E: SURVEY CONSENT FORM .....	204
APPENDIX F: E-MAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW .....	207
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM.....	208
APPENDIX H: FIRST NATION EDUCATION DIRECTOR SURVEY .....	213
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	217

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 3.1 Alberta First Nations, Numbers of Education Directors and Schools ..... 65

TABLE 3.2 Numbers of Alberta First Nations Represented in Research ..... 70

TABLE 3.3 Alberta First Nations Education Director Participation ..... 71

TABLE 3.4 A Match of Research Questions, Corresponding Sources of Information, and Corresponding Data Analysis/Reporting Procedures ..... 75

TABLE 4.5 First Nation Education Director Survey—Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity ..... 101

TABLE 4.6 First Nation Education Director Survey—Years of Experience as a Teacher; as a Director; in Current Position..... 102

TABLE 4.7 First Nation Education Director Interview—Educational Background and Experience..... 103

TABLE 4.8 First Nation Education Director Interview—Educational Background and Experience / Gender Difference..... 104

TABLE 4.9 First Nation Education Director Survey Prior Experience Preparedness to Meet the Challenges of the Directorship..... 105

TABLE 4.10 First Nation Education Director Survey—Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Student Enrollment On-Reserve and Off-Reserve..... 107

TABLE 4.11 First Nation Education Director Interview—First Nation Process and Procedures in Place..... 108

TABLE 4.12 First Nation Education Director Interview—Key Roles and Responsibilities ..... 110

TABLE 4.13 First Nation Education Director Interview—Accountability Reporting Process.. 111

TABLE 4.14 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks 112

TABLE 4.15 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time Consuming Administrative Tasks ..... 113

TABLE 4.16 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks / Gender..... 114

TABLE 4.17 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time Consuming Administrative Tasks / Gender ..... 114

TABLE 4.18 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks – Ethnicity..... 115

TABLE 4.19 First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time Consuming Administrative Tasks / Ethnicity ..... 116

TABLE 4.20 First Nation Education Director—Most Important Administrative Tasks Compared to Key Tasks Identified by Interviewed Education Director ..... 117

TABLE 4.21 First Nation Education Director—Most Time Consuming Administrative Tasks – comparison between Surveyed & Interviewed Education Directors ..... 118

TABLE 4.22 First Nation Education Director Survey—Role and Responsibilities Difficulties 120

TABLE 4.23 First Nation Education Director Interview—Administrative Challenges..... 122

TABLE 4.24 First Nation Education Director Survey—Personnel Challenges ..... 123

TABLE 4.25 First Nation Education Director Interview—Economic Challenges.....	124
TABLE 4.26 First Nation Education Director Survey—Economic Challenges.....	125
TABLE 4.27 First Nation Education Director Interview—Political Challenges .....	127
TABLE 4.28 First Nation Education Director Survey—Political Challenges Faced on First Nations .....	128
TABLE 4.29 First Nation Education Director Survey—Educational Achievement .....	129
TABLE 4.30 First Nation Education Director Survey—Educational Programs .....	130
TABLE 4.31 First Nation Education Director Survey—General Challenges .....	132
TABLE 4.32 First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / First Nation Rate of Support .....	136
TABLE 4.33 First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / INAC/Federal Government Rate of Support .....	137
TABLE 4.34 First Nation Education Director Interview—Effect of First Nation students living in Poverty .....	138
TABLE 4.35 First Nation Education Director Interview—Strategies Recommended to Education Directors coming into the Job .....	139
TABLE 4.36 First Nation Education Director Interview—Creating Effective Schools on First Nations and Capacities and Powers Needed by Education Directors to Lead the Reform.....	141
TABLE 4.37 First Nation Education Director Interview— Summary Comments on Topic .....	142
TABLE 4.38 Research Findings Table .....	142

#### LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 4.1 First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / First Nation Rate of Support .....	136
FIGURE 4.2 First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / Rate of Support.....	137

## AXIOLOGY

I am by no means able to provide a true account of myself, but as our Siksika elders will often give as a premise *nookanistootsitapitsii*. Loosely translated the phrase means, “this is how I understand it.”

To put things into context, and provide background for this thesis during the last ten years, I began my quest for a new challenge—fitness through distance running and competitive dancing on the First Nations powwow circuit. As life would have it, it was not an easy journey. It has been wrought with injuries from back to ankle sprains, stress fractures, muscle tension, and so on. I have been, and continue to be, in therapy for those injuries. It is through this process that I ran into something that I had not anticipated. It made me think outside of my own beliefs to try to understand a different belief system.

What happened was that I was referred to a chiropractor who shared an office with a masseuse. The office receptionist convinced me to see this masseuse as I had “great coverage,” as she put it. The masseuse, a young woman in her 20s, was very friendly and she was wonderful in relieving my back pain. It was during these sessions that we started discussing our beliefs. I had shared that sometimes I get nightmares when I slept on my back. She then asked me if I believe in demons. I indicated that in our native beliefs we do believe in spirits; everything had a spirit. She asked then if I have anything like a dream catcher or something native in my home. I shared that our people have sacred societies and that we have ceremonies but they are all for good. I informed her that I did not think that native “stuff” had demons.

She then began a monologue on how First Nation people do not know that our ways are from the demons they mask as being good but in reality they are evil. Even though we think that

our beliefs are doing good, they are actually doing evil. I had to hold my tongue as I wanted to know more about where her beliefs originated from. She then went on about how years back, when she was in elementary school, they had gone to visit a native community and went inside a teepee. She indicated that she remembered being scared and how she and her brother hated being there. She said that her mother and father never let her watch any shows with natives. Movies like *Pocahontas* and *The Lion King* were forbidden in their home. She indicated that I needed to find anything native in my home and get rid of it or better yet, burn it as that was the root of my nightmares.

I responded that some non-native people, through media and their church, make assumptions about other people's beliefs as wrong or evil. In the Siksika way, I was taught to be respectful of other people's beliefs. This may be why many religious organizations like the Mormons, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Full Gospel, to name a few, established a following in Siksika, their presence still being prevalent today. Many Siksika people were baptized, attended their churches, and practiced their ways along with continuing to practice and believe in Siksika spirituality, as well.

What frustrated was that even though I was almost twice her age, she dismissed my views as if I did not know any better and treated me like she needed to set me straight. This view parallels with how the Indian agents stationed in Siksika viewed and treated First Nations in the past. As wards of the government, First Nations peoples were taught to be dependent on government assistance yet present day governments now chasten First Nation leaders when they ask for more funding for their peoples.

I remember leaving my massage session feeling not so much as outraged, but angst ridden, my chest heavy. However, the more I delved into this encounter with bias or prejudice, I

assumed that her words came from her parents' own beliefs, as well as the community where she was raised. It seemed that her beliefs carried a certain arrogance with underlying tones of domination. This prejudgment was so ingrained in her that I realized that no matter what I said, she would still believe this about First Nation people. By the same token, I also stood firm in my beliefs, traditions, and spirituality.

From a historical perspective, I realized that this type of bias and prejudice exhibited by the masses drove our churches and governments to put First Nation children into residential schools. They believed that they had to rid them of their beliefs and customs and justified by the notion that those beliefs and customs were evil and in effect, devil worshipping (Agbo, 2005; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). What bothers me more is that this type of thinking still exists today. I ponder on this deeply as I know that this oppressive mindset contributes to the core present-day problems and issues associated with First Nations communities in Canada and have hindered First Nations towards attaining sustainability and more importantly, sovereignty.

In the years following I became assistant superintendent and then superintendent. I revamped and implemented a system based largely on the Alberta Education curriculum and current practices. I had vigorous discussions with colleagues on our challenges. I read, planned, and researched for better ways to improve the academics. The Siksika language acquisition, supported and encouraged school plans to reintroduce Siksika ways of knowing into the students and schools daily routines but knowing ultimately, we are judged by government on whether or not we have students attaining the high school graduation requirements. While doing this, in the back of my mind, there is a sense of near despair because, at the end of the day, the attainment of language and culture of First Nation people is not validated or considered a part of day-to-day operations within Siksika. Added to this, the current reality is that most communities suffer from

“red rage.” This term as explained to me by Faith Spotted Eagle (Dakota) is the result of the “impact of generations of trauma, violence, and oppression that historically colonialism loaded on Indian nations” (Reyhner, 2008, p. 19). First Nations people are distrustful. They often go from calm to instant rage over a minor conflict, and calm (or in some cases, enhance) their “red rage” with alcohol and drug addictions. There is also a rash of First Nation family feuds and domestic violence.

In line with this—on a personal front and a contradiction to my belief of an education system based on our language, value system and practices as the best way for our First Nations children to be educated—I eventually sent my children to provincial schools in part influenced by Western values. Truth is, this education decision is based on one son being bullied by First Nation classmates and another son influenced by the drugs that were readily available at the school. Furthermore, my experience has been that since being employed in our school system, if your own children excel or receive awards, they are more apt to be labelled as “favourites” by the community. I always felt uncomfortable about this decision because I did not want to subject my children to ostracism because of their mother.

When I say our communities suffer red rage, I suffer from it too. It was a part of my life for many years until I left my old life and took the Horn Society traditional way of life. In my professional life I justified my rage by the inequalities faced by many of our First Nations people. I was distrustful of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) who provided our education funding. I remember attending meetings between INAC officials and First Nation educators where there was a lot of shouting at red-faced INAC officials and feeling proud that our people were standing up and voicing their concerns. But as time went on, I realized that this

served no purpose other than being labelled as “those women from the south” that the government did not want to deal with. That was almost ten years ago.

Around the same time, there was tremendous upheaval within our Siksika education system. Administrators, who were non-Siksika, did not support any Siksika staff going out to take professional development causes which included school administration or educational leadership. Their stance was this was not part of current job descriptions so educational leave was not granted. Eventually these administrators (superintendent and assistant superintendent) were released by the school board.

After those terminations, there was chaos inside our educational system and our community. Those who supported the people who were terminated clashed with those who supported members pursuing their masters’ degrees. I remember, at one point as acting principal, being brought into a closed-door meeting where I was reprimanded for having the audacity to speak up against the unfair practices and suppression of those of us who wanted to attain their masters’ degree.

It was during this dark time that I was taught a different way of dealing with opposition besides “red rage.” This was the Horn Society way in which we are taught not to talk back, to pray for those who were angry and their families, and to remain humble. I remember coming home one evening and barely hanging on after another tongue lashing and being labelled an activist, and asked why I have to question everything. But, inside, it was that firm belief that the solutions required to resolve our issues were from within, that kept me getting up every day, knowing our education system had to move forward based on our Siksika core sense of integrity and deep commitment to establishing a system using our own ways of knowing.

The interesting thing is that now, nearly a decade later, those First Nation members who wanted to keep status quo at the time, and opposed myself and other First Nation members holding leadership positions, are now the strongest supporters. In retrospect, I think that my teachings of Continuous Quality Improvement and that we look at any issue, conflict, or failure not in a negative way, but in a way in which we say how can we learn from this? And how can we move forward in our conversations and disputes so it is a win-win situation? I did not hold any animosity to those who opposed as I knew that I had shaken at least some of their assumptions and established ways. However, once they understood where I was coming from, I gained their trust and commitment. But in all honesty, it was not easy at the time as my “red rage” wanted to retaliate.

In the years following—much as you want change to happen quickly, whether this is within a class, school or system—the lesson learned was that for good change to happen, it takes time, consistency, and a willingness to listen to the people you serve. People cannot change their behaviour and routines at the flip of a coin. People cannot change their value system quickly much as we may see those values as not right or that our ways are better.

What surprises me (and then doesn't) is that once I came to a realization, or a paradigm shift, the supporting research is there. What I am saying is that things come when its time. It is a belief that I shared with my grandmother, the late Mildred Backfat. I did not understand that, or appreciated until I became a member of the sacred traditional Siksika Horn Society and participating in the ceremonies and songs during the annual Siksika Sundance. Your thinking shifts as you listen to the teachings the grandfathers shared, in awe of how succinct and relevant their messages had become. Much like the aspects of orality, knowledge that is only relevant is passed on. And I understand now that is why we valued our *omikitapiiks*—our elders.

Ceremonies are not run on time, it is run when things are felt to be in order. The grandfathers chatting, visiting with everyone, and sharing of storytelling until it is felt that everything is in place—only then, do they signal to begin. This concept is shared by many indigenous people's world views. Meyer (2008) specifically makes reference to this concept in research by claiming that “our early spaces help create the topic you choose, the questions you formulate, and the way you respond to data. It is all shaped by space. Not time. Conscious-shaping space. Space-shaped consciousness. An epistemological priority” (p. 222).

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

First Nations people want to be able to take charge of their own affairs. Jules (1999) indicates that “as Native Indian people have taken control of their own affairs, positions of leadership have arisen; more and more Native Indian people have taken leadership roles in many areas, including education” (p. 40). While asserting this leadership role, “there is no question that one fundamental educational need of American Indians for the future is the training of Native persons as teachers and administrators” (Hampton, 1993, p. 265). Similarly, in Canada, in relation to leadership qualities and success in the leadership role within First Nations and First Nations’ people, Urion (1993) states:

When I have watched First Nations leaders I admire, I see that there is another characteristic they share: compassion, along with the knowledge that whenever people connect in caring for each other the tradition revitalizes us and the Ancestors are honoured. Leaders serve when they see their own place in maintaining that connection between people. There is a way that leaders carry that connection among people as a concern in their heart. Leadership becomes an example of service, not to gain individual recognition, but because their vision makes their service inevitable (Urion, 1993, p. 1).

For a First Nation education administrator the role expands to that of a mediator, advocate, or bureaucrat (Hampton, 1993). Hampton (1993) explained “that the complexity of the actual situation goes beyond a simple adherence to any one of these roles, but the roles, as he describes them, are useful for summarizing the conflicts felt by the native administrators” (Hampton, 1993, p. 262).

### ***1.1. Background***

The background to this study takes into account the historical phases that led to Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) to the situation in which education directors of First Nations find themselves now. This will form the basis for understanding the present-day challenges of

education directors in First Nations in Alberta. According to Goddard (1993), the history of the education of Indian peoples in Canada can be arranged into four distinct phases: the pre-European settlement era; the era from confederation to the late 1960s; a transitional phase up until the 1974; and the present phase. These phases are briefly outlined below.

#### *1.1.1. The Pre-European Settlement Era*

During the pre-European settlement era phase, Goddard (1993) stated that Aboriginal people had “an efficient system of informal education practices that transmitted the accumulated knowledge, wisdom, beliefs, and values of each First Nation from one generation to the other” (p. 163). This traditional Indian education, as explained by Hampton (1992), “can be characterized as oral histories, teaching stories, ceremonies, apprenticeships, learning games, formal instruction, tutoring, and tag-along teacher” (Hampton, 1992, p. 268). Then with the arrival of the Europeans, First Nations were exposed “to new forms of education, technology, and different religious beliefs which seriously reduced the ability of First Nations communities to remain socially, economically, and culturally independent” (Agbo, 2005, p. 289). The loss of this independence is critically significant to understanding the present-day realities of First Nations peoples living in First Nations communities and has never been adequately addressed or redressed.

#### *1.1.2. Confederation to the Late 1960s Era*

The era from confederation to the late 1960s era “meant the establishment of reserves and the formalization of education with schools established by both church and state, in attempt to ‘civilize’ and ‘assimilate’ Indian peoples into the dominant Canadian society” (Goddard, 1993, p. 163). From a First Nations perspective, “The politicization of residential schooling has meant using education as a vehicle to assimilate First Nations children” (Agbo, 2005, p. 290) or as

Perley (1993) notes, the federal governments of Canada's "goals of schooling for the colonized population are designed to serve the needs of the colonizer, not the colonized" (p. 119).

### *1.1.3. Transitional Phase*

In the transitional phase "legislation and transition raised the issue of who was responsible for the education of Indian children and forced an examination of what was happening at that time" (Goddard, 1993, p. 163). In 1967, the now famous Hawthorn Report clearly illustrated the inadequacy of successive Canadian government policies for First Nations education and "became the official document that clearly spelt out the failure of the policy of assimilation" (Agbo, 2005, p. 291). The Hawthorn Report "did not advocate radical change, but change that would better accommodate the First Nations child in the existing school system" (Agbo, 2005, p. 291).

In response to this the Indian Affairs Department of Canada issued an Indian Policy paper in 1969, referred to as the "White Paper," which created controversy because "one of its main themes was to abolish the appellation 'status Indian' that is, those legally recognized as First Nations as a result of the *Indian Act*" (Agbo, 2005, p. 292). The Indian Association of Alberta (IAA), comprised of First Nation chiefs across Alberta, in response to this, published "Citizens Plus" also known as the "red paper" which outlined the difficulties faced by students from First Nations attending integrated provincial schools in Alberta. "Treaty Indian children in Alberta attempt to gain their education in integrated schools in spite of social, economic, and linguistic handicaps that other children generally do not have to face" (Citizens Plus, 1970, p. 89). Along with not only enduring hardships, they faced racism attending integrated provincial schools. "[O]ne of the serious deterrents to Indian children getting a complete education in this modern world is the fact that the Indian pupils too frequently face various kinds of discrimination during their educational careers" (Citizens Plus, 1970, p. 90).

As is evident today, even then, student drop-out rates were of issue both for First Nations and greater Canadian society was identified. “The problem of Indian pupils dropping out of school before they have sufficiently prepared themselves to make their way economically is a national problem” (Citizens Plus, 1970, p. 89). From the Citizen’s Plus paper, the 1972 ICIE paper was written by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) organization which is presently known as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). This paper brought about change and, with the Federal government backing down from the “White Paper,” the implementation of Band Control of Education began across the country.

“The policy declared the right of First Nations people over their own education and represented the “transfer of education authority from the federal government to local bands to replace past practice in which bands acted only as an advisory body with limited influence in defining their own educational system” (Charters-Voght, 1999, p. 66).

#### *1.1.4. Present Phase*

The present phase “meant the development of band controlled schools and the gradual downsizing of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)” (Goddard, 1993, p. 163). In this phase, Native people began to take an active role in the schooling of Native children as board members, teachers, administrators, and resource people (Hampton, 1993, p. 269).

“According to Barman (1987), the federal government was quick in handing schools over to local people, but the government neither provided the people with a definition of their role, nor a power base for the transfer to local control. There were also neither guidelines as to how to administer education funds nor how to manage the school system” (Agbo, 2005, p. 295).

The analysis of Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) has been extensive (Bear-Nicolas, 2008; Binda, 1995; Charters-Voght, 1999; Hampton, 1993; Hampton, 1995; Kirkness, 1998; Perley, 1993) however “the issue may not be the definition of First Nations control, but the

definition of the role of the Department of Indian Affairs in ensuring the delivery of First Nations Control” (Agbo, 2005, p. 293). Specifically the type of, and limited administrative, supports provided by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has contributed to the ineffectiveness of ICIE. It lead to gaps in a knowledge base and in effect created a “set up to fail” education system. In turn, they have lead back to the prospect of First Nations communities again giving control back to provincial government through the implementations of tri-partite agreements currently funded by INAC.

With the proposed federal legislation of the First Nation Education Act (which was in the Economic Action Plan, 2013), the Government had affirmed they will consult with First Nations across Canada about the development of a First Nation Education Act and expressed a commitment to sharing this draft legislation with First Nations communities for their input. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013b). This so-called consultation has been seemingly done in a transparent way, but in reality it offered no ability for First Nations to assist in modification or revision drafts. The new Education Act was viewed by First Nations as the most reprehensible action since the introduction of the “White Paper.” However in this instance, the current government forged ahead and introduced it to parliament despite the huge outcry from First Nations’ people. The government had committed to introduce the First Nation Education Act and was to have it in place for September, 2014. The government claimed the purpose of this legislation is to establish the structures and standards to support strong and accountable education systems on reserve. In terms of accountability provisions, if a First Nation is not up to par with results, the federal government will institute repercussions. To add to the problem the government has also indicated that public school systems can directly run Nation schools. Currently, there has been a reprieve as the federal government has put this controversial

First Nations education act on hold until the Assembly of First Nations clarify their position on the legislation in the wake of the resignation of the national chief.

### *1.2. Definition of Terms*

**Assimilation:** In this thesis, this term is used to refer to the process by which groups are forced to adopt or change to reflect the mores of the dominant culture. Assimilation happens, when to be successful in school, students are expected to communicate and behave according to the dominant (namely non-indigenous) school cultural norms.

**Citizens Plus:** The “Citizens Plus” term first coined in the Canadian based Hawthorn Report, and later was used as the title of the Indian Association of Alberta policy paper. The term “Citizens Plus” was defined in the red paper as “Indians should be regarded as ‘Citizens Plus’. In addition to the rights and duties of citizenship, Indians possess certain additional rights as charter members of the Canadian community” (IAA, 1970, p. 1).

**Civil rights:** Civil and political rights are a class of rights that protect individuals' freedom from infringement by governments and private organizations, and ensure one's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the state without discrimination or repression.

**Colonization:** A process whereby sovereignty over a particular land area, its natural resources, economic, political, and/or social resources is taken at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

**Construct validity:** Correct operational measures for the concepts being measured.

**Critical race theory (CRT):** A theoretical framework for academic research and teaching that focuses on racism as central to all other forms of oppression (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. xvi).

**Deficit theory:** This is a view that assumes that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because (a) students enter school without the normative cultural

knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their children's education (Yosso, 2006). This argument is contrary to a belief that organisational structures, instructional practices or schools could be part of the problem.

**Discrimination:** The arbitrary denial of privileges and rewards to members of oppressed groups. Discrimination occurs at both an individual and an institutional level.

**Equality:** A state of being equal in that one cultural group is not inferior or superior to another and that all groups have equal access to the same benefits of society regardless of group membership.

**Ethnocentrism:** The belief that one's cultural group is superior to all others. In terms of CRT, Gloria Ladson-Billings defines it as "Where whiteness is positioned as normative and everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9).

**External validity:** Refers to the whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case study.

**Ideology:** A system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.

**Imperialism:** The policy of extending a nation's authority by territorial acquisition or by the establishment of economic and political hegemony over other nations.

**Indian Act 1876:** This is a Canadian statute that concerns registered Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves.

**Indian education:** Is defined as "education by Indians rather than simply the education of Indians" (Hampton, 1993, p. 270). However, the definition cannot be so easily interpreted. Hampton (1995) explains that "part of the problem lies in the fact that Indian education is inherently a bicultural enterprise that has been directed at two sometimes competing and

sometimes complementary goals: assimilation and self-determination” (Hampton, 1993, p. 267). “Taken together, ‘The juxtaposition of the two words ‘Indian’ and ‘education’ have almost always been problematic in spite of the agreement by Indian parents and Anglo policymakers on the importance of education for Indians (Bradley 1980)” (Hampton, 1995, p. 7). “Indian education was a ‘thing of its own kind (National Advisory Council on Indian Education, 1983)” (Hampton, 1993, p. 270).

**Inequality:** Marked systemic distinctions in economic success, educational achievement, education credentials and power among groups of people.

**Lifelong learning:** The provision, acquisition or use of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for employment and personal fulfilment.

**Liminal space:** A liminal space, the place of transition, waiting, and not knowing.

**Marginalization:** Relegation to a position that is not part of the mainstream nor accepted by most people.

**Naturalistic generalization:** This refers to harmonious relationship between the readers’ experiences and the case study itself.

**Pedagogy:** The art or science of teaching, which includes both instructional strategies and methods.

**Praxis:** Practical application or exercise of a branch of learning.

**Prejudice:** An aversion to members of a cultural group that is different from your own.

Prejudice can result when people lack an understanding of the history, experiences, values, and perceptions of other groups.

**Race:** A social construction used as a means of classification, often made by skin color. Race is a categorical system of privilege and discrimination invented and sustained by individuals and institutions rather than a natural part of the world.

**Racialize:** To differentiate or categorize according to race.

**Racism:** Belief that one race has inherent superiority over all others and thereby its members possess the natural right to be dominant.

**Red rage:** The impact of generations of trauma, violence and oppression that historically, colonialism loaded on First Nations.

**Rentier mentality:** Developed when a community or nation acquires financial gain from external sources in return for the land that the community or nation owns or occupies (Deer, 2009, p. 96).

**Self-determination:** Freedom of the people of a given area to determine their own political status; independence.

**Self-government:** Control of the government of a state, community, or other body by its own members.

**Self-government agreements:** Set out arrangements for Aboriginal groups in Canada to govern their internal affairs and assume greater responsibility and control over the decision making that affects their communities.

**Socio-economic status (SES):** A composite of the economic status of families or persons on the basis of occupation, educational attainment, income, and wealth. In Canada, the SES is estimated by combining the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) with information on the highest level of education among a student's parents, family assets, educational resources at home and family cultural assets. Within the Program for International

Student Assessment (PISA), ISEI is calculated based on students' answers to questions about their parents' occupations (Statistics Canada, 2008).

**Stereotype:** Application of generalizations about a group of people without the consideration of intra-group diversity.

**Treaty rights:** Refers to those specific rights that were reserved by indigenous peoples when they signed treaties with settler societies in Canada in the wake of European colonization.

**Tribal autonomy:** It means that a tribe can, to some extent, make their own political decisions, independent of a nation-state and government. The ability of communities and tribal nations to have control over existing land bases, natural resources and tribal national boundaries.

**Tribal critical race theory (TribCrit):** A theoretical framework for academic research and teaching that focuses on racism and colonialism as being central to all other forms of oppression, especially with research and teaching involving Indigenous peoples. TribCrit challenges the lasting legacies of colonialism, ongoing systemic racism, the impact of ideological/cultural hegemony on students in schools, the subordination of Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies, and the continued violations of tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and the rights of tribally controlled education. (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. xvi).

**Tribal/First Nation sovereignty:** In Canada, sovereignty grants First Nations the jurisdiction over their lives without interference by other governments. It is also contingent on the fulfillment of certain fundamental obligations of First Nations governments to both its own citizens and to the international community. Capacity development—and capacity building—are focused on meeting sacred, customary and legal responsibilities associated with their sovereignty. In the United States, tribal sovereignty is the thought that the federal government has special trust

obligations to protect tribal lands and resources, protect tribal rights to self-government, and provide services necessary for tribal survival and advancement.

**White privilege:** Individuals or groups whose socio-economic status, race, native language, gender or other group membership grants them advantages and power over others in society (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. xvi).

For purposes of this research, the following terms will be used interchangeably:

- Indian—shall also mean Native, First Nation, status Indian, and Treaty Indian as it pertains to those residing on federal Indian reserves within Alberta.
- Education director—shall also mean education administrator and superintendent and refers to those in position of education authority in First Nations.
- Indian control of education—shall also mean “local” control of education, “band” control of education, “First Nations” control of education and “community” control of education and is in reference to those First Nations who have assumed and been recognized by the federal government as managing the education of children in First Nations. For the latter, “although community education has not had widespread authorship by First Nations scholars, there are philosophical similarities between community education and First Nations education” (Calliou, 1993, p. 27).

#### *1.2.1. Abbreviations Used*

- AANDC—Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
- CRT—Critical Race Theory
- FN—First Nation (This has been used interchangeably depending on the context in which it was used.)
- ICIE—Indian Control of Indian Education

- INAC— Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- TribCrit—Tribal Critical Race Theory

### ***1.3. Study Purposes***

The purpose of this study was to understand the multiple administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors and if any of these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children.

A further purpose was to study the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8) who administer First Nation schools directly.

### ***1.4. Research Questions***

An exploratory multi-site case study approach was used to guide the research. The theoretical lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) underpinned this study.

This study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?
- 2) What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?
- 3) In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?

### ***1.5. Significance of the Study***

The current state of First Nation Education on First Nations in Alberta is abysmal. Since First Nation demanded to have local control of children's education, the Canadian federal government has provided minimum funding for First Nations to administer their education programs. Consequentially, among other issues, capacity development to ensure proper management and provision of a quality education program has been lacking. The intent of this study was to gain insight into First Nations education through the directors who administer the education programs for the First Nations in Alberta. Despite First Nations and the federal government of Canada recognizing the issues surrounding ICIE, there has been little research specific to the current realities faced in administering the First Nations education, specifically in Alberta. This research will break ground and set the stage for future research focussing on education directors who work on First Nations.

This study was conducted to better inform First Nations leadership, the federal government and FN education bodies as to the issues surrounding ICIE and to help with education directors being better prepared when assuming the roles and responsibilities of an education director, in the hopes for proper management and better quality education programs for First Nations. The intent was also to encourage a dialogue amongst all involved in First Nations education and possible a more fulsome study in this regard, in the future.

### ***1.6. Summary***

This chapter introduced the research topic and the study's key purposes and research questions. Included also was the definition of terms. This chapter concluded with a brief discussion of the study's significance. Chapter Two is the literature review which is comprised of three parts. The

first part will relate to Critical Race Theory (CRT) that serves as a background to the second part of the literature review. The second part concerns Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit), which informed the study. The third part outlines the course of Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) and examines how this has impacted local control currently implemented by education directors of First Nations. Chapter Three concerns the study's methodology. Chapter Four presents the findings and is divided into seven sections; the Introduction, Alberta First Nation Multi-site Case study, the Demographics of First Nations Education Directors in Alberta, Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. The final chapter includes the following sections: the introduction, study summary, a summary of the findings and conclusions, the study's implications, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

*“I think as a new director, I think, it’s been a real learning curve for me all the things I have to stay on top including requirements of the government for accountability for the funding that we get, and so on and so forth, that’s one the biggest things that I have had to come up to speed on”*

*(Anonymous Alberta First Nation Education director, 2013)*

The literature review is comprised of three parts: (1) Critical Race Theory (CRT), (2) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit), and (3) the course of Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) since its inception. Although this study centered on First Nations in Alberta, all First Nations in Canada are under federal jurisdiction and, decisions made federally, have direct impact on First Nations. An examination was developed in light of what happens in other parts of Canada. The focus is on First Nation’s Vision of ICIE, Canadian government implementation of ICIE, general prevailing issues surrounding ICIE, and ultimately how ICIE impacts education directors in First Nations. It also examines the abject failure of ICIE and what First Nations education directors contend with in implementing effective education for FN students.

### ***2.1. Theoretical Framework***

In First Nations education circles, we have continually pondered the plight of First Nations education with no examination of a theoretical framework on which to base it. Over a decade ago, Hampton (1995) called for an explanatory theory of First Nations education. He asserts that “the lack of theory of Indian education not only hampers research, it also impedes the practice of education” (p. 11). Any such theory, in turn, should be passed on to the broader Canadian society to “learn how to accept, understand, and profit from the forms and modes available for the production, presentation, and distribution of First Nations knowledge” (Agbo, 2005, p. 316). Hampton (1993) on the other hand argues “It may not be the shortage of research (of theory in

Indian education) but a shortage of research that is useful from Indian points of view” (Hampton, 1993, p. 271). Whatever the case, even as early as 1970, there were racial concerns with regard to the education of First Nations students. “The ethnic group with the least education is native Indian” (Indian Association of Alberta, 1970, p. 77).

It was apparent there were assimilation effects from federal government policies of the time with residential schools, and later with integration into provincial schools surrounding First Nations’ communities (Paquette & Fallon, 2010). On the surface, one would assume that with ICIE implementation, these effects would be occurring. However Bear Nicholas (2008) notes when looking at indigenous language loss:

Mention the work “assimilation” to political and educational authorities and they will vehemently deny that it is the goal of the education system. The impression given is that whatever assimilation policies may have existed in the past they no longer exist in the present, especially now that the residential schools have all been closed down. But that was twenty years ago and the decline of indigenous languages has proceeded more dramatically since then than ever before, and without residential schools (p. 11).

The threat of assimilation is not only from the far reaches of the federal government, but from within. Bear Nicholas (2008) asserts that neo-colonization (replicating assimilationist ideologies within indigenous communities) “presents a difficult challenge to indigenous communities, but it is one which must be understood” (p. 25).

In examining theories revolving around race and education, Critical Race Theory (CRT) appears to be the very similar to First Nations student experiences with education within white society. CRT began with a number of activists and scholars “interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado, 2001, p. 2). The CRT movement began in the field of law, but quickly spread to other disciplines specifically in education. Critical race theorists “use CRT’s ideas to understand issues of school discipline and

hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing” (Delgado, 2001, p. 3).

One proposition most critical racist theorists believe is that “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—“normal science” the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of colour in this country” (Delgado, 2001, p. 7). Ladson-Billings (1998) explains it as living “in a racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative, everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12).

Another proposition of CRT is that it sometimes employs storytelling to “analyse the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). Delgado explains the voice of color thesis holds that “because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts’ matters that the whites are unlikely to know” (Delgado, 2001, p. 9).

CRT asserts that change in racism occurs only when there is an “interest convergence—where the interests of whites and people of color intersect” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). As CRT scholars, Ladson-Billings (1998) indicates they are unified by two common interests—to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and to change the bond that exists between law and racial power. One such interest convergence in America as identified by Derrick Bell (1980) was the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark decision in which the Supreme Court ordered the end of state-mandated racial segregation of public schools. Bell indicated that America’s prime interest in supporting this landmark decision to desegregate schools had to do with America’s

international credibility and that the “precepts of equality and freedom so heralded during World War II” were marred by the U.S. segregation and continued discrimination. Further, “segregation was viewed as a barrier to further industrialization in the South” (p. 23).

In this study, CRT will be cast against First Nations experiences with the Canadian government and Canadian school systems.

### *2.1.1. Similarities between CRT and First Nations Education*

CRT is a useful lens for this study as First Nations education has had very similar histories to African Americans in terms of racism. However, in terms of integration, African Americans in the United States fought for integration while First Nations in Canada were forced into school integration. The 1969 Indian Policy (White Paper) stated:

Steps will be taken to support to enlist the support of Canadians generally. The provincial governments will be approached to support this goal through their many agencies operating in the field. Provincial educational authorities will be urged to intensify their review of school curriculae and course content with a view to ensuring that they adequately reflect Indian culture and Indian contributions to Canadian development (p. 9).

The First Nations opposed integration, not so much on integration itself at the time, but on the basis of not being consulted. “Responsibility for integration belongs to the people involved. It cannot be legislated or promoted without the full consent and participation of the Indians and non-Indians concerned” (Assembly of First Nations/National Indian Brotherhood, 1973, p. 30).

### *2.1.2. Repercussions of Integration*

Integration was like jumping from one assimilation pot into another—residential school to provincial school while still having First Nation parents left out of any decision making in the education of their children. This remained deeply problematic. “Integration in the past twenty years has simply meant the closing down of Indian schools and transferring Indian students to

schools away from their reserves often against the wishes of the Indian parents” (NIB, 1972, p. 25). The First Nation students’ discriminatory experiences with integration, as outlined by the Citizens Plus policy paper (1970), were analogous to United States history. “When the black children who were the beneficiaries of those court orders were admitted previously to all white schools, they often faced hostility, and only infrequently found a teaching environment that was conducive to their needs” (Bell, 2005, p. 1062). Ladson-Billings (1998) indicated that the city of Buffalo’s model desegregation program revealed that African American students continued to be served poorly by the school system. African American student achievement failed to improve, while suspension and expulsion, and dropout rates continued to rise (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 21). Another repercussion of integration for the African Americans was that it “resulted in the closing of black schools and the dismissal of thousands of black teachers and administrators” (Bell, 2005, p. 1062). He further noted that

“[W]hite parents’ fear of sending their children to desegregated schools drove many of them either to move to mainly white school districts or to enrol their children in all white private schools. The primary reason for racial balance remedies departed right along with those white families” (Bell, 2005, p. 1060).

In essence, that was a “white flight”

### *2.1.3. CRT and Politics*

In examining how government politics plays a role in First Nations’ education, Binda (1999) contends that “The symbiotic linkage of colonial politics and education in support of prevailing ideologies, socio-economic and political order have had dysfunctional effects on First Nations” (Binda, 1999, p. 4). The ineptness of the federal government on this issue further added to the bungling of ICIE. “In Ottawa two organizational units—operations and development had separate responsibilities for education with each not knowing what the other was doing. This

bureaucratic incompetence is a violation of important administrative principles, unity, and command” (Binda, 1999, p. 22).

#### *2.1.4. CRT and Funding*

Of critical importance is the issue of funding, property, material wealth and how it relates to racism. Ladson-Billings states that:

CRT argues that the import of property provides another way to consider the funding disparity. Schooling, as a function of individual states, is differentially administered by the various state legislatures. Those areas with property of greater wealth typically have better funded schools. Without the commitment to redesign funding formulas, one of the basic inequities of schooling will remain in place and virtually guarantee the reproduction of the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 21).

First Nations education funding, and government funding in general, to First Nations peoples’ has to be considered in light of poverty within First Nations:

As long as material need remains to keep indigenous peoples dispossessed, efforts will persist to control them and their education with educational experts continuing to focus on genetic or internal and individual explanations for the educational “problems” of Aboriginal youth, and the corresponding solutions that arise from racist assumptions and explanations. (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 22).

In the initial years of ICIE’s existence, there were funding problems that affected the effectiveness and success of ICIE. “A federal study [of Indian Education] found ‘that a funding problem exists in most areas of the education program’ with ‘no clearly identifiable guiding principle” (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1982, p. 43). The study noted that the problem was rooted in a variety of organizational factors” (Binda, 1999, p. 22). For First Nations, there still appears to be the assimilation tones when funding disparities are evident in terms of how funding is provided for First Nation schools compared with provincial schools “...that most schools on reserve receive from the federal government, on average, as

much as one-quarter to one-third less funding per capita than public schools” (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 27).

In respect to funding provided at a provincial level versus funding provided at a federal level, Alberta 2014–2015 school jurisdiction funding rates (Alberta Education, 2014) are significantly higher than the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) education program allocation methodology for the 2014–2015 fiscal year (AANDC, 2014). The Alberta base instruction rate for a student in grades 1–12 is set at \$6,561.68 while the AANDC basic rate is set at \$5,933.00, which is 628.68 less than the Alberta rate. Furthermore, a student in Grades 1–3, in Alberta provincial level, will also receive a base instruction rate of \$1,491.84. If the student is of First Nation descent, \$1,178.10 is also provided under the FNMI rate. In other words, if a First Nation student, in Grades 1–3, attended on-reserve school, the funding provided would be \$5,933.00 and if the same student attended an off-reserve school, the funding provided would be \$9,231.62. This would be 35% difference between federal and provincial rates. If the First Nation student lived in the north, Alberta Education would provide anywhere from \$471.24–\$1,060.80 while AANDC provides \$200 per full-time equivalent student (FTE).

AANDC also provided a small school factor funding of \$900 per FTE. In contrast, the Alberta Education provides small schools by necessity funding of \$82,281 base allocation per school along with variable allocation per FTE ranging from \$588.54 to \$2,943.72.

For home schooling, AANDC provides \$2,086.00 per FTE while Alberta Education provides \$1,641.27 per FTE along with additional funding for the cost of Alberta Distance Learning Centre courses to a maximum of \$1,641.27 which totals \$3,282.54.

AANDC also provides \$180 per FTE for low cost special education. In contrast, Alberta Education provides inclusive education funding of \$466.49 (per eligible FTE-funded enrolment),

differential modifiers (per formula) and additional per student (per eligible FTE funded enrolment) of \$56.22.

In addition to this, the Alberta Education also provides for other factors such as outreach (\$62,972.76 per school), small board administration (\$470,835.88), socio-economic status (\$471.24 per FTE), and SuperNet services (\$800 per month) none of which are provided by AANDC. However, AANDC does provide enhanced teacher salaries based on nominal roll of First Nations and minor adjustment based on the provincial salary index for neighbouring school divisions and also funds guidance and counselling of \$45,000.00 for 250 FTE per school and less than 250 FTE per school of \$22,500.00 that Alberta Education does not provide.

Presently, many First Nations communities provide their peoples with individual parental choice to decide whether to send their children to attend either provincial schools (integration) or First Nations schools (segregation). However the “underfunding of First Nations schools has been quite effective in the assimilationist’ goal of driving indigenous children living on reserve into provincial (and dominant language) education systems for decades” (Bear Nicholas, 2000, p. 28).

#### *2.1.5. CRT and Equal Opportunity*

The underlying argument for integration for African Americans in the United States was to have equal opportunities as were provided for the white students. Ladson-Billings (1998) states that it “was associated with the idea that students of color should have access to the same school opportunities, i.e. curriculum, instruction, funding, facilities, as White students” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 17). This was also similar in Canada as part of Citizen’s Plus policy paper (1970) expressed concern for students of First Nation having access to a quality education. With regard to these inequities, in the United States, Ladson-Billings (1998) notes:

Beyond equal treatment was the need to redress pas(t) inequities. Thus, there was a move toward affirmative action and the creation of African Americans and other marginalized groups as “protected classes” to insure that they were not systematically screened out of opportunities in employment, college admission, and housing” (p. 18).

The “protected classes” in the United States equated to the “citizen plus.” This demand for special status fell on deaf ears and the Canadian federal government continued on the assimilation track. Similarly, Curry (2008) contends that for African Americans in the United States, “Regardless of black appeals to genetic similarity or to the theme that ‘god created all men equal,’ race will continue to reference our non-humanity. Instead of trying to meet the criterion whites have placed on humanity, genuine Black resistance must be rooted in the right to develop and assert a new cultural world” (p. 42). However, Curry (2008) did not consider the quest for equality would help to achieve that new world: “Equality serves as an imaginative allure—a fantasy, and this is the reality that must be conceptually disengaged” (Curry, 2008, p. 42).

#### *2.1.6. CRT in the Classroom*

In the development of school curriculum, the decisions about what is essential for students to learn within their school life, is entirely a government decision. By contrast, “Critical race theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artefact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). In much the same way, Bear Nicholas (2008) states that First Nations schools in Canada under the control of the federal department of INAC schools use dominant- language provincial curriculum materials and teachers trained in dominant language institutions.

In terms of instructional strategies that are aimed at assisting minorities, Ladson-Billings (2008) purports “CRT suggests that current instructional strategies presume that African

American students are deficient. As a consequence, classroom teachers are engaged in a never-ending quest for the right strategy or technique” (Ladson-Billings, 2008, p. 19). Bear Nicholas concurs with this type of claim and notes the same deficit theory is used for First Nations and that “most educational strategies are aimed at compensating for the supposed defects or differences” (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 21). INAC educational strategy programs like “the so-called ‘New Paths in First Nations Education’ are simply more of the same old path ‘solutions’ that have been recommended since the early 1970s and they are still founded on racist and assimilationist assumptions” (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 22).

In terms of assessment, there is the racist belief that perpetuates all First Nations student failures:

[K]nown as deficit theories, they posit that something is defective in the indigenous child, his or her language, culture, community, family or so-called “race” rather than in the education system or the larger society. Central to deficit theories is the belief that there are presumed genetic differences (particular genes) in Aboriginal children that explain supposed Aboriginal learning styles, and that predispose Aboriginals to all sorts of problematic behaviours, including learning disorders, behavioural disorders, suicide, alcoholism, and so on (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 21).

In terms of CRT, as with First Nations, deficit theories are used against the African Americans. For example, intelligence testing has been used on the basis of a notion of superior reasoning. Similarly, intelligence testing has been used by some people to legitimize African American students’ deficiency under the guise of scientific rationalism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). “If the working class white is “achieving” at a higher level than African Americans, then they feel relatively superior” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 19).

In terms of high school completion rates, Bear Nicholas (2008) points to the fact that high rates do not necessarily mean benefits for either individual or the community “increased rates of school completion do not correlate with correspondingly high levels of academic proficiency,

especially for non-lingual indigenous or minority language students” (Bear Nicholas, 2008, p. 5). In fact, “the almost universal practice of subtractive education in Canada must now be addressed as a central factor in the continuing high rate of educational failure among Inuit and First Nations children” (Bear Nicholas, 2008 p. 10).

### *2.1.7. CRT and Educational Leadership*

Moving ICIE from where it sits presently to bringing it closer to a position that reflects the true spirit and intent that it was meant to be, as First Nation visionaries saw it in the 1970s, means examining the role of the educational leadership in each respective First Nation. However, if present day education directors are of the following mindset as Bear Nicholas (2008) claims, it may be difficult to achieve the true spirit and intent of ICIE:

Since educational and political leadership in First Nations communities generally falls to a small group of elites who are most educated, knowledgeable (and indoctrinated) in the workings and values of the dominant society, those alien values are often replicated in the myriad of decisions that First Nations leaders get to make by virtue of their elected or appointed positions. Central to most values internalized by colonized peoples is a high value placed on literacy in the dominate language, which is generally based on two mistaken beliefs—that indigenous languages have no practical value and actually stand in the way of modernization and that monolingualism in a dominant language is a valid goal (Bear Nicholas, 2009, p. 24).

Young and Laible (2000) warns that “If changes are not made, educational administration programs will continue to produce primarily white, middle class administrators with little understanding of our interest in the institutionalized system of white privilege, oppression, and racism” (Young & Laible, 2000, p. 388) Lopez believes that administration preparation programs are not adequate to meet the rapidly changing demographics and linguistically diverse society” (Lopez, 2003, p. 71) of contemporary Canada. The call for changes in administrative education programs requires a commitment from government, universities, and First Nations to address

issues of race. “As scholars who prepare educational leaders, we cannot continue to marginalize and/or trivialize issues of race and racism within the larger discourse of educational leadership and policy” (Lopez, 2003, p. 86).

#### *2.1.8. CRT in the Realm of ICIE—Future Considerations*

What is notable, in the face of racism and educational inequities between the First Nations and African Americans, is that First Nations want First Nation schools within their community (segregation) using their language and culture (which was, in effect, forcibly taken) as part of school curriculum, while African Americans, by contrast, had segregation but wanted integration with the premise for equality and equal opportunities for education. “Dr. Du Bois observed that “Negro children need neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What they need is education”” (cited in Bell, 2005, p. 1063).

Bell (2005), purported to be the founder of CRT, was of the same notion and supported programs that recognized that effective schooling was of primary importance regardless of its source (p. 1064). Bell did not see integration as the necessary solution to address racism.

In relation to this qualitative case study, the use of CRT framework (in the context of First Nations experiences with racism in government First Nations education policies) will be used in looking at the roles of education directors in First Nations and what levels of support are provided in comparison to provincial school superintendents. As Ladson-Billings (1998) states:

If we are serious about solving these problems in schools and classrooms, we have to be serious about intense study and careful rethinking of race and education. Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means we will have to expose racism and propose radical solutions for addressing it. We will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions. We may be pilloried figuratively or, at least, vilified for these stands (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22).

## *2.2. Tribal Critical Race Theory*

In 2005, American scholar Bryan Brayboy introduced Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) to examine the issues of Indigenous People in relationship to the United States and its laws and policies. It is defined as follows:

Tribal critical race theory (TribCrit)—A theoretical framework for academic research and teaching that focuses on racism and colonialism as central to all other forms of oppression especially with research and teaching involving Indigenous peoples. TribCrit challenges the lasting legacies of colonialism, ongoing systemic racism, the impact of ideological/cultural hegemony on students in schools, the subordination of Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies, and the continued violations of tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and the rights of tribally controlled education (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. xvi).

In this sense, critical race theory has been adapted to address the unique legal, political, and racial issues confronted by Indigenous populations (Brayboy, 2005). In the United States, other Indigenous scholars have embraced the tenets of tribal critical race theory and focused their educational studies on how colonialism and imperial ideology have ubiquitously impacted every aspect of Indigenous peoples' lives, including: Indigenous families and lands, Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous education, Indigenous languages, Indigenous identities, and Tribal sovereignty and self-determination (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011; Brayboy, 2005; Lindley, 2009; Writer, 2008).

The following are the nine tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory which will be outlined as it pertain to First Nation in Canada:

1. Colonization is endemic to society.
2. Government policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.

3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.
4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.
8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.
9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.

In the following section, each of these tenets is examined more comprehensively.

### *2.2.1. Tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory*

#### *1. Colonization is endemic to society.*

Brayboy (2005) states the primary tenet of TribCrit is the notion that colonization is endemic to Western society (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). U.S. society, whether explicitly or implicitly, sought to “civilize” the Native Americans via boarding schools that were intended to “kill the Indian and save the man” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). “The colonization has been so complete that even many American Indians fail to recognize that we are taking up colonialist

ideas when we fail to express ourselves in ways that may challenge dominant society's ideas about who and what we are supposed to be, how we are supposed to behave, and what we are supposed to be within the larger population" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 431).

The parameters of everyday life for First Nations in Canada are indicative of present-day colonialism with developed regulations identifying who is "status Indian" via status numbers issued after confirmation of blood quantum/or membership codes, are confined to reserves which are all numbered, and work mainly consisting of carrying out government regulated programs. Smith (1999) writes, "legislated identities which regulated who was an Indian and who was not ... who had the correct fraction of blood quantum, who lived in the regulated spaces of reserves and communities, were all worked out arbitrarily (but systematically), to serve the interests of the colonizing society" (Smith, 1999, p. 22). Brayboy recognises this "process of colonization and its debilitating influences are at the heart of TribCrit; all other ideas are offshoots of this vital concept" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 431).

Abercrombie-Donahue (2011) points out that "though it may seem that colonialism and racialized representations of Indigenous peoples have become a part of the distant past, educational researchers have documented a very different story" (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. 36). Abercrombie-Donahue provides an example of present day racialized representations.

"Chavers (2009) conducted a survey of educational studies throughout the United States and he identified four major ways that Indigenous students have continued to experience racism and racial discrimination within schools: —1) placement in bonehead or lower track classes, 2) failure of the school to connect to the home or home culture, 3) the lecture method of teaching, and 4) low teacher expectations" (Abercrombie-Donahue, 2011, p. 36).

In Canada, Aboriginal children continue to struggle with mainstream education whether it is because of having English as a second language or dialect, often having parents with

insufficient education themselves to support them, or the mainstream disregard for oral traditions. “For others, it is simply that they are ostracised for their ‘otherness’; their manners, their attitudes, their speech or a hundred other things which mark them out as different” (Hutchings, n.d., p. 6).

2. *U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain.*

Brayboy (2005) describes and builds on the notion that colonization is endemic in society and recognizes that the policies of the United States toward American Indians are rooted in imperialism, white supremacy, and a desire for material gain (p. 431). From a First Nation perspective, this is evident in the aspect of land ownership versus habitation. For example, in the United States white settlers rationalized the dispossession of the native off their lands with the notion that, although they were rooted to their land, there was no land ownership by the American Indians. What was not understood was that these lands not only held life sustenance for American Indians but that the people were spiritually connected to the land.

In a similar vein, in Canada’s colonialist federal government, there continues to be a push to displace First Nations from their land. Currently there are numerous Acts being proposed in Parliament with one regarding First Nations lands called “The First Nations Private Property Ownership Act.” This proposed Act, was it to be made law, would permit private property ownership within reserve boundaries. It would also allow the small existing Aboriginally-owned land base to be sold to non-Aboriginal buyers, forever losing these lands as Aboriginal lands. This Act (if enacted), as noted by Land (2012) is a particular risk for impoverished communities who may be forced by economic desperation to sell their own lands for short term gain (Land 2012, p. 1).

3. *Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.*

Brayboy (2005) explains that the third tenet of TribCrit is that Indigenous peoples are often placed between joint statuses as legal/ political and racialized beings. He contends that Native Americans are both legal/political and racialized beings but they (members of First Nations communities) are rarely treated as such, “leaving Indigenous peoples in a state of inbetweeness wherein we define ourselves as both” (p. 432).

For First Nations in Canada, this legal/political being is defined by the Treaties. Between 1871 and 1921, the Crown entered into treaties with various First Nations that enabled the Canadian government to actively pursue agriculture, settlement, transportation links, and resource development. These Treaties, commonly referred to as "Numbered Treaties," consisted of 11 Treaties signed with the Crown. In Alberta, the numbered treaties are Treaties 6, 7, and 8. The government of Canada negotiated Treaties in order to protect “their” cultures, land base, and languages. First Nations did not view the Treaty process as a surrender of their land, but as an agreement to share the land and its resources with Canadians (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, n.d.).

Along with the treaties providing for such things as reserve lands and other benefits including agricultural equipment and livestock, annuities, ammunitions, gratuities, clothing, and certain rights to hunt and fish, the Crown also made promises regarding the maintenance of schools on reserves and the provisions of teachers or educational assistance to the First Nation parties to the treaties. Even at this stage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many Canadians are unaware of the treaties and their enormous significance to First Nations sovereignty. The exchange of giving up First Nation traditional territory was for government to ensure the needs of First Nations are

being adequately met “for as long as the river flows, the grass grows and the sun shines” (Chief Crowfoot, signing of Treaty 7). Presently First Nations view this exchange by acquiring a special status awarded as compensation for surrendered lands and expect treaty obligations to be honoured through the transfer of money from government departments to First Nations (Deer, 2009; Frideres & Gadacz, 2008).

First Nations vehemently will argue that these “treaty rights” are being ignored and violated by the federal government with every new federal policy and program imposed on First Nations. This again parallels the American Indian plight “The racialized status of American Indians appears to be the main emphasis of most members of U.S. society; this status ignores the legal/political one, and is directly tied to notions of colonialism, because larger society is unaware of the multi-site statuses of Indigenous peoples” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 433).

The Assembly of First Nations urged the federal government that “First Nation Governments need new fiscal transfer arrangements based on a stable allocation reflecting demographics, need and inflation, as well as the spirit and intent of treaties and the principles contained in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (Assembly of First Nations, 2010a, p. 1).

However, there is a thought shared by the Canadian mainstream society in which First Nations are a financial burden on Canadian shoulders, have poor fiscal management of funding and are funded substantially more than Canadians for programs and services

In a study conducted to look at the true cost of First Nations governments, (Fiscal Realities Economists, 1999) First Nation fiscal transfers were examined. This review of data from the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples report found that there were many program areas where per capita expenditures on Aboriginals were higher than for non-Aboriginals. It

highlighted four large expenditure areas: health care costs are 65% higher; social service costs are 194% higher; basic education costs are 111% higher and costs associated with the protection of people and property are 49% higher (p. 11). With the exception of housing, the largest cost differential was social services. The report concluded that the data are consistent with the theory that poverty provides the largest explanation for high costs of delivering First Nation programs.

Yet, rather than look at the poverty issue, First Nations are viewed as not wanting to be self-sufficient and basically a burden on the Canadian tax payers. Minnis (2006) claimed that these fiscal transfers represent unearned income and support a rentier mentality. This, in turn, leads to poor Aboriginal student achievement. Deer however disputed this as over simplifying the issue and argues “Minnis failed to recognize the importance of the unique treaty agreements made between the First Peoples and their colonizers” (Deer, 2009, p. 95). The biggest obstacle First Nations face on a constant basis is how the federal government dismisses the treaty obligations and fails to meet the most basic of needs for First Nations, hence keeping First Nations in a state of poverty. This despite the fact that there are billions of dollars made from the revenue from the traditional territories of First Nations. One has to wonder if there are underlying colonial aims in keeping First Nations in poverty and reinforcing the racialized view that First Nations are ‘lazy Indians’ to the broader Canadian society?

Ladson-Billings supports the notion that special status/treatment needs to be provided to make improvements with non-dominant groups. She recognizes “that historically denied groups should be given a preference in admission to schools and colleges” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 238). Currently there are Canadian universities that provide bridging programs geared to aboriginal student population however it does not necessarily provide admission to certain fields/programs within the universities and colleges.

4. *Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.*

Brayboy (2005) explains that the fourth tenant of TribCrit is rooted in a belief in and desire to obtain and forge tribal autonomy, self-determination, self-identification, and ultimately tribal sovereignty by American Indians. Tribal autonomy as described by Brayboy is the ability for communities and tribal nations to have control over existing land bases, natural resources, and tribal national boundaries. It is also linked to the ability to interact with the United States and other nations on a nation-to-nation basis. Self-determination is the ability to define what happens with autonomy, how that happens, why, and to what ends, rather than being forced to ask permission from the United States government. It rejects the guardian/ward relationship currently in place between the U.S. government and tribal nations. Knowledge of these current relationships allows researchers ways to better analyze interactions between Indigenous students and the dominant institutional structures. Self-identification is the ability and legitimacy for groups to define themselves and to create what it means to be Indian (Brayboy, 2005, pp. 433–434).

Abercrombie-Donahue (2011) ascertains “since education was secured as a right by treaties between the U.S. government and tribal nations, tribal critical race theory researchers have explored the role of educational institutions in either undermining or preserving tribal sovereignty or self-determination” (p. 41).

In Canada, several First Nations have sought through their Self-Government Agreements (SGA), total control of education. However, McCue (1999) remarked that, of the six SGAs he has examined, at best, “the jurisdiction of self-government amounts to the jurisdiction to self-regulate and to self-administer. At worst, they effect a definition of self-government that is as

narrow, albeit more refined, as the current model of Indian Act band governments” (p. 14).

McCue recommended rigorous attention to the definition of jurisdiction as both critical and necessary. McCue also argued that if First Nations want to create an education for their children that was First Nations in content, structure, values and philosophy, how their jurisdiction in education was defined would be critical (1999).

5. *The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.*

Brayboy (2003) identifies three forms of knowledge—cultural knowledge, knowledge of survival, and academic knowledge. All three forms of knowledge exist and are integral to each other and to survival and ultimately lead to tribal sovereignty. They are defined as

- Cultural knowledge is an understanding of what it means to be a member of a particular tribal nation; this includes particular traditions, issues, and ways of being and knowing that make an individual a member of a community.
- Knowledge of survival includes an understanding of how and in what ways change can be accomplished and the ability and willingness to change, adapt, and adjust in order to move forward as an individual and community.
- Academic knowledge is that acquired from educational institutions. In many of our communities this is often referred to as “book knowing” or “book smarts.”

(Brayboy, 2005, p. 334)

Since the local control of education movement over 40 years ago, “First Nations, Inuit and Métis have long advocated learning that affirms their own ways of knowing, cultural traditions, and values. However, they also desire Western education that can equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in Canadian society. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis

recognize that “two ways of knowing” will foster the necessary conditions for nurturing healthy, sustainable communities” (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007, p. 29).

The Canadian Council of Learning (CCL, 2007) reported on the progress of Aboriginal learning in the “State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency” report. The report’s release was a formative effort to monitor and report on the holistic nature of Aboriginal learning across the lifespan. After its release, a partnership formed between CCL and its Aboriginal scholars and other key Canadian education leaders to determine the indicators needed to capture a holistic view of lifelong learning that reflects Aboriginal needs and aspirations. One subsequent result of this was reviewing the whole spectrum of lifelong learning. One identified as most important was Learning from Place. In the living document Concept 5—*Innaihtsiyysin* (Co-Existence): referred to the importance of land to First Nations and the learning that is distinctly tied to the sacred sites.

Many of the monuments of *kitawahsinnoon*—including certain cairns, tipi rings, or geographic features—mark the origin sites of alliances established to ensure mutual benefit between different societies sharing a single territory. For instance, *Soyoohpawahko* (otherwise known as Blackfoot Crossing) is recognized as the place where Treaty Seven was made. Similarly, *Paahatomahksikimi* (Inner Lake) is where the Blackfoot people first accepted transfer from the animals of *kitawahsinnoon*, in exchange for our acknowledgement of their right to live without interference, and our promise not to abuse them. Each monument to *innaihtsiyysin* carries important lessons for the maintenance of our socio-ecological order, and each comprises a tangible presence that, when revisited and the stories retold, functions to sustain and renew the relationships that are most vital to our continued existence.

(Canadian Council of Learning, 2007,  
p. 2)

This is one example of how a First Nation has distinct pedagogy linked to landmarks and sites indigenous to Canada. This essential learning from place, distinctly connecting each place

as places of knowledge and learning to each First Nations in Canada and highly revered, is sadly not recognized nor included in present-day education in public education systems.

6. *Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.*

The sixth key component of TribCrit is “recognition that governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples have, historically, been oriented toward a problematic goal of assimilation requiring students to replace their cultural knowledge with academic knowledge” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437).

In the United States, as well as Canada, treaties emphasized appropriate education for Native American students. Although the First Nations implicit understanding was that “appropriate” meant trust responsibility and sovereignty to be the guiding principles of Native American education, “often ‘appropriate’ education was assumed by federal officials to be that which eradicated Indianness or promoted Anglo values and ways of communicating” (Brayboy, 2005, 436).

The results of this type of schooling are still very evident today. Deer (2009) indicates “In spite of the establishment of treaties, Canada’s First Peoples have struggled with the effects of colonialism and social dominance” (Deer, 2009, p. 95). The far reaching aspects of this assimilationist paradigm have led First Nations peoples to accept the racist stereotypes of themselves and, as a result, many frequently suffer low self-esteem and negative feelings about themselves and their culture (Pauls, 1996; Tunison, 2007).

7. *Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.*

The seventh tenet of TribalCrit emphasizes the “importance of tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future; it honors the adaptability of groups and recognizes the differences within individuals and between people and groups” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437).

These ways of knowing are vital to our self-education and self-determination for American Indians and for Canadian First Nations (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Battiste, 2002; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002).

Brayboy (2005) elucidated that individuals are parts of communities rather than individuals alone in the world. He states, TribalCrit, then, recognizes the “importance of tribal philosophies, values, and beliefs—such as community and cooperation—in the experiences of American Indian peoples” (p. 439). By contrast, in its belief of individualism, U.S. society established boarding schools for American Indians for the purpose of assimilation.

In same the fashion the government of Canada amended the Indian Act in 1891 to make school attendance mandatory for every First Nations child between the ages of seven and 15, as part of a program to assimilate Aboriginal people into the cultural mainstream. By 1930, this had led to the creation of more than 80 residential schools (Brief History of Residential Schools, 2014). Many children were separated from their families and communities so as to attend residential schools, where they often suffered from sexual, physical, and mental abuse. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded that many of the current challenges facing Aboriginal communities, including violence, alcoholism, and loss of identity, spirituality and language, could be tied to the residential school experience (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

8. *Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.*

Brayboy (2005) explains that the eighth tenet of TribCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being. “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory. Many Indigenous people have strong oral traditions, which are used as vehicles for the transmission of culture and knowledge” and states that “stories also serve as guideposts for our elders and other policy-makers in our tribal communities” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439). Brayboy indicates the stories “as ‘data’ are important, and one key to collecting these data is ‘hearing’ the stories and ‘hearing stories means that value is attributed to them and both the authority and the nuance of stories are understood’ (Brayboy, 2005, p. 440). “When stories are heard, they lead the listener to examine the range and variation of possibilities of what can happen and has happened” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 440) and build skills of attending, understanding, and remembering.

Brayboy indicates stories often are the guardians of cumulative knowledge that hold a place in the ‘psyches’ of the group members, are memories of tradition, and reflections on power. To this end, Abrams (1996) speaks of a time

“[W]hen humans spoke with the voice of the Earth. Our ancestors’ senses were alert to messages coming to them from the wild world of nature....We are all born with this ancestral heritage, with the ability to ‘read’ and respond to the sensuous earth. But with the discovery and learning of written words, literate culture lost something special—even something sacred—that has been integral to the oral traditions” (Abrams, 1996, p. 15).

For Western societies, this is not comprehensible in their psyche. The aspect of orality in the context of First Nation education has not been given the attention it warrants in the development of our education systems as (we) move forward.

9. *Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change.*

In the final component of TribCrit, Brayboy (2005) asserts that there must be a component of action or activism—a way of connecting theory and practice in deep and explicit ways. Building on what is called Critical Race Practice, TribCrit must be praxis at its best. “TribalCrit scholars ‘must expose structural inequalities and assimilatory processes and work toward debunking and deconstructing them; it also works to create structures that will address the real, immediate and future needs of tribal peoples and communities’ (Burkhart, 2004)” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 440).

Brayboy emphasizes the utilization of a TribCrit lens, which requires no research be conducted with Indigenous Peoples that is not in some way directed by a community and aimed toward improving the life chances and situations of specific communities and American Indians writ large. As well, he argues that this research must be relevant and address the problems of the community with little room for abstract ideas in real communities. To this end, any research employed is done with the full understanding that education directors must work to move First Nations away from colonization and assimilation and working towards a more real self-determination and tribal sovereignty for their respective First Nations.

### ***2.3. Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE)***

In understanding the significance of Indian Control of Indian Education to First Nations, a starting point is a review of the treaties that were established between First Nations and the Crown in relation to education. Youngblood Henderson stated that the First Nations original education system was family based, was never delegated to the Crown in the treaties and “is an existing Aboriginal right under section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982” (1995, p. 246)). He purports that as the treaties are held by the Supreme Court of Canada to be legally binding,

Aboriginal choice of education is a constitutional obligation which has never been extinguished, although regulated by different governments (Youngblood Henderson, 1995).

Beginning in 1871, the First Nation treaties the treaty provisions began to transition from Aboriginal choice to Crown obligation. In the treaties, particularly the numbered treaties, the Crown obligations to education were established. “The Crown, however, did not fulfil its constitutional obligations and, from the outset, chose to provide limited educational services not as a treaty right, but as an assimilationist mechanism through its own criteria, the Indian Act” (Carr-Stewart, 2001, p. 126).

In 1894, the treaty articles in the Indian Act regime created day schools for First Nations parents to send their children to. The minister of the interior and former Indian commissioner complained that these schools were ineffective in “improving them” [First Nation children]. This ultimately resulted in parliament giving authority to the governor in council to make regulations regarding attendance, punishment of parents of truant children and the authority to establish boarding and industrial schools and thus began the residential schools (Youngblood Henderson, 1995). Youngblood Henderson also stated that subsequent amendments to the Indian Act up until 1972 expanded the governor in council’s authority which included justices or Indian agents exercising authority to decide of sending children to school, transfer of children’s annuities and interest monies to the school, the authority to take reserve land for school purposes, transportation of students, buildings and equipment, teaching and discipline, and in 1920, another expanded truancy law was established (1995, p. 251).

In the 1951 Indian Act revisions, Youngblood Henderson noted that the missionaries’ authority was replaced with the federal government although religious affiliations continued. At this time, parliament also unilaterally terminated the chiefs and councils authority over education

leaving the minister of Indian affairs with the exclusive authority. In addition the minister of Indian affairs had authority to enter into agreements with provincial school boards (1995, p. 253). These agreements did not allow any involvement of First Nations in the curriculum, administration of teaching staff, methods of instruction, and or management. This began the era of integration and “the number of Indian students dramatically increased in provincial schools, and in the absence of any requirements to revise the curriculum, they quickly became a ‘cash cow’” (Youngblood Henderson, 1995, p. 253). Youngblood Henderson summed up the federal government’s approach of First Nations Education as “deliberate psychological experiments which attempted to destroy First Nations consciousness” (Youngblood Henderson, 1995, p. 254).

In 1967, the Hawthorne Report, a study undertaken by anthropologist Harry B. Hawthorn to look at the contemporary situation of the Indian people of Canada, recommended “the integration of aboriginal children into public school systems should proceed with due concern for all involved and after the full cooperation of local Indians and non-Indians has been secured” (Hawthorne, 1967, p. 12). Nonetheless, rather than garnering support from First Nations in educational decisions, in 1969, the federal government released the Indian Policy paper (White Paper) outlining the end of First Nation treaty rights in Canada (Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1969). With First Nations deep discontent with the forced assimilation and integration of First Nation children into public school systems and with the atrocities of residential school still fresh, the writing of the “White Paper” brought to a head, First Nations outrage. In Alberta, Treaty 6, 7, and 8 First Nations people banded together and, based, in part, on Hawthorne’s Report, wrote the Citizens Plus paper outlining not only decision-making that ought to lay with First Nations parents but that First Nations be recognized as “citizens plus” honouring what was envisioned in the peace treaties that provided for the necessary funding to

manage our education systems. As the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) lamented, “decisions on the education of Indian children have been made by anyone and everyone, except Indian students” (p. 27). First Nations advocates demanded “This must stop. Band councils should be given total or partial authority for education on reserves, depending on local circumstances and always with provisions for eventual complete autonomy” (NIB, 1972, p. 27).

Essentially, what has been initially defined as local control and later, further clarified, meant decisions would be made at each First Nation’s level. These decision-making responsibilities would embrace educational finances, facilities, teacher certification, hiring of teachers, curriculum planning, administration and evaluation, representation on provincial school districts at the provincial level (if students attended provincial schools) negotiating agreements with provincial/territorial or separate school jurisdictions for the kinds of services necessary for local requirement, developing adult education and upgrading courses, evaluation of programs both on and off-reserve, and establishing educational standards that would prepare First Nations students to live in both societies (Agbo, 2005; Charters-Voght, 1999; Perley, 1993; Ralph, 1993). “Tribal control means positive use of tribal languages and cultures in schools; relevant curriculum; increased parental involvement; and a larger number of Indian teachers, administrators, and counsellors” (Tippeconnic III, 2000 p. 42–43).

### *2.3.1. Canadian Government Implementation of ICIE*

In the years following the inception of ICIE, the Canadian federal government delegated to the Indian affairs department the implementation of ICIE but “allowed the department to move slowly, delegating programs of administration rather than policy development and real management and financial control” (Agbo, 2005, p. 293).

First Nations are delegated authority to operate their schools. However, control of funds for education programs in those schools is still attached to the federal government. “The AFN [Assembly of First Nations] states that First Nations education authorities “must comply with federal directives or be subject to reprisal or loss of resources” (Charters-Voght, 1999, p. 69). Further to this, Friesen and Friesen (2002) affirm “By and large, the administrative structure, the organization for the curriculum, the instructional methods and materials, and the standards used to judge performance continued in most cases to be extensively influenced by the Canadian federal government’s policy regarding First Nations (p. 290). Charter-Voght (1999) states that “AFN (1988) suggests “deficiencies in legislation, policies, and administrative practices must be amended or changed to be consistent with the goals of First Nations people (Charter-Voght, 1999, p. 69). Although First Nations are a federal responsibility, each respective First Nations operates under the provincial education system. However there has been no significant involvement of First Nations people in development of curriculum, programming and provincial tuition agreements. “Unless there is meaningful involvement of self-determining First Nations peoples in tuition agreement negotiation, implementation, and monitoring processes whereby the overall tuition process becomes a process of First Nations inclusion and empowerment throughout, First Nations tuition agreement education results will continue to remain dismal” (Burns, 1998, p. 60).

### *2.3.2. General Prevailing Issues Surrounding ICIE*

Even with the limited delegated authority, there were some successes of ICIE. “Currently, each Indian-controlled school, project, parent committee, or program adopts, adapts or invents a model of education as it can. In many cases this has led to significant local improvement (National Film Board of Canada, 1983; Rough Rock Demonstration School, 1978;

Turner, 1984). The strength of these individual efforts has been their reliance on local communities” (Hampton, 1993, p. 271). However, the inroads made have been overshadowed by:

“A century or more of cultural conflict, non-Native-oriented schools, and the fact of Native educators trained in non-Native schools has left a situation that places major obstacles in the way of Native-controlled schools. Native languages have declined, non-Native standards are usually used to evaluate Native schools and Native teachers, the development of Native curriculum and Native educational methods is an enormous task, and funding is uncertain and usually controlled by non-Natives” (Hampton, 1993, p. 270).

By contrast, Kirkness (1998) chastises the First Nations for their “insecurity in taking control and failing to design an education that would be based on our culture, our way of life and most important our world view” (Kirkness, 1998, p. 11). On another hand, Goddard (1993) argued “It is time to question the whole concept of the band controlled schools and to determine whether in fact they are an idea whose time has gone” (Goddard, 1993, p. 177). A part of this collapse has been the unsupported implementation of ICIE from the education authority in First Nations.

### *2.3.3. Preparedness of Education Directors in First Nations for ICIE*

As an outcome of the ICIE policy paper (1972), training must be provided by the federal government for the implementation of ICIE:

Training must be made available to those reserves desiring local control of education. This training must include every aspect of educational administration. It is important that Bands moving towards local control have the opportunity to prepare themselves for the move. Once the parents have control of a local school, continuing guidance during the operational phase is equally important and necessary (Indian Control of Indian Education, 1972, p. 7).

“The AFN also suggests that this training could occur in the local communities or at institutions of higher education and that such training would “prepare F.N. education personnel for their responsibilities” (Charters-Voght, 1999, p. 72).

Tremblay (2001) outlined recommendations in a national background paper on First Nations Educational Jurisdiction noting that “Ensuring capacity to effectively manage and administer programs and services within First Nations structures was found crucial. Thus the provision of training was found to be a necessary requirement to ensure success” (p. 52). This training did not transition successfully in First Nations communities nor was it ongoing. The training for First Nations in administration education for First Nation children, or lack thereof, is of particular interest as it sheds some light to why over the last 38 years, ICIE has been on a path of slow demise.

Any training provided to education directors again depended on the capacity of FN communities themselves without any ongoing assistance from the federal government. This training was sporadic at best and revolved around what was applicable to provincial school district procedures and provincial expectations “in most cases, the director and board were simply not prepared to understand or cope with issues pertaining to schooling within the cultural context of First Nations” (Agbo, 2005, p. 311). If a training program is ever provided, it needs to address the context in which the education director works and ensures that he or she is:

“trained to understand the concept of Indian Control of Indian Education and in contrast to the Euro-Canadian style of administration, community school administrators should promote First Nations values and worldviews, this means that community administrators should emphasis cultural democracy that would assert the will of the community in running the school” (Agbo, 2005, p. 312).

Further, training should include understanding what is entailed working with 3 levels of government (First Nation, provincial, federal). Within First Nations, FN directors receive various

directions and directives from band councils, education committees/boards and tribal managers' directives. The job stability of education authorities on First Nations has been, at best, capricious, depending on the First Nations community; the position has been fraught with political wrangling and hiring/firing happening frequently. "The frequent turnover in the education coordinator's position, by far the most important position in the school governance raises a number of questions—when interviewed (education coordinator) some of those who had left the job indicated that the position created doubt and unease as they worked under conditions of uncertainty" (Agbo, 2005, p. 309).

Despite the First Nation struggle in ICIE viability, there is still strong support for maintaining the responsibility of educating students in First Nations as declared in the FN Jurisdiction of Education—A New Indian Control of Indian Education Policy—Preparing our Children for the Future draft, (2008):

We affirm our commitment to cultivate and implement a renewed lifelong learning vision. We will continue to assert First Nations jurisdiction, maintain First Nations responsibility for the learning of our people, and work to implement First Nations visions of education" (p. 5).

Indicators of First Nations struggles implementing local control of education have been evident for many years, sometimes played out in the backrooms of INAC offices or represented out in terms of academic failures, student outcome data and drop-out rates on the front pages of newspapers across Canada. These indicators have led to many both First Nation and Non-native to question the viability of ICIE.

#### *2.4. Education Directors Training*

Whether it is meeting the ICIE vision of sufficient funding to have quality schools and education programming for First Nation students, of ensuring parental involvement, having language and curriculum taught that affirms First Nations culture and heritage, or the vision of the federal (i.e. improvement of graduation rates, drop-out rates, achievement rates), there needs to be adequate training and support provided to those in the leadership positions in First Nations education. This type of training is not only an issue in First Nations only but it is seen to be needed in mainstream public education as well.

In a paper commissioned by the College Association of School Superintendents (CASS) it was noted that in 2003, as part of its final report to the Minister of Learning, Alberta's Commission on Learning, made the following recommendation: "Develop a comprehensive, targeted program for preparing superintendents and providing ongoing professional development to support them in their role as CEOs of school jurisdictions" (Alberta Learning Commission, 2003, p. 14).

Providing ongoing capacity development support to First Nations to ensure education directors have the necessary training, skills and knowledge base to work toward self-determination is necessary. "Empowerment of Aboriginal peoples, especially in the field of education, has become a "politically correct" way of thinking. Sadly, most educators and politicians see empowerment as the end of an important process designed to allow Aboriginal peoples control over their educational destiny. Our point is that empowerment is only the beginning of the process" (Taylor, 1993, p. 182). Agbo (2005) notes that policy implementation is also part of that process "The issue involved is not merely one of the LEA [local education authority] acquiring theoretical knowledge in the development and implementation of policy but

for the federal authorities to provide the opportunity for implementing socially- and culturally-oriented policies that can be sustained from within, recognizing community aspirations and local resources in context and reinforcing and maximizing their contribution to student achievement (Agbo, 2005, p. 314).

It is evident in the literature surrounding ICIE that training and support of those in leadership position is seen as a critical need. However, what this training and support might be determined. This study will examine the present day roles and responsibilities of education directors in Alberta First Nations, then consider them in contrast to public superintendents' roles and responsibilities, and along the way look for similarities and discrepancies between First Nations education and mainstream education. As there were very limited studies in Canada and Alberta on superintendent roles and responsibilities, other studies were reviewed for comparison. In a study conducted between Sweden and Wisconsin Superintendents (Bredeson & Johansson, 1997), superintendents' self-descriptions of their administrative work was examined. They found that for Wisconsin superintendents, the most important administrative task faced by education directors was budget and finances as most important and Swedish superintendents ranked curriculum development and instructional leadership as most important administrative tasks. On most time consuming administrative task, Wisconsin and Swedish superintendents' ranked budget and finance as most time consuming administrative task.

Further, the study will investigate whether there any other unique challenges faced in working in First Nations.

## 2.5. *Summary*

The literature review was comprised of three parts: (1) Critical Race Theory (CRT), (2) Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit), and (3) the course of Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE) since its inception. Chapter Three consists of the research design, the study issues of generalization, reliability and validity, data gathering procedures, sample, informed consent and other ethical considerations, and data analysis methods.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*“I’m very pleased that you are doing this study, I think there is a unique niche there but I mean if you look at all the reserves across Canada, how many directors are there like me? And what kind of guidance do they get, I’d love to hear you speak at some conference sometime once you’re research is done, and what you advise us to do in practice.”*

*(Anonymous First Nation Education director, 2013)*

### **3.1. Introduction**

Chapter Three was to outline theoretically, conceptually, and structurally the research methods and data collection procedures used in this study. The chapter consists of the study influence research design of the study; issues of generalization; reliability and validity; data gathering procedures; sample; informed consent and other ethical considerations; and data analysis method.

### **3.2. Research Design**

Yin (2009) refers to research design as a plan that “guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting observations” (p. 23). The five critically important components of research designs, as indicated by Yin (2009) are a study’s question, its proposition (if any), its unit(s) of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings.

The purpose of this study was to understand the multi-site administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors and if these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children.

A further purpose was to study the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8) who administer First Nations schools.

Specifically, to study the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8) who have First Nations children in their schools' student population and identify any challenges they may face in the course of fulfilling their job duties and responsibilities.

This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?
- 2) What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?
- 3) In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?

The methodological approach taken in this study was a mixed method, exploratory multi-site case study and informed by tribal critical race theory. The research was based on two principal sources; a survey of the Education Directors on First Nations reserves in Alberta and a series of in-depth interviews conducted individually with approximately 75% of them. As this is a qualitative research study, the survey was undertaken in part to confirm (or disconfirm) claims made in the semi-structured interviews. Relevant documentation pertaining to the study was also analysed.

For the first phase of the study, 46 First Nations education authorities in Alberta were surveyed. As no other study has been done for this intent and local control differs from one First Nations to another, an exploratory multi-site case study was chosen to provide the information required to do the second phase of the study. For the second phase, 34 superintendents/education

directors were approached to take part in semi-structured interviews. Document analysis was the third element undertaken for the purpose of seeking data triangulation.

In all, three sources of data obtained were each coded, categorized and analyzed the triangulation data. This was reported in matrix tables.

### ***3.3. Research Methodology***

Once the topic of study was defined, the researcher was tasked with determining the most appropriate type and method(s) of research. As indicated in Chapter Two, from a theoretical lens, Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) was employed to shape my study. In looking at the three goals outlined by Parker and Lynn (2002) of CRT, the first goal is to present stories about discrimination from the perspectives of people of color. Cresswell (2007) indicate “these may be qualitative case studies of descriptions and interviews. These cases may be drawn together to build cases against racially biased officials or discriminatory practices” (p. 28). Cresswell (2007) indicates that case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). Stake (2005) suggests that case study procedures include determining if case study is appropriate for the research problem, then identifying their case or cases. Yin (2009) indicates that case studies can be single, collective, or multi-case designs and range from a general approach to designing to using exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies approaches (p. 35).

Theory development is crucial “whether the ensuing case study’s purpose is to develop or to test theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 35). Eisenhardt (1989) further states that “[t]he completed research design embodies ‘a theory’ of what is being studied. Yin cautions that theory development takes time and can be difficult” (as cited in Yin, 2009, p. 35). Understanding that, although there was significant research on superintendent roles and responsibilities in the more mainstream

Canadian education settings, there was no specific research on the education directors' roles and responsibilities in First Nations Schools or on the challenges faced within these First Nations. Yin (2009) indicates that when the existing knowledge is poor, the available literature will not provide a conceptual framework or explanations that are reliable. "Such a knowledge base does not lend itself to the development of good theoretical statements and any new empirical study is likely to assume the characteristic of an exploratory study" (Yin, 2009, p. 37). Nevertheless, "even an exploratory study should be preceded by statements about what is to be explored, the purpose of the exploration, and the criteria by which the exploration will be judged successfully" (Yin, 2009, p. 37).

An exploratory, mixed method approach was determined to be the most suitable and as the researcher needed to understand this in simple terms from a quantitative perspective, the context in which First Nation education directors worked and current challenges they faced working on First Nations in Alberta was the initial focus. The aim was to hone specifically on those education directors who directly administered Indian Control of Indian Education, specifically, operating schools on their First Nation communities. This to be carried out via qualitative means (multi-site case study using semi-structured interviews were considered to be the most appropriate approach, given the diversity and unique aspects of each First Nation. Yin (2009) states "that mixed methods research forces the methods to share the same research questions, to collect complementary data, and to conduct counterpart analyses" (Yin, 2009, p. 62).

### ***3.4. Generalization, Reliability, and Validity***

Yin (2009) indicates that four tests are used to establish the quality of any empirical social research "construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability" (p. 40). Construct

validity requires that the study identifies correct operational measures for the concepts being measured. To increase the construct validity for this, the use of multiple sources of evidence was used. Survey, semi-structured interviews, and pertinent documentation were relied upon. For internal validity, “this logic is inapplicable to descriptive or exploratory studies which are not concerned with this kind of causal situation” (p. 43).

External validity refers to whether a study’s findings are generalizable beyond the immediate case study. Case study often relies on analytic generalization “the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 43). Tellis (1997) also indicated that “Stake (1995) argued for another approach centered on a more intuitive, empirically-grounded generalization. He termed it "naturalistic" generalization. His argument was based on the ‘harmonious relationship between the reader's experiences and the case study itself. He expected that the data generated by case studies would often resonate experientially with a broad cross section of readers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon’” (Introduction section, para. 9).

My intent is that through naturalistic generalization, the readers will become intrigued and more aware that there are many challenges faced by First Nation education directors. Second that there are complexities and underlying racism that many mainstream educators do not realize affected the implementation of ICIE as was rolled out by the Canadian government. And that First Nations are not solely responsible for the state of education on First Nations. To ensure the reliability of this research so that later investigators can follow the same procedures, I have kept interview notes and closely followed scripts for case study investigators for all aspects of my research.

After reviewing previous superintendent surveys that were conducted in more mainstream populations, the survey items were revised based on the current realities in First Nations. Having worked as an education director for 12 years helped with the selection of the items used. The survey was initially piloted (including having the questions reviewed) and feedback was provided by a former education director to fine tune it prior to distribution and to help increase both the validity and reliability of the education director survey.

### ***3.5. Data-Gathering Procedures***

In Alberta, Canada, there are 46 First Nations. These First Nations are grouped according to Treaties signed with the Crown; Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8. Treaty 7 has five First Nations located in southern Alberta. Treaty 6 has 17 First Nations and is located in central Alberta. Treaty 8 has 24 First Nations and is located in Northern Alberta.

Within the Treaty 7 First Nations, (see Table 3.1) there are five education directors who oversee 19 schools. Within Treaty 6 First Nations, there are 15 education directors, and two others who oversee their respective First Nations (principal and education leader) who oversee 27 schools. Within Treaty 8 First Nations, there are 14 education directors and ten others who oversee their respective First Nations (Employment and Training officers, band and education managers, education portfolio holders, education coordinators, consultants) that oversee 15 schools.

Each Treaty area has unique characteristics and varies according to land mass, organizational structures, and population. Those characteristics, in effect, dictate how education is administered. In Treaty 7, their five First Nations have larger land masses and are not in close proximity to each other and have substantively more transportation costs. They do have larger school populations that enable them to have economy of scale second-level services. Second-

level services include but are not limited to special education services, in-service training for teachers, student recognition, teacher professional development, technology support, tuition agreement negotiation, language, and culture curriculum development. Treaty 6 First Nations vary in amongst themselves in terms of land mass and population (with some schools as large as Treaty 7 schools while others are significantly smaller in land mass, population and school size). Some First Nations are in very close proximity to each other and every First Nation has at least one First Nation school. Treaty 8 is located across central/northern Alberta, encompassing/representing many smaller First Nations (many of their students attend schools off-reserve, many of those First Nations do not have their own education directors but rather they have three larger education organizations that assist in administering their education programs and funding). Twelve out of the 24 First Nations have schools located on their First Nations. Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 do not have as many economies of scale to offer second-level services.

Each Treaty area also has a regional management organization (RMO) that is more political in nature and, for example, works with the Chiefs from each respective First Nation on education matters. The RMOs work closely with the federal government to oversee federally mandated education programs and with the provincial government on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement. The MOU is a partnership between Treaty 6, 7, and 8 First Nations, province of Alberta and the federal government to collectively address all aspects of education system in order to achieve better educational outcomes for First Nations children in Alberta implementation.

In total, there are 46 First Nations with 34 education directors and 61 First Nation schools.

**TABLE 3.1***Alberta First Nations, Numbers of Education Directors and Schools*

Treaty Area	Education Directors	Other		First Nations	First Nations with schools
		Education Authorities	Schools		
Treaty 6	15	2	27	17	17
Treaty 7	5	0	19	5	5
Treaty 8	14	10	15	24	12
Total	34	12	61	46	34

*3.5.1. Seeking Chief and Council Approval*

In respect to the authority within First Nations and the sensitivity around conducting research in First Nations, prior to any contact being made with any education authorities, the goals were to make First Nation leadership personnel aware of the study I was undertaking and what it would entail. As stated earlier, in Alberta, the First Nations are organized by three Treaty areas (Treaty 6, 7, 8). In each Treaty area, there are regional management organizations noted earlier that have websites listing the First Nations, the Chiefs of each of the First Nations and the addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and websites. This information was used to make contacts with each Chief in Alberta. At that time, in the preparation for that phase of the study, and given that I was conducting this study from another province, arrangements were made to have a toll free number so that all contact could be made to me without costs to the Chiefs and education directors. As well, I had a fax machine installed in my home so all faxes could be sent directly to my home.

In mid-June 2012, an e-mail (see Appendix A: E-Mail Invitation to Chiefs) was sent to each Chief outlining the nature of the study and requesting their approval for me (the researcher) to invite the Chief's education director to take part in this study. In the e-mail, each Chief was informed that the researcher would telephone (see Appendix B: Telephone Script for First Nation Chiefs) them in the following week so as to allow them to ask specific questions and make any other relevant requests of the researcher. Also in the e-mail/Appendix A there was an attachment (Support for the Research to Proceed) for the Chiefs (who approve of the research) to sign and return to the researcher by fax or email—i.e., written confirmation that they supported the research proceeding.

Follow-up calls were also subsequently made to each respective First Nation band/administration office. However, with First Nations Chief and Council taking summer breaks from their duties in July and in August, there was very minimal response to emails sent to Chiefs. As well, Chiefs do not keep regular office hours and are only in band offices for scheduled meetings (so follow-up calls were also not very successful in terms of establishing direct contact with some Chiefs).

In July, with my change in employment and relocation to another province along with registrar issues, this study was temporarily halted until Mid-November 2012. In December 2012, Chief contact lists were updated (as many First Nations hold elections in November and there were changes in FN leadership). Another email was then sent by me to the 46 FN Chiefs and that was followed up with telephone call. Five FN Chiefs, when finally contacted, provided verbal approvals and/or requested emails to be resent, which was done by me.

In January, after numerous attempts to make contacts with remaining FN Chiefs, and in consultation with the Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board (CHREB), at the University of

Calgary, a decision was made to contact Alberta First Nation education directors' directly rather than further delay this study by waiting for Chief written approval. The decision meant it would be at the discretion of each respective education director so far as any FN approval process they would want followed.

All Chief contact and contact notes were kept in hard copy and documented on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

### *3.5.2. First Nation Education Director Survey*

After conducting a detailed web search, contact information on each First Nation was acquired, either through their First Nation website, the Alberta Education website or AANDC government website, Alberta Region. The information acquired included the name of each education director on each First Nation, their emails, addresses, and phone/fax numbers. Of particular help was the "First Nation and Metis Settlement Education Director Contact List" January 2013, from the Alberta Government. This list is a public document as an outcome of on the Freedom of Information Act in Alberta (Alberta Education, 2013).

With this information at hand, all 46 education directors were sent an email in February, 2013 (see Appendix D: Invitation letter to Participate in Survey) with the applicable consent form (i.e., the semi-structured interviews were conducted only with those First Nation Directors who administer Indian control of education for on-reserve schools) (see Appendix E: Survey Consent Form; and Appendix F: E-mail Invitation to Participate in Interview; and Appendix G: Survey and Interview Consent Form). The survey (see Appendix H: First Nation Education Director Survey) focused on questions in relation to the roles and responsibilities of education directors. The survey (when field tested with a former education director), took 11 minutes to

complete. Education directors were informed that the survey would take approximately 15 minutes to complete. A follow-up email was sent between March and April with regard to the survey. There were some education directors who indicated that they were unable to open email attachments so the survey was faxed to them. The use of E-mail and facsimile of documents was necessary for reasons of efficiency, due to the significant geographic distance between all First Nations reservations in Alberta. A contact log was kept of all the contacts made either by telephone, fax or email with all 46 FN education directors. Documentation was also kept in a excel spread sheet with contact notes of each contact made.

### *3.5.3. First Nation Education Director Semi-structured Interview*

For this phase of the study, 33 education directors from these First Nations were approached to take part in semi-structured interviews. The 33 directors (of the 45) were those who have responsibility for schools on their reserves. Those First Nation education directors, who administer Indian control of education on-reserve (i.e., the reserve has First Nation schools), were asked to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview.

Between March and April 2013, after the initial emails were sent, follow-up telephone calls were also made (see Appendix C: Telephone Script: Education Directors) to 34 respective education directors. Through these calls I introduced myself and/ indicated the purposes of my study and invited them to consider taking part in an interview.

Between April and June 2013, when a Director agreed to take part in an interview (of approximately 1 hour), a mutually agreed date and time was arranged for that (see Appendix I: Interview Questions). Each education director was asked if the interview could be recorded and 100% of them agreed to the recording. Each interview was recorded using the Cyberlink Youcam 3.5 program on my laptop computer. This program captured the audio of the interview.

This program provided the time enabled transcribing to be done more quickly and as I can put actual minute/seconds per question, analytic information of each question was also captured.

#### *3.5.4. Record Checks*

The recorded interviews were transcribed and returned via email to the relevant participant for review. Each participant was invited to delete, add, or amend any of their comments prior to it being used in this research. There were no issues raised with the transcriptions sent.

#### *3.5.5. Document Analysis*

The document analysis was done through reviewing education director job descriptions, school authority policies and procedures, federal government reports, Alberta Education reports including their online public documents, and any other specific reports and evaluations conducted previously that pertained to the purposes of this study. In addition, a number of websites containing pertinent background documents to First Nations in Alberta and documents from the AANDC website (on educational programs for First Nations in Alberta) were collected and analyzed. The documents provided demographics information on First Nations populations, the number of schools, and demographic details of education authorities.

### ***Population and Sample***

#### *3.5.6. First Nation Education Survey*

At the onset of the initial survey emails sent to all 46 First Nations education directors in Alberta, five education directors declined to participate in the survey and interview. As well, two other education directors left or were removed from their position during the time of data collection. Of all the education directors, 14 participated in the survey (see Table 3.2, Alberta First Nations

Education Director Participation). This accounted for 30% of all 46 education directors. The fourteen education directors who participated in the survey represented 20 First Nations. Given that there were some education directors who agreed to participate oversaw more than one First Nation, the sample of directors represented 43% of all First Nations in Alberta (see Table 3.2, Alberta First Nations Represented in Research).

**TABLE 3.2**

*Numbers of Alberta First Nations Represented in Research*

Data Gathering Procedures	Participants	First Nations Represented	Total First Nations	First Nation Represented %
Survey	14	20	46	43
Semi Structured Interview	8	14	34	41

### *3.5.7. Semi Structured Interview*

For the semi structured interviews, of the 34 First Nations who had First Nations schools, twelve education directors (see Table 3.3, Alberta First Nations Education Director/Participant) agreed to be interviewed from these First Nations. Eight education directors were ultimately interviewed as four education directors were unable to be reached to set up an interview. Of the eight education directors who participated, seven agreed to a telephone interview while one education director requested a hard copy of the interview questions and then returned typed responses to each question. The eight education directors who participated in the semi-structured interviews represented fourteen First Nations. As noted earlier, there were some education

directors who oversaw more than one First Nation. This was 41% of First Nations that administer ICIE directly (see Table 3.2, Alberta First Nations Represented in Research).

**TABLE 3.3**

*Alberta First Nations Education Director Participation*

Data Gathering Procedures	Invited Participants	Participants	Education Director/Other Participation %
Survey	46	14	30
Semi-Structured Interview	33	8	24

*Informed Consent and other Ethical Considerations*

*3.5.8. Informed Consent*

Participants were informed in the Consent Form that their participation in this study (including the interview process, and the review of the transcript) was completely voluntary. In the consent form, participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty at any time during the study. The consent form also informed each participant that if they withdrew, all data collected until the point of the withdrawal would be retained but the data will not be used.

In any one-to-one discussions with prospective participants, and at the outset of my interview, the participants were informed that they may refuse to participate in the study or portions of the study, decline to answer any interview question for any reason (stated or unstated), and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

After each interview was transcribed, within one month of the interview, the participants received a copy of the transcript of their interview (through an attachment to an e-mail account of their choice). In the email, participants were asked to review their transcript and make any changes (additions, deletions) and to contact the researcher either with or without changes to be made, within three weeks of my sending the material to them. If they did not inform me, I would assume that they have approved the material as it was.

At the end of each interview, I offered to provide an overall explanation of the study's findings at any upcoming relevant Treaty or education administrator's gathering. I promised to send an Executive Summary of my study's findings to all Treaty 6, 7, and 8 Chiefs, and education directors.

#### *3.5.9. Confidentiality and Anonymity*

All the names of participants who returned surveys have been kept confidential. Surveys were numbered for my record and data handling purposes and no names were on the survey pages where responses are shown. Rather, on the first page of the survey, there was a provision for the participant to place his/her name. On the subsequent survey pages (where responses were) no space for names was allocated. This design allowed me to remove the name from the first page of the survey as I received it. I then substituted the name with a code/number. The master list of names and numbers are stored in a locked cabinet separate to where the survey responses are kept.

Initial plans were to have all the relevant participants participate in a one-to-one telephone interview with me with the interview taking place at a time and location convenient to the participant and where his or her responses would be unheard by others. In retrospect, these plans came true for all who participated.

### *3.5.10. Language*

Although it was anticipated that English would be participants' language of choice for the semi-structured interviews, I was prepared that if there were education directors who were First Nations individuals who prefer to use their own language, I would arrange for a translator (Cree, Dene, etc.) from their First Nation to join in the interview. As I spoke Blackfoot fluently, there was no need for a translator for the Blackfoot speaking First Nations. However, as it happened, the language of choice for all participants was English.

### *3.5.11. Raw Data Access*

As noted earlier, all face sheets on the surveys that showed the participants' name were separated from all other pages of the survey. The participants' data from surveys returned is stored on a personally-owned, password-protected computer accessible only to me, and on a backup USB drive in a locked cabinet assessable only to me. All data will be stored until December 31, 2016, at which time, it will be permanently destroyed.

All participants were assigned a pseudonym by me and this pseudonym was not disclosed to the participants. In order to protect all participants, their First Nations are assigned pseudonyms.

The master list for these data will be stored separately from all other data and will be in a locked cabinet in a locked room until December 31, 2016.

### *3.5.12. Assumptions*

The following assumptions were made in relation to this study:

1. All education directors in First Nations communities will answer honestly
2. All surveys will be administered correctly

### *3.5.13. Limitations*

As results may not be easily generalized beyond the cases studied (Yin, 2008), there may be some threat to the external validity. There was demographic and other different educational organization within each First Nations specific to this study..

### *3.5.14. Delimitations*

The findings of this study will be limited to the province of Alberta and all data gathering were administered only to the education directors in First Nations working within Alberta.

## **3.6. Data Analysis**

Data analysis consisted of a detailed description of each case and its setting. Data collected from the surveys, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were put into themes through coding, condensing the coding and representing the data in figures, tables, and discussion (Cresswell, 2007). The use of the data analysis spiral (data managing; reading, memoing; describing, classifying, interpreting; representing, visualizing) were integral in the data analysis process for this study. The process included categorical aggregation, identification of patterns, cross case synthesis and naturalistic generalizations.

The survey consisted of all close-ended questions: questions 1, 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, and 5b were numerical items; questions 2 and 3 were categorical items; questions 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were Likert scale type items; question 4 was a four-point, descriptive rating scale type, forced choice item; question 8, 9, and 10 were 4 point, descriptive rating scale items with a neutral type item and the last portion of the survey were two rank order scales each with ten ordinal items. The interview questions consisted of nine semi-structured questions.

**TABLE 3.4**

*A Match of Research Questions, Corresponding Sources of Information and Corresponding Data Analysis/Reporting Procedures*

Research Questions	Corresponding Sources of Information from Survey and Interviews conducted	Corresponding Data Analysis/Reporting Procedures
1) What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?	<p>Survey - Education Director Task - most important and most time consuming</p> <p>8. Roles and responsibilities of education director</p> <p>Interview - 4. Understanding of education directors' work in the age of accountability is important. Would you please describe your reporting process, outlining who education directors are accountable to and report to on a daily, monthly, and yearly time frame.</p>	<p>descriptive analysis, data matrix</p> <p>categorical aggregation, identification of patterns, cross case synthesis and naturalistic generalizations.</p>
2) What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?	<p>survey - Questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 which addresses general, personnel, political, educational and economic challenges faced by education directors</p> <p>Interview - Questions 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d which address the personnel, economic, political, educational challenges and how they were</p>	<p>descriptive analysis, data matrix</p> <p>categorical aggregation, identification of patterns, cross case</p>

	overcome	synthesis and naturalistic generalizations.
3) In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?	<p>Survey - Question 7 address the community and federal government support for Indian Control of Indian Education</p> <p>Interview - Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 address strategies for FN education directors coming into the job, creating more effective schools and the ways in which the effects of poverty shape what education directors do and the progress of First Nations and adding anything else to the topic</p>	<p>descriptive analysis, data matrix</p> <p>categorical aggregation, identification of patterns, cross case synthesis and naturalistic generalizations.</p>

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Data analyses were carried out throughout the course of this study. A binder was kept of contacts made to each individual First Nation Chief and education director. Notations were made as contacts were established. The binder functioned as a chronological record as all contacts with participants and potential participants were noted and dated. Two large matrixes were made detailing responses by both Chiefs and education directors, dates, and notations of each contact. Several journals were kept by me in relation to the education director interviews.

### ***3.7. Summary***

Chapter Three considered the study research design, research methodology, generalization, reliability and validity, data gathering procedures, population, sample, informed consent, other ethical considerations, and data analysis. Chapter Four is divided into seven sections that include; the Introduction, Alberta First Nation Multi-site case study, the Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta, Research Question 1, Research Question 2, Research Question 3, and a Chapter Summary. The purpose of each section of Chapter Four is outlined below.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

*“ really didn’t know my job description. Sometimes I feel like a band administrator and sometimes I feel like the superintendent of the school. I’m always doing stuff around the band office and don’t have time to go to the school to see what really goes on. When there is a serious problem in the school, the band holds me responsible and it’s only then that the Chief and Council realize that I’m the Education Coordinator”*

(Agbo, 2005, p. 310)

### **4.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand the multi-site administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors and whether these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children.

A further determination was to study the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8) who administer to First Nation schools.

The sample of First Nation education directors who participated in this study was 16. Fourteen of the 16 completed the First Nation Education Survey and eight of the 16 participated in the interviews. The surveys were distributed and collected between February 2013 and October 2013. The telephone interviews took place between April 2013 and June 2013.

Chapter Four presents the findings of both the interviews and the survey conducted with those First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8) who have First Nations children in their schools' student population. The chapter also reports on the challenges the directors noted that they experienced in the course of fulfilling their job duties and responsibilities. A summary of the findings (broken down into topics related to the research questions) will be provided.

Chapter Four is divided into seven sections—Introduction, Alberta First Nation multi-site case study, the demographics of education director in Alberta, Research Question 1, Research

Question 2, Research Question 3, and a summary. The purpose of each section of Chapter Four is outlined below.

Section Two provides a demographic snapshot of education directors in Alberta who are currently administering Indian Control of Indian Education. The demographic data include their age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Section Three is intended to profile each education director/participant and provide a summary of interview questions asked of them. The questions pertained to their roles and responsibilities, and challenges faced, such as poverty in First Nations communities, recommendations about coming onto the job to other education directors and what would make an effective school on First Nations. Section Four provides findings in relation to Research Question 1—What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta? Section Five provides findings in relation to Research Question 2—What contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations’ schools? Section Six provides findings in relation to Research Question 3—In what ways have First Nations’ communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education? Section Seven is to provide a summary of Chapter Four and an introduction to Chapter Five.

#### ***4.2. Alberta First Nations Multi-site Case Study***

Case study research is often criticized for the limited sample size or small number of investigated cases which is said to limit the generalization of the findings (that is external validity). There are, however, some research investigations that must rely on a small or modest sample size due to the population (in this case education directors) being small in the first place.

Across Canada there are over 617 First Nations that are recognized by AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013a). In the province of Alberta, there

are 46 First Nations out of which 34 First Nations operate their own schools. Over 30 years ago, First Nations fought the federal government to have control over the education of their children (ICIE). For many First Nations communities, that notion of control included being able to provide schools on First Nations reserves in order to educate their children. In understanding the current administration of ICIE on First Nations in Alberta, the focus of this study was on the education directors of the ICIE. At the onset of this study 33 directors were invited to participate. Twelve agreed to participate in the study however, only eight subsequently set an interview date and time for the telephone interview. The eight education directors comprised four males and four females. The ethnic make-up of the sample included First Nation, Caucasian, and Other. The interviews were completed between April 1, 2013 and June 30, 2013. All of the interviews were done via telephone. With the exception of one, all interviews were conducted in each of education directors' place of work. Prior to the day of the interviews, all participants were e-mailed a letter explaining the study and a three-page informed consent form. Those participants signed and faxed back the informed consent forms. In this study, each education director was asked nine common-to-all questions in what was a semi-structured interview format. The nine common open-ended questions were asked in order to engage the interviewee in a discussion on the topic and elicit opinions and responses related to the topic.

The results of the education director interviews are presented as individual case profiles. Due to ethical and confidentiality considerations in relation to the education director (for example with regard to having a small population to draw a sample from) the First Nation background information of each respective participant is not used in the narratives. All interviewees will be referred to as ED (Education Director) along with a number assigned.

### ***4.3. ED1***

ED1 was interviewed at length for 53 minutes. ED1 is a female education director whose ethnicity is First Nation. The first question asked her to indicate her key roles and responsibilities. ED1 indicated that she oversaw not only a First Nation School, but also the Nations day care, postsecondary, and tuition agreements. When asked about what helped her in her first month on the job, she indicated that job “shadowing” and asking a lot of questions to the departing education director plus reviewing numerous documents and reports. In terms of education and background, she indicated that her formal education gave her a good foundation for her work and assisted her in understanding the provincial education system along with the First Nation education system. She stated both systems “are completely different.” In terms of accountability, ED1 outlined the reporting requirements in her role as education director. For her, it involved daily reporting to school and central office staff, day care, transportation; and monthly reporting to her supervisor, the band administrator and Chief and Council; and biannually to community. She felt that getting information out to key stakeholders was beneficial and improved the communication process between herself and others. ED1 indicated that the main shortcoming of that work is “as much as you try and engage people sometimes they don’t want to be engaged, they don’t want to come, there’s low attendance.”

When asked about challenges, ED1 pointed out that the biggest challenge faced was the economic challenge “not having adequate resources and enough funding to ensure that you need to do what you can do, our staff are underpaid ... special education programming is underfunded.”

When asked about political challenges, ED1 stated that “for the most part, Chief and Council have actually been very good in letting the program managers run their programs.” ED1

indicated that when there are Chief and Council issues that she disagreed with, she just had to “really stick to my guns and say no.” ED1 pointed out that living in the FN community can be stressful especially if there are familial relations there and that when some decisions made, not everyone would be in agreement. In those situations, she stated “that gets really tough, it really bears heavy on your shoulder sometimes.”

When asked about what strategies she would recommend to improve the effectiveness of education directors in First Nations coming onto the job, she indicated having good relationships with people. She also noted that if you are from the community, you know what your community needs and that it is important to build capacity within the community because when others come in, “you’re not sure how long of a time you’re going to get with them” and “how much vested interest in the community [they have] in the same way that you do when you’re from the community.” ED1 also stressed another strategy was getting to know your Chief and Council and that you have to lobby them. She acknowledged as well how important it is to have a good relationship with them as there will be times that they will be needed for support.

Other strategies ED1 recommended to improve the effectiveness of education directors were to first have the funding in place, and then to work toward recruiting qualified, strong teaching staff. She indicated that because salary grids on First Nation are not on par with those of provincial school districts, teacher and principal recruitment was a challenge. ED1 expressed frustration at INAC’s inadequate funding which has resulted in being unable to ensure having properly qualified staff, sufficient resources, sufficient technologies, and programming. Together, all those factors affected the students, and especially the students who were not graduating. She also stressed that so far as the overall curriculum goes, there needs to be “balance” with our own culture and language curriculum and provincial curriculum in educating

First Nation students. ED1 stated “we have been failing our kids for a long time, they don’t know who they are, they don’t know where we come from, they don’t know their history, they don’t know their language” and the responsibility has been put on the school to remedy this.

When asked about poverty in the community, ED1 indicated that staff members not from community didn’t understand why the students do not attend school and that poverty affects the students. Students don’t attend if they don’t have a lunch, or clean clothing, and sometimes parents are worried about other things and education then, is not a priority. ED1 indicated that progress in First Nations is slow and that they are still feeling the effects of residential school and there is no trust in any schools including those on reserves from parents—and sometimes students.

When asked if there was anything else to add, ED1 referred to the accountability and reporting question (stated earlier in the interview) and stated that reporting to INAC is challenging and when combined with all the other duties of an education director, it is very difficult in terms of time and energy. She also felt that people in First Nation communities did not understand that being committed and dedicated, you can “run yourself ragged sometimes just to make sure things are in place.” ED1 mentioned that working together with other First Nations educators at the Regional Management Organization (RMO) level had brought about improvement with student achievement. It had also helped with the First Nation Student Success Program (FNSSP) as there has been a stronger sense of teamwork and a sense that “we are all in this together.”

#### ***4.4. ED2***

ED2 was interviewed at his home and the length of this interview was an hour and 21 minutes.

ED2 is a male education director whose ethnicity is listed as Other. The first question asked was to indicate his key work roles and responsibilities as education director. ED2 indicated the main responsibility was budgeting. ED2 felt that teacher recruitment was another major responsibility as about one-fourth of the teachers leave every year from that particular First Nation. As well, he indicated that training for teachers and support staff from the community was also a big part of the job and working with the school board.

When asked about what assisted him in his first month on the job, ED2 stated that having been at different First Nations, it depended upon which First Nation community he was with—it varied. That was because some First Nations are very well organized and have an education director job description, policy manual, salary grid, etc. to use, but others are still struggling to develop those because the community “has internal turmoil” and are worse off. In terms of education and background, ED2 felt that the formal education system did not prepare him for the job as education director on a First Nation.

With regard to accountability and reporting requirements, ED2 stated that everyone he works with wants accountability, including himself. He indicated that he answered to the federal government, Chief and Council, the education organization and the school board along with being accountable to the school staff and students. He felt that although he was striving for accountability, sometimes the school board had different priorities. He felt that the shortcomings in this related, in part, to the fact that even though First Nations have less funding than provincial schools and have many obstacles, there still should be FN accountability and that this issue may have to do with board governance issues.

When asked about administrative challenges, ED2 felt that community staff was a challenge as they were not qualified educators and did not always have the work ethic needed, especially in schools. Yet, First Nation hiring practices prevented him from getting the most qualified support staff. In terms of the economic challenges, ED2 indicated that the federal government funding was not adequate considering that teachers in provincial system get 20% more in remuneration. He did clarify that this level of salary differentiation also varies amongst First Nations (as some have other sources of revenue to assist the education department) while in other First Nations, staff run to the bank for fear of getting “the cheques bounced because the money was used for something else.” When asked about political challenges, ED2 indicated that in his role/location, political influence enacted from others makes it very difficult for him to work and harder for him to enforce education policies and procedures.

When asked about what strategies he would recommend, ED2 said the first thing was training and coaching: “There needs to be a mechanism to assist the newly appointed director.” ED2 stated that a new education director should have experience as a teacher and principal in First Nations as they would not survive, given the politics, the complex staffing issues. Also, at a First Nations level he/she would have to have some discretion in policy implementation. When asked about what would create more effective schools, ED2 indicated that board governance needs to be addressed as it impacts students and staff. He indicated that he liked local control of education but the board has to be productive and not engage in nepotism.

When asked about poverty, ED2 stated that in First Nations, with so many people in poverty, education was not seen as important as getting food on the table. It produced a bad cycle, as parents were not educated, did not promote education as being important to their children even if it serves as a mean for children to get out of poverty. He also indicated that there

was not proper fiscal management in some First Nations. ED2 felt that in his First Nations, they relied solely on the government for monies and that was never going to be enough.

When asked if there was anything else to add to the topic, ED2 replied that he understood that First Nations are against the federal government's First Nation Education Act and although he saw the logic on First Nations control of education, he strongly felt that accountability has to be there. ED2 stressed that parents also must be held accountable, ensuring that students attend school. He again brought up board interference as being a major hindrance to getting the job done as education director. He also made a suggestion to the researcher that when this research was done, I should set up training for principals, for education directors, and for school boards and that he would "be the first one to sign up for our board, you train them."

#### ***4.5. ED3***

ED3 was interviewed at his office and the length of this interview was 47 minutes. ED3 is a male education director whose ethnicity is listed as Caucasian. ED3 stated that he was responsible for all the education, from daycare to adult post-secondary and training in his First Nation. He stated that with a role in this area as big this, he needed to be able to pull it all together and that although that work may be not what traditional educational leadership is about, what he did and where he works does have its strengths and opportunities.

When ED3 was first on the job, he indicated there was nothing in place other than policy and procedures related to the First Nation Human Resources and the Nation's five-year sustainability plan. ED3 stated that his considerable years in administration in the public education system were transferable and having previous interactions with First Nations was of helped him prepare to meet the demands of the directorship. However, he stated that nothing

“prepared me in the difference in funding methods; that is all a big learning curve.” He also did not understand the role and functions of the tribal Councils and AANDC programs.

ED3 indicated that he had a wide variety of accountability requirements from leadership down to parents and children. For example, he is accountable and reports monthly to the executive director of operations and education committee while others report to him on a monthly basis. ED3 felt that the strength to this was that communication was critical and given all the different areas of responsibility under him, he needed to bring everything in line rather than having everyone create their own little “islands.” A shortcoming he felt was that the data gathering to measure his success in accountability was missing. He stated you have to start from the ground up in First Nations. He stressed that accountability was everywhere in the provincial system but that the federal government was not equipped to run the First Nation education system and be accountable. “They are more concerned if you have the right words, in the right box in the reporting form rather than what the words say.”

When ED3 was asked about administrative challenges, he indicated that some longstanding employees were afraid of change and (as director he knew change theory, and knew it would take a long time to achieve). He noted that the speed in which decisions could be made in First Nations may be slower, and not to expect anyone to be on board with a director’s time schedule. Also, dealing with the bureaucracy of AANDC was frustrating as “you deal with the last rung of the ladder and you can’t even get your hand near the top ones.” When it came to RMOs, he felt that the financial structures were cumbersome and hindered those grappling with a more rapid pace and forward thinking plan.

In terms of the economic challenges, ED3 indicated the disparity between the cost of the tuition agreements with the public school system and the revenue from the federal government

were of concern. Another economic challenge was the overstaffing in FN schools as it was the only employment around.

When asked about political challenges, ED3 indicated that you can't overcome them, "the best you can do is survive within them or around them." Other challenges he has faced were interference from Chief and Council with administrative decisions.

When asked about what strategies were needed to improve the effectiveness of education directors, ED3 recommended a thorough review of personal and contractual policies, visionary statements, leadership sustainability plans, an understanding of AANDC terminology and function, revenue sources and full academic review of schools, salary review, financial status, and spending time in the community. Also, he indicated it was important to understand that "everything won't go your way, slow down."

When asked about what would create more effective schools, ED3 spent quite a bit of time responding to that question: getting the best person in Canada for the job, then empower them to make the change, have competitive salary and benefits, step away from tuition agreements, and network with all First Nation departments to effect change, increase pride and dignity in First Nation culture, were his key suggestions.

When asked about poverty, ED3 stated that poverty and social situations were heartbreaking yet he believed children are resilient. He indicated that they fund everything in relation to school field trips so that no student misses out on the experience and educational leaders "don't single anyone out." ED3 also felt that role models were needed and "strong students are like gold, you have to get them through."

When asked if there was anything else he could add to the topic, ED3 replied he was very pleased that this study was happening and pointed out that "there are many other education

directors out there and what kind of guidance do they get?” He also stated that the province has to extend more of the supports provided to public school systems to First Nation schools.

#### ***4.6. ED4***

ED4 was interviewed at her office and the length of this interview was 27 minutes. ED4 is a female education director whose ethnicity is listed as First Nation. ED4 indicated that administrating tuition agreements, expanding the services at one school, policy development, board relations, strategic and system planning, providing leadership in schools, building partnerships with other provincial school districts and RMOs were some of her key responsibilities.

When ED4 was first hired, she indicated that she did not get a lot of direction. She and her assistant struggled to stay on top everything with so many AANDC program deadlines,. She indicated she would have preferred to have been given clarity as to the roles and responsibilities of the job. ED4’s education background and experience included having an administrative background starting as an assistant principal on a First Nation community and working up from there. In terms of the workload, she felt that “there should be three or four of us doing this job, instead of two of us.” In terms of accountability, ED4 reports to the school board, to the Chief and Council (two or three times per year), the band finance department, and federal government to meet program requirements. She felt the strength in her role was being accountable for the modest dollars they got and being effective and providing programming to students and staff. The shortcomings were insufficient funding to provide for staffing, teacher salaries, and resources for students and support programs.

When ED4 was asked about administrative challenges, she indicated that office space and location had been a challenge and central office staffing shortages were concerns. Economic

challenges for ED4 were the costly repairs to the school facilities. ED4 felt that one political challenge she faced was the school board not getting the support from the political leadership, “they always say education is one of their priorities but in terms of providing the support, I don’t see it there.” As for other challenges, ED4 expressed frustration at the bureaucracy at the Nation level and at AANDC in relation to developing new school plans.

ED4 suggested that having a well-organized orientation developed whether at the First Nation level or at the RMO level was needed to improve the effectiveness of education directors in First Nations as they come onto the job. To create more effective schools, ED4 felt that literacy and numeracy programs at the younger grades were vital and having communities more technology fit so that there could be flexibility in terms of how education is provided. ED4 again mentioned the biggest drawback to these elements was funding. She also expressed concern about what happened to students after they left school permanently.

When asked about the effects of poverty and how she responded to issues of child poverty, ED4 responded that they provided as many supports as they could to students including having an alternative school setting. However she realized that it did not change the poverty in the First Nations community. She stated that they were doing a lot of home-school partnership building and had hired liaison workers to oversee that initiative.

When asked if she wanted to share anything else relevant to the topic, ED4 expressed that having to attend to federal government requirements was challenging and stated “it would have been really easy if we didn’t have all the extra things to do.”

#### **4.7. ED5**

ED5 was interviewed at his office and the length of this interview was 42 minutes. ED5 is a male education director whose ethnicity is listed as Caucasian. ED5's key responsibilities are the implementation of the K–12 education of the community from Alberta Education and implementation of the community way of life and culture. When ED5 was posed with the question regarding what process and procedures were in place to assist him, he indicated that “at the level we are talking about, I should come in with a lot of knowledge of what to do” and that there was a certain amount of self-responsibility to find out information. He indicated that he was provided with the administration HR manual, education authority manual, staff lists, and told where other organizational documents were available.

When asked about his education background and experience, ED5 indicated that his years of being a principal in both the public school system and First Nation, and in more than one school, in more than one community, let him see many different ways to operate. He felt that his years of experience in living within the communities and being immersed in those cultures gave him knowledge and a foundation to what he does. However, he indicated that he is still learning.

ED5 reports to the First Nation CEO, school board, Chief and Council. Part of his professional accountability involved working collaboratively with the school principals. ED5 also listed accountability to the parents in terms of students, by academic results was important and stated that “if a student does not feel comfortable and don't think things are effective or meaningful, they have a vote, they vote with their feet, they leave.” ED5 noted the strength of that process was that when it is working well, they would hear from the grassroots people in the community. A shortfall to this process was that sometimes it can be personal, to the extent that

decisions (by community leadership with regard to education) were made on a personal level, rather than a professional level.

The key administrative challenge ED5 highlighted was the need to have more central office staff. The key economic challenge ED5 faced was INAC funding. When he first came onto the job, ED5 drafted a budget of what was actually needed in the schools to meet the students' education needs. He then sat with the accountants and realized that the funds needed were exactly 20% over the funding provided by INAC. He pointed out that this lack of funding was being "compensated on the backs of staff" and that staff were overworked. A key political challenge related to the fact that sometimes leaders wanted to be part of the administrative decisions, wanted jobs for family and he stated it all came from the fact that "this is a place of poverty, economic parity and severity and makes living difficult for people, it means they have to ask for things." Other challenges faced, included not having enough support staff and making professional certified staff "understand that they are held to professional standards and accountability, the same as if they worked in a provincial school or not."

In terms of strategies to improve the effectiveness of education directors as they come onto the job, ED5 recommended that First Nations should be hiring people who are qualified, have been around and are strong in their positions. Then it would be just be a matter of having an orientation and handbook. ED5 also indicated that there is a handbook developed by AANDC Alberta Region providing, for example, deadline dates and program information. With regard to improving school effectiveness, he stated that having the power to evaluate and remove people who were not effective in their position, was needed "we have to make decisions based on what's best for the children and what's effective."

ED5 stated that the far-reaching effect of poverty is underestimated in First Nations' communities and that when students come to school, "they can't concentrate, they can't focus, it's not ADHD, it's poverty, they are coming to school with not enough food in their belly." He also indicated that it is not only in the home, there is poverty in the community, "our kids will lose 5% of their attendance just because the roads won't be plowed or the roads will be washed out or the buses broke down and not enough money to fix them." ED5 also shared that they spend 650,000 on lunches to "fix poverty, to fix nutrition" and that if AANDC provided the needed 20% more funding, they would be able to hire more teachers and support staff.

#### ***4.8. ED6***

ED6 was interviewed at her office and the length of this interview was 27 minutes. ED6 is a female education director whose ethnicity is listed as First Nation. ED6 is listed her key responsibilities as preparing for bi-monthly meetings with her education committee (where education issues and quality of education are discussed), managing the post-secondary program along with her responsibilities for a school. ED6 indicated that the process and procedures in place related to the education vision, mandate, policies and procedures, terms of reference and various report documents. She indicated that being from the region; she was familiar with the First Nations and people.

When asked about her education background and experience, ED6 indicated that she had formal education (attaining her university education degree) and continued to be a lifelong learner. She also stated that she is fluent in her First Nation language, and, being raised in a traditional upbringing, had retained her values. She had over 30 years' experience working in various capacities from teacher assistant to education director and had held a number of political offices as well.

ED6 reports to the board of directors comprised of Chiefs and Council members and reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer providing monthly reports. She also deals with INAC, ensuring reporting requirements are met by First Nations. She and the CEO have worked collaboratively with Alberta Education in the development of language programs and ensuring that reports were provided to the board of directors for approval. The strengths of this process is running an efficient office, with good reporting mechanisms, knowing polices and “representing people respectfully.” ED6 did not feel there were any major shortcomings however she noted that sometimes new board members may not understand the education area and she needed to ensure that board members became informed. She did that by sharing information with them on a one-to-one basis and in group meetings.

The administrative challenges ED6 faces are in the administration of the work plans developed. They were hindered by having insufficient funding. The economic challenges ED6 indicated in her geographic area concerned the fact that is was costly to host workshops, buying resources, and attending meetings. She also indicated that she does not deal with any political challenges. ED6 expressed concern that students leaving First Nations entering Provincial schools are academically behind most non-indigenous students. She also felt that the provincial schools were not providing quality education for the First Nations students either.

In terms of strategies to improve the effectiveness of education directors as they come onto the job, ED6 replied that development of a business plan and an operation plan to identify the goals they want to work on would assist. She also advised that they keep away from First Nation politics and always ensure they have a paper trail linked to their key work contributions and reporting adequately to relevant groups and individuals. To have effective schools, ED6 said

there was a need to develop partnerships with the community and with education institutions. As well, she indicated it was important for education directors to be visible in the community.

In discussing poverty, ED6 felt the need to reach out to students, gain their trust and assist them in completing their education/career so they could ultimately have a better lifestyle. She stressed the need for student employment after completing school “we need to work on getting some work people in the next ten years.”

When asked if there were anything else she would add relevant to the topic, she indicated that to improve the quality of education we need partnerships, collaboration with funders, government, industry, First Nation leadership, parents, and youth. ED6 also stressed the need to focus on developing and implementing yearly work plans when planning day to day activities so that by year end, goals and objectives outlined in the work plan have been accomplished.

#### ***4.9. ED7***

ED7 was interviewed at her office and the length of this interview was 45 minutes in length. ED7 is a female education director whose ethnicity is listed as First Nation. ED7’s key responsibilities include overseeing provincial tuition agreements, special education provisions, nominal roll and AANDC program reporting requirements for the First Nations. Indirectly the funding and programming for schools on First Nations was overseen by her.

When ED7 was posed with the question of what process and procedures were in place to fulfill those responsibilities, she indicated in her position she basically developed most of them from scratch. As well, she observed that her position has changed over the years she has been with the organization.

When asked about her education background and experience, ED7 indicated that she started off as a teacher assistant in a provincial school system, later served on local school board,

and worked as an education coordinator for her First Nation prior to coming into current position.

ED7 reports to the board of directors which is comprised of Chiefs and Council members providing monthly reports. She also dealt with INAC, ensuring reporting requirements were met by her First Nations. ED7 mentioned that INAC does not provide training in terms of completing reports and the absence of that often becomes very frustrating. What helps offset this frustration is that she has had years of experience to understand the reporting requirements. A shortfall to this reporting process is that she does not get the support and training she needs to meet reporting requirements.

The administrative challenges ED7 faced concerned the administration of the provincial tuition agreements. Provincial superintendents put pressure on her to find additional funding for students attending provincial schools, particularly with those students with special needs. In that respect, the economic challenges ED7 faced concerned the fact that there is insufficient special education funding. ED7 did not feel that she currently faced any political challenges from either internally or externally based sources.

In terms of strategies to improve the effectiveness of education directors as they come onto the job, ED7 suggested having training, being formally educated, reading policies and procedures of First Nations, and understanding the Alberta School Act, are needed in particular when implementing tuition agreements. ED7 recommended improving school effectiveness, there was a need for First Nation teachers, teacher assistants, and for First Nation teachers to be able to teach courses that are required for students to complete Grade 12.

In discussing poverty, ED7 expressed considerable concern about substance abuse issues in some First Nations communities that affect students, learning, and well-being. She stated that

students in poverty often have poor school attendance rates. To offset that partially, they provide lunch programs at school level.

In discussing other things relevant to the topic, ED7 referred to the need for more central office support. She also claimed she has other job duties not directly related to education, such as meeting obligations to outside organizations (RMOs). In terms of the Education Director handbook she received initially from INAC, it was incomplete as it was missing information about post-secondary. Another issue that ED7 brought up was the fact that INAC was difficult to contact and phone messages often were not returned (which proved to be very frustrating for ED7). Further, that often there were INAC personnel changes and “when stuck, and need help, nobody’s there to help you.” By contrast, she stated often INAC would approach her and request information immediately. ED7 indicated that being First Nation and working for First Nations could be an issue insofar as First Nations would often rather pay and recognize non-First Nation more than a First Nation.

#### ***4.10. ED8***

ED8 was not interviewed as ED8’s preference was to review the semi structured interview schedule and then provide a written response to each question. ED8 is a male education director whose ethnicity is listed as Caucasian. ED8 is responsible for the total operation of the school: this included responsibility for all school administrative and financial matters, liaison with principals, overall education programming, and curriculum development as per his job description.

In answering the first question regarding what processes and procedures were in place during the first two months of his appointment (that were in place to assist in familiarizing himself with the roles and responsibilities of his position) ED8 stated that there were “very few

clear process[es] or procedures. I am able to draw upon my 17 years as a principal with this organization to assist me.” In terms of his educational background and experience, ED8 indicated that, in addition to his 17 years as principal with his First Nation, he had 11 years as a teacher with First Nations.

In describing his reporting process, and, outlining who he was accountable to and reported to on a daily, monthly, and yearly time frame, ED8 provided the following list:

- I report each month to our school board
- I report each year in an open Band Meeting
- I hold once a month meetings with other First Nations Directors
- I report each month to the Nations Board of Directors
- I complete yearly reports to AANDC
- I hold bimonthly meetings with school admin staff
- We have five schools
- I am accountable each day to the staff, students, and community

Further, ED8 stated the strengths in that process were accountability and transparency of the First Nation education system. As well, he referred to garnering feedback from all sources. The shortcomings in that process were the time involved and challenges in providing reports to AANDC.

In looking at the challenges and barriers of his position, ED8 indicated, the key administrative challenges were frequent staff turnover, financial deficits, poor enrollment, and inadequate programing to meet needs of students and community were the key issues. ED8 shared that successes of having a positive or balanced budget, low staff turnover (seven of 126 this year), a 165% increase in FTE students, and increased programing to meet the need of

students and community (including Outreach school, evening classes, transition programs, head start, literacy and numeracy focus, increased culture in schools).

ED8 explained that the significant economic challenge he faced was that they “were in a deficit and I had to take control of the funding for this school district. I had to understand all aspects of AANDC funding both grant and proposal driven sources to access them to their full potential. This is in no way saying that the funding was adequate just that we are able to manage it.”

In terms of significant political challenges, ED8 stated that they “try and be politically neutral while at the same time letting each Chief and Council know how we operate and the policies we operate.” Another significant challenge encountered was creating a work environment that retains staff and commits to them long term with contracts.

ED8 recommends that to improve the effectiveness of education directors in First Nations as they come onto the job, it is necessary to require that they have been in the classroom as a teacher and in an administration position as a principal or vice principal. To create more effective schools in First Nations ED8 additionally suggested that “First Nations have to have full ownership of their education. What, how, and when a curriculum is taught should be between the First Nation and the province, not with AANDC.” ED8 also stressed that AANDC should be a funding source only not an educational policy body and that AANDC needs to match the funding offered at a provincial level.

ED8 explained that the effect of First Nation students living in poverty shapes the type of programming, the social/Home Liaison workers we have employed, the breakfast and lunch programs in place in his schools, and that he has the cooperation between all band departments to

have a “360 view” of families and issues. ED8 added overall, education directors need to understand and embrace the First Nation culture they are working in.

#### ***4.11. Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta***

##### *4.11.1. Age, Gender, Race/ethnicity*

As per the First Nation and Metis Settlement Education Directors Contact List (Alberta Education Document, 2013), in Treaty 6, there are ten female education directors and seven male. In Treaty 7, three of the education directors were female and two were male. In Treaty 8, 16 of the education directors were female and eight were male. Overall, there were 29 female education directors and 17 male education directors at the time of this study. Percentage wise, 63% were female education directors and 37% were male education directors.

In the First Nation Education Directors Survey sent out, of those 46 First Nations, 14 FN education directors participated. Of these 14 education directors, 79% of these directors were 51 years of age or older, 14% 41–50 years of age, and 7% under 40 years of age. Fifty-seven (57) percent of these education directors were female and 43% were male. Fifty-seven (57) of the education directors were First Nation, 36% were Caucasian, and 7% were other ethnicities.

Please note in the ensuing education director interview tables, frequency refers to the number of examples provided by the education directors of topic at hand.

**TABLE 4.5***First Nation Education Directors Survey—Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity (N=14)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
<b>Age</b>		
30 or younger	0	0
31–40	1	7
41–50	2	14
51 or older	11	79
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	6	43
Female	8	57
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
First Nation	8	57
Caucasian	5	36
Other	1	7

*4.11.2. Education Directors Education Background and Years of Experience in Formal Education Roles*

In assessing the years of experience education directors had (Table 4.6), 43% of education directors had from 0–15 years of experience as a teacher, followed by 30% with over 31 years of experience, 14% for both education directors with 16–30 years of experience, and 14% did not respond to the question.

Fifty (50) percent of education directors had 0–5 years of experience as an education director, 36% had 6–10 years of experience, and 14% did not respond to the question.

For years at current position, 58% had 0–5 years of experience, 28% had 6–15 years of experience, and 14% had over 30 years of experience.

**TABLE 4.6**

*First Nation Education Directors Survey—Years of Experience as a Teacher; as a Director; in  
Current Position (N=14)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
<b>Years of teaching experience</b>		
0–5 years	2	14
6–10 years	2	14
11–15 years	2	14
16–20 years	0	0
21–25 years	1	7
26–30 years	1	7
more than 30 years	4	30
no response	2	14
<b>Years of education director experience</b>		
0–5 years	7	50
6–10 years	5	36
11–15 years	0	0
16–20 years	0	0
21–25 years	0	0
26–30 years	0	0
more than 30 years	0	0
no response	2	14
<b>Years of experience in current position</b>		
0–5 years	8	58
6–10 years	3	21
11–15 years	1	7
16–20 years	0	0
21–25 years	0	0

26–30 years	0	0
more than 30 years	2	14

During the interviews, education directors were asked, in terms of their educational background and experience, what in particular prepared them to meet the demands of their directorship. Several themes emerged (see Table 4.7) with the top two themes being years of experience in the public schools system and years of experience in a First Nation.

**TABLE 4.7**

*First Nation Education Directors’ Interview—Educational Background and Experience (N=8)*

Variable	Frequency	
	of Responses	Percentage %
education background	2	10
years of experience in public school system	4	20
peers	1	5
formal education does not give you much	1	5
administrative leadership background	1	5
interactions with First Nations	1	5
having people skills	1	5
nothing prepared me	2	10
years of experience in First Nation	4	20
Life-long learner	1	5
grew up on the land	1	5
fluent in the language/traditional upbringing	1	5
school board member	1	5

Analyzing this by gender, (see Table 4.8) a majority of the male education directors indicated that their years of experience in the public school system prepared them while female

education directors had a variety of earlier work experiences. The influence of their education background and years of experience in First Nations were the top two themes.

**TABLE 4.8**

*First Nation Education Directors' Interview—Educational Background and Experience/Gender Difference (N=8)*

Background/Experience	Female	Male	Percentage %
education background	2	0	10
years of experience in public school system	1	3	20
peers	1	0	5
formal education does not give you much	0	1	5
administrative leadership background	1	0	5
interactions with peers	0	1	5
having people skills	1	0	5
nothing prepared me	1	1	10
years of experience in First Nation	2	2	20
lifelong learner	1	0	5
grew up on the land	1	0	5
fluent in the language and traditional upbringing	1	0	5
school board member	1	0	5
Total	13	8	100

In looking at prior experiences, 36% of education directors' believed that their administrative experiences in schools adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship (see Table 4.9) with 29% strongly agreeing. Twenty-one (21) percent indicated that it was not applicable and 14% strongly disagreed.

When asked if the prior experiences in a central office role adequately prepared them for the challenge of the directorship, 50% of education directors chose a response of N/A (not applicable) while 29% agreed that they did help to prepare them.

In terms of training outside of education, 37% of education directors indicated training outside education adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship, with 14% strongly agreeing. Twenty-one (21) percent indicated that it was not applicable and 28% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. For experience outside of education, 79% agreed and 7% strongly agreed that experience outside of education contributed to adequately preparing them for the challenges of the directorship. Nonetheless, there were 14% of education directors strongly disagreeing and 7% with a response of N/A.

**TABLE 4.9**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Prior Experience Preparedness to Meet the Challenges of the Directorship (N=14)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
<b>Prior administrative experiences in schools</b>		
Strongly Disagree	2	14
Disagree	0	0
Agree	5	36
Strongly Agree	4	29
N/A (not applicable)	3	21
<b>Prior experiences in the central office</b>		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	1	7
Agree	4	29
Strongly Agree	1	7

N/A (not applicable)	7	50
<hr/>		
Training outside education		
Strongly Disagree	2	14
Disagree	2	14
Agree	5	37
Strongly Agree	2	14
N/A (not applicable)	3	21
<hr/>		
Experience outside education		
Strongly Disagree	2	14
Disagree	0	0
Agree	11	79
Strongly Agree	1	7
N/A (not applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		

#### *4.11.3. Education Directors' Responsibility for Number of Enrolled students*

Fifty (50) percent of education directors were responsible for an on-reserve student enrollment between 1–200 FTEs (see Table 4.10), 21% were responsible for an enrollment between 201–400 FTEs and 21% of education directors oversaw an enrollment of 1,000 or more FTE students. Forty-three (43) percent of education directors oversaw an enrollment of between 1–200 (FTE) students who were attending on-reserve school/s, and 30% of education directors had 201–400 students who were attending on-reserve schools. Twenty-one (21) percent of education directors did not respond.

**TABLE 4.10**

*First Nation Education Directors Survey—Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Student Enrollment  
On-Reserve and Off-Reserve (N=14)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
Total FTE students currently on-reserve schools		
1–200	7	50
201–400	3	21
401–600	1	8
601–800	0	0
801–1000	0	0
1000 or more	3	21
no response	0	0
Total FTE students currently off-reserve schools		
1–200	6	43
201–400	4	30
401–600	1	7
601–800	0	0
801–1000	0	0
1000 or more	0	0
no response	3	21

#### *4.11.4. First Nation Process and Procedures in Place*

Education directors interviewed were asked to reflect back to their first month or two on the job as education directors and to describe the processes and procedures that were in place to assist them in familiarizing themselves with the roles and responsibilities of the position. Most mentioned were relevant documents to assist them (see Table 4.11). Examples of this include the job description, policy manual (FN Human Resources and Education), salary grid, staff lists, and

terms of reference in conducting meetings. Just over one in four (or 26%) of education directors indicated that there was no orientation for them while 7% indicated the education director must be proactive, and “be self-responsible.” Another education director indicated "There were three file boxes I had to go through and familiarize [myself], be familiar of how the work was going to look like."

One education director remarked on the varying status of First Nations, "some [First Nations] are doing very well, some over the years, many, many years, are still struggling because the community itself, they are not organized, they have internal turmoil, they don't get along"

**TABLE 4.11**

*First Nation Education Directors’ Interview—First Nation Process and Procedures in Place*

(N=8)

Variable	Frequency of Responses	Percentage %
Relevant documents	11	48
job shadowing	1	4
being proactive	2	7
Pre-requisites	3	13
no orientation	6	26

**4.12. Data Presentation: Research Questions**

The following data are presented to address each of the three research questions. Basic quantitative data are presented in both a summary and table format and qualitative data are presented in a summary and matrix format.

#### ***4.13. Research Question 1***

- 1) What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?

To find out what the key administrative practices of education directors are, in the survey and in the interviews, education directors were asked what their key roles and responsibilities were, who they were accountable to, and to rank most important and most time consuming administrative tasks. They were also asked whether there were problems in the administration of their responsibilities that they had undertaken.

##### *4.13.1. Education Director Key Roles and Responsibilities*

The first question asked of education directors interviewed, related to their key roles and current responsibilities. Based on their responses (see Table 4.12), and using the Survey Item outlining the education director tasks, responses were coded into eight of these tasks. Some responses did not fit into the traditional superintendent administrative tasks: Those were grouped under “Other tasks.” The most frequent responses (12) fit in this, followed by budget and school finance as key roles and responsibilities, curriculum and instructional leadership and school board relations/training/policy.

**TABLE 4.12***First Nation Education Director Interview—Key Roles and Responsibilities (N=8)*

Education Director Tasks (Themes)	Frequency of Responses	Examples
Budget and school finance	6	Provincial tuition; budgeting, proposal writing
Curriculum and Instructional leadership	6	Programming
Parent/community relations	2	External relations
Personnel recruitment/retention	3	Teacher recruitment and retention
Planning and goals formation	3	Day-to-day operations, education/school planning, whole system planning
Professional Growth and Staff Development	5	Staff issues, teacher training/coaching/ mentoring, staff from community
School Board Relations/Training/Policy development	6	Board relations, policy development, strategic planning
School facilities	2	School facilities
Other tasks	12	Transportation, daycare, post- secondary, employment and training, nominal roll, student discipline, student records

*4.13.2. Education Director Accountability*

Education directors interviewed were first posed with this statement: Understanding of education directors' work in the age of accountability is important (and this statement served to orient their thinking and a key area of concern linked to understanding their work experience).

They were then asked to describe their reporting process, outlining who they were accountable to and report, to on a daily, monthly, and yearly time frame. Just over one in four (26%) of responses centered on accountability to their staff followed by 15% of responses regarding accountability to Chief and Council. Band administrator, parents/community, and school board all ranked third in terms of who education directors were accountable to.

When asked about the strengths in that process, some examples of comments ranged from the advantage of having a better communication process, maintaining accountability to government, to parents, to students, and First Nation controlling their education.

When asked about the shortcomings in that process, there was far more responses. Some education directors noted that reporting to their community was not always successful as, for example, there was low attendance at community meetings. Others reported on issues in relation to school board governance, school staff accountability, First Nation finance departments not responding to education director inquiries, not having enough data gathering to measure progress or outcomes, the federal government not providing sufficient information/training on the reporting process and there never being enough funding to provide the services that they would like to provide.

**TABLE 4.13**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Accountability Reporting Process (N=8)*

Accountability Variable	Frequency of Responses	Percentage %
First Nation students	3	6
First Nation staff	12	26
Band manager/administrator	6	13
First Nation parents and community	6	13

First Nation finance department	1	3
First Nation school board	6	13
First Nation Chief and Council	7	15
Federal government	5	11
Total	46	100

#### 4.13.3. Education Directors Most Important and Most Time Consuming Tasks

In reference to the survey list of administrative tasks, education directors were asked to rank each task by its importance and by the amount of time each required in their daily work. (See Table 4.14). Education directors ranked curriculum and instructional leadership as most important in their administrative responsibilities. Parent/community relations and planning and goals formulation were ranked respectively as second and third in most important tasks.

**TABLE 4.14**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks (N=14)*

Education Director Tasks	Most Important
Budget and school finance	4
Planning and goals formulation	3
Parent/community relations	2
Curriculum and instructional leadership	1
Personnel recruitment/retention	6
Professional growth/staff development	5
School board relations/training/policy development	8
Legal issues	10
Political/Chief and Council issues	9
School facilities management	7

When education directors' were asked to estimate the amount of time various administrative tasks required (see Table 4.15), curriculum and instructional leadership ranked first; budget and school finance ranked second; followed both by planning and goals formulation, and parent and community relations both ranked third.

**TABLE 4.15**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time-Consuming Administrative Tasks (N=14)*

Education Director Tasks	Most Time-Consuming Task
Budget and school finance	2
Planning and goals formulation	3
Parent/community relations	3
Curriculum and instructional leadership	1
Personnel recruitment/retention	7
Professional growth/staff development	6
School board relations/training/policy development	5
Legal issues	9
Political/Chief and Council issues	8
School facilities management	4

In terms of gender perspectives, female education directors ranked parent/community relations as most important administrative task (see Table 4.16) while male education directors' ranked planning and goal formulation as most important. Curriculum and instructional leadership were ranked second by both female and male education directors. Female and male education directors again were in agreement both ranking budget and school finance as the third most important.

**TABLE 4.16***First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks / Gender (N=14)*

Education Director Tasks	Female	Male
Budget and school finance	3	3
Planning and goals formulation	5	1
Parent/community relations	1	5
Curriculum and instructional leadership	2	2
Personnel recruitment/retention	6	6
Professional growth/staff development	7	4
School board relations/training/policy development	9	8
Legal issues	10	10
Political/Chief and Council issues	8	9
School facilities management	4	7

When female education directors' were asked to estimate the amount of time various administrative tasks required (see Table 4.17), parent/community relations remained first in ranking while male education directors' planning and goal formation tasks fell to third place and curriculum and instructional leadership was ranked first in most time consuming. Budget and school finance, and planning and goal formation were respectively ranked as second and third time consuming, by both female and male education directors.

**TABLE 4.17***First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time-Consuming Administrative Tasks / Gender**(N=14)*

Education Director Tasks	Female	Male
Budget and school finance	2	2
Planning and goals formulation	3	3

Parent/community relations	1	7
Curriculum and instructional leadership	5	1
Personnel recruitment/retention	8	6
Professional growth/staff development	7	4
School board relations/training/policy development	6	5
Legal issues	9	9
Political/Chief and Council issues	8	8
School facilities management	4	3

When assessing this from a race/ethnicity perspective (see Table 4.18), First Nation education directors ranked Budget and finance as first, while the Caucasian education directors ranked planning and goals formation as first, and the directors of another ethnicity ranked curriculum and instructional leadership as first. Both the First Nation and the Caucasian education directors ranked curriculum and instructional leadership as second, while the other ethnicity education directors ranked planning and goals formation as second.

**TABLE 4.18**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Important Administrative Tasks / Ethnicity*  
(N=14)

Education Director Tasks	First		
	Nation	Caucasian	Other
Budget and school finance	1	3	7
Planning and goals formulation	3	1	2
Parent/community relations	1	4	3
Curriculum and instructional leadership	2	2	1
Personnel recruitment/retention	4	6	5
Professional growth/staff development	5	5	4

School board relations/training/policy development	7	7	10
Legal issues	8	10	9
Political/Chief and Council issues	6	9	8
School facilities management	2	8	6

For most time consuming administrative tasks (see Table 4.19), the First Nation education director ranked parent and community relations as most time consuming while the Caucasian and the other ethnicity education directors ranked curriculum and instructional leadership as first. Both the First Nation and the Caucasian education directors ranked budget and school finance as second and the other ethnicity directors ranked planning and goals formation as second.

**TABLE 4.19**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Most Time-Consuming Administrative Tasks / Ethnicity (N=14)*

Education Director Tasks	First		
	Nation	Caucasian	Other
Budget and school finance	2	2	7
Planning and goals formulation	3	4	2
Parent/community relations	1	7	3
Curriculum and instructional leadership	4	1	1
Personnel recruitment/retention	7	6	5
Professional growth/staff development	6	5	4
School board relations/training/policy development	5	4	10
Legal issues	8	8	9
Political/Chief and Council issues	7	6	8
School facilities management	3	3	6

When comparing both the surveyed education directors' responses and the interviewed education director responses, the surveyed education directors ranked curriculum and instructional leadership as most important while the interviewed education directors two most identified tasks were budget and school finance, and school board relations/training/policy development (see Table 4.20). Second most identified administrative task of surveyed education directors' was parent/community relations while professional growth/staff development was the second most identified administrative task with interviewed education directors.

**TABLE 4.20**

*First Nation Education Directors' Most Important Administrative Tasks Compared to Key Tasks Identified by Interviewed Education Directors*

Education Director Tasks	Ranked Most Important Survey	Ranked Most Identified Interview
Budget and school finance	4	1
Planning and goals formulation	3	3
Parent/community relations	2	4
Curriculum and instructional leadership	1	0
Personnel recruitment/retention	6	3
Professional growth/staff development	5	2
School board relations/training/policy development	8	1
Legal issues	10	0
Political/Chief and Council issues	9	0
School facilities management	7	4

For most time-consuming administrative tasks, (see Table 4.21), the surveyed education directors and the interviewed directors' ranked/identified first budget and school finance. The

second most time-consuming administrative tasks of surveyed education directors were both the parent/community relations; and curriculum and instructional leadership while the interviewed directors ranked professional growth/staff development as the second most time-consuming administrative task identified during interviews.

**TABLE 4.21**

*First Nation Education Directors’ Most Time Consuming Administrative Tasks compared to key tasks identified by interviewed Education Directors*

Education Director Tasks	Ranked Most Consuming Survey	Ranked Most Identified Interview
Budget and school finance	1	1
Planning and goals formulation	3	3
Parent/community relations	2	4
Curriculum and instructional leadership	2	0
Personnel recruitment/retention	6	3
Professional growth/staff development	5	2
School board relations/training/policy development	5	1
Legal issues	8	0
Political/Chief and Council issues	7	0
School facilities management	4	4

*4.13.4. Education Director Role and Responsibilities Difficulties*

Surveyed education directors were asked, overall, if general education system administration (such as central office staff, time management, reporting requirements, etc.) was a problem or not a problem (see Table 4.22). Twenty-nine (29) percent indicated it was not a

problem, however, 36% reported it to be a slight problem, 14% indicated a moderate problem and another 14% reported it as a major problem.

In terms of providing effective instructional leadership—such as setting standards, matching curriculum and assessment to standards and assessing instructional methods, 37% of education directors indicated it was not a problem, 21% reported it as a slight problem and 14% reported it as moderate problem, 14% as a major problem and 14% reported it as not applicable. In relation to having sufficient management skills—such as those needed to handle matters of finance, personnel, and facility maintenance—57% reported it as not a problem, while 37% reported it as either as a slight, moderate or major problem and 7% reported as not applicable.

In terms of providing effective leadership—such as defining vision, setting goals, directions and education strategy, 71% reported this as not a problem, 21% as a moderate problem and 7% not applicable.

In relation to education directors' capacities for negotiating change such as managing conflict, creating coalitions and dealing with community relations. Twenty-nine (29) percent reported this as not being a problem, while 64% reported this as a slight or moderate problem.

In terms of working with a school board, Council or other oversight body, 43% education directors reported this as not being a problem to handle effectively while 30% reported this as a slight problem, 14% as a moderate and 7% as a major problem.

**TABLE 4.22***First Nation Education Director Survey—Role and Responsibilities Difficulties (N=14)*

Survey Variable	Frequency	
	of Responses	Percentage %
<b>General education system administration</b>		
Not a Problem	4	29
A Slight Problem	5	36
A Moderate Problem	2	14
A Major Problem	2	14
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>		
Not a Problem	5	37
A Slight Problem	3	21
A Moderate Problem	2	14
A Major Problem	2	14
N/A (Not Applicable)	2	14
<b>Management skills</b>		
Not a Problem	8	57
A Slight Problem	1	7
A Moderate Problem	2	14
A Major Problem	2	14
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<b>Leadership</b>		
Not a Problem	10	71
A Slight Problem	0	0
A Moderate Problem	3	22
A Major Problem	0	0
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7

Negotiating change		
Not a Problem	4	29
A Slight Problem	4	29
A Moderate Problem	5	35
A Major Problem	0	0
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		
Working with a school board, Council or other oversight body		
Not a Problem	6	43
A Slight Problem	4	30
A Moderate Problem	2	14
A Major Problem	1	7
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		

#### ***4.14. Research Question 2***

2. What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?

To understand the contexts with which education directors were grappling as they administered First Nation schools, their challenges were examined. These challenges were divided into administrative; economic; political; educational; and, challenges in general.

##### *4.14.1. Administrative Challenges*

In looking at the challenges and barriers of education directors working on First Nations, education directors were asked what the significant administrative challenges encountered were and how they overcame them (see Table 4.23). There were nine themes, the most commonly identified was staffing, followed by provincial school boards then student enrollment, goal setting, and Regional Management Organizations. One director stated that in regard to attaining meaningful change and challenges “it took five years to implement any kind of meaningful

change in the school or in the school system, you know the problem we have, the challenges we have in FN education didn't happen overnight, and they are not going away overnight."

**TABLE 4.23**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Administrative Challenges Faced*

Variable	Frequency	
	Responses	Percentage %
staffing	6	30
provincial School boards	3	15
student enrollment	2	10
time management	1	5
goal setting	2	10
RMO	2	10
programming	1	5
federal government	1	5
Central office	1	5
understanding cultural difference	1	5
Total	20	100

Within administrative challenges, personnel challenges faced by First Nation education directors (see Table 4.24) centered on staff recruitment. In regard to finding qualified central office staff, 30% reported it was not applicable, 28% reported this as a slight problem and 14% reported as a major problem. In terms of the task of finding qualified school principals, 29% reported it as not a problem, 29% reported it as a major problem and 29% reported it as not applicable. In terms of the task of finding qualified teachers, 36% reported it as a slight problem, 21% reported as moderate problem and 14% reported it as a major problem.

**TABLE 4.24***First Nation Education Director Survey – Personnel Challenges*

Survey Variable	Frequency	
	of Responses	Percentage %
<b>Finding qualified central office staff</b>		
Not a Problem	2	14
A Slight Problem	4	28
A Moderate Problem	1	7
A Major Problem	3	21
N/A (Not Applicable)	4	30
<b>Finding qualified school principals</b>		
Not a Problem	4	29
A Slight Problem	2	14
A Moderate Problem	0	0
A Major Problem	4	29
N/A (Not Applicable)	4	29
<b>Finding qualified teachers</b>		
Not a Problem	1	7
A Slight Problem	5	36
A Moderate Problem	3	21
A Major Problem	2	14
N/A (Not Applicable)	3	21

*4.14.2. Economic Challenges*

When asked about the significant economic challenges and how the education directors overcame them (see Table 4.25), 42% of education directors stated funding constraints, 16% listed deficit recovery, and 11% reported Chief and Council. One education director mentioned

the implications of funding shortages “The biggest challenge, probably in the whole five and a half years that I’ve been here as assistant director and director, has been a financial challenge. Not having enough adequate resources and enough funding to ensure that you need to do what you can do, our staff are underpaid, we have [poor salary] grids, we are constantly trying to keep up with our salary grids, but financially we can’t, special education programming is underfunded.”

**TABLE 4.25**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Economic Challenges Faced*

Variable	Frequency	
	Responses	Percentage %
funding constraints	8	42
Chief and Council	2	11
band finance department	1	5
tuition agreement	1	5
overstaffing at FN schools	1	5
deficit recovery	3	16
operation and maintenance	1	5
teacher salary 20% less	1	5
AANDC requirements	1	5
Total	19	99

With regard to specific economic challenges and funding, the following statements were presented to surveyed education directors (see Table 4.26):

- Federal Government core funding is adequate for the delivery of Alberta education programs that are provided in on-reserve schools to First Nation children. Seventy-nine

(79) percent of education directors strongly disagreed, 7% agreed and 14% indicated it was not applicable.

- The non-core targeted programs adequately address the needs of on-reserve children (i.e. special education, school initiatives, capacity building, etc.). Seventy-one (71) percent strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed, 7% agreed with statement, and 7% indicated it was not applicable.
- The First Nation assists through their own band funding to meet the core needs of the students. Twenty-nine (29) percent agreed and 29% disagreed and 14 strongly disagreed with this statement. Twenty-one (21) percent indicated it was not applicable.
- The rising cost of provincial tuition for students attending off-reserve schools is of great concern. Eighty-six (86) percent of education directors concurred: 50% agreed and 36% strongly agreed to this statement. Fourteen percent indicated that it was not applicable.

**TABLE 4.26**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Economic Challenges*

Survey Variable	Frequency of Responses	Percentage %
Federal Government core funding is adequate for the delivery of Alberta education programs on-reserve schools		
Strongly Disagree	11	79
Disagree	0	0
Agree	1	7
Strongly agree	0	0
N/A (Not Applicable)	2	14
The non-core targeted programs adequately address the needs of on-		

reserve children		
Strongly Disagree	10	71
Disagree	2	14
Agree	1	7
Strongly agree	0	0
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
The First Nation assists through their own band funding		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	4	29
Agree	4	29
Strongly agree	2	14
N/A (Not Applicable)	3	21
The rising cost of provincial tuition for students attending off-reserve schools is of great concern		
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Agree	7	50
Strongly agree	5	36
N/A (Not Applicable)	2	14

#### *4.14.3. Political Challenges*

For significant political challenges, 73% of interviewed education directors indicate Chief and Council interference was the most challenging (see Table 4.27) and 9% indicated lack of political support was of issue. The relevant First Nation administration office was also a challenge and 9% indicated there was no interference. One education director reported on Chief and Council interference "support staff come in late, don't work and [if you] try to discipline, you get call from the board or Chief and Council."

**TABLE 4.27***First Nation Education Director Interview—Political Challenges*

Variable	Frequency	
	Responses	Percentage %
Chief and Council interference	8	73
First Nation administration office	1	9
lack of political support	1	9
no interference	1	9
Total	11	100

Surveyed education directors (see Table 4.28) were provided with five statements:

Chief and Council respect the decision making of the school board and/or education director. In responses, 29% of education directors disagreed, 29% agreed, 29% strongly agreed and 13% indicated it was not applicable.

School boards/committees understand their roles and responsibilities—7% strongly disagreed, 29% disagreed, 29% agreed, and 35% indicated it was not applicable.

Band offices are overly bureaucratic—36% disagreed, 29% agreed, and 14% strongly agreed.

Federal mandates constrain local First Nation authority—a notable majority of directors agreed to federal mandates constraining local First Nation authority with 50% strongly agreed, 29% agreed, 14% disagreed.

Provincial mandates constrain local First Nation authority—42% strongly agreed, 21% agreed and 21% disagreed with this statement.

**TABLE 4.28***First Nation Education Director Survey—Political Challenges Faced on First Nations (N=14)*

Survey Variable	Frequency of Responses	Percentage %
<b>Chief and Council respect the decision making of the school board and/or education director</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	4	29
Agree	4	29
Strongly Agree	4	29
N/A (not applicable)	2	13
<b>School boards/committees understand their roles and responsibilities</b>		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	4	29
Agree	4	29
Strongly Agree	0	0
N/A (not applicable)	5	35
<b>Band offices are overly bureaucratic</b>		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	5	36
Agree	4	29
Strongly Agree	2	14
N/A (not applicable)	2	14
<b>Federal mandates constrain local First Nation authority</b>		
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	14
Agree	4	29
Strongly Agree	7	50

N/A (not applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		
Provincial mandates constrain local First Nation authority		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	3	21
Agree	3	21
Strongly Agree	6	42
N/A (not applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		

#### 4.14.4. Educational Challenges

In looking at the significant educational challenges (see Table 4.29) education directors were asked if the achievement gap between First Nation students and the rest of the students in the province was a critical and chronic challenge. In all 86% either agreed or strongly agreed (50% agreed with this statement and 36% strongly agreed) while 7% disagreed. Forty-three (43) percent of education directors agreed that provincial standards, accountability and assessment create overwhelming pressures on them, 21% strongly agreed, 21% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed.

**TABLE 4.29**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Educational Achievement (N=14)*

Survey Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
<hr/>		
The achievement gap between students (First Nation students in comparison to students in the province) is a critical and chronic challenge		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	0	0
Agree	7	50

Strongly agree	5	36
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		
Provincial standards, accountability and assessment create overwhelming pressure		
Strongly Disagree	1	7
Disagree	3	21
Agree	6	43
Strongly agree	3	21
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7

In looking at First Nation school programming, First Nation education directors asked whether they were confident that the program they had in place would close the achievement gap within five years (see Table 4.30). Thirty-five (35) percent of education directors agreed, 29% strongly agreed, and 14% disagreed with this closing the achievement gap within five years. Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the language and culture programs/courses of the First Nation are adequately provided for in the on-reserve schools. Twenty-one (21) percent agreed with this statement.

**TABLE 4.30**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Educational Programs*

Survey Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
<hr/>		
I am confident that the program we have in place will close the achievement gap within five years		
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	14
Agree	5	35

Strongly agree	4	29
N/A (Not Applicable)	3	21
<hr/>		
The language and culture programs/courses of the First Nation are adequately provided for in the on-reserve schools		
Strongly Disagree	7	50
Disagree	4	29
Agree	3	21
Strongly agree	0	0
N/A (Not Applicable)	0	0
<hr/>		

#### 4.14.5. General Challenges

With respect to general challenges faced on First Nations by education directors (see Table 4.31), with a perceived crisis in education within their own First Nation, 36% indicated this as a slight problem, 7% as moderate, and 36% as a major problem. Twenty-one (21) percent indicated this was not a problem. Forty-three percent (43) indicated that demands from community groups were not a problem however 21% indicated it was a slight problem and 21% reported it as a moderate problem. Pressure for the opportunity for First Nation students to access provincial schools or other forms of parental choice were viewed as a slight problem by 36% of education directors, 21% as a moderate problem and 21% as a major problem. Fourteen percent indicated it was not a problem. Fifty (50) percent of education directors did not see performance contracts/agreements between the board and the director as a problem, 21% reported them as a slight problem and 21% reported them as not applicable. Forty-three (43) percent did not see audits and reports from independent organizations as a problem but 14% reported them as a slight problem and 21% as a moderate problem. The media focus on schools in First Nation issues (such as poor student achievement) was viewed by 36% of education directors as not a

problem, 29% as a slight problem, and 21% reported this as major problem. Forty-three (43) of education directors indicated that coordinated support from community and/or First Nation Agencies was a slight problem, 14% as a moderate problem and 21% as a major problem.

When interviewed, education directors were asked if there were any other significant challenges in their roles. In responses, the following challenges were mentioned; being “from community,” dealing with irate community members, understanding reserve politics, not having an equivalent to the Alberta Teacher Association (ATA) type body to advocate for teachers, getting a new school, working with unprofessional certified staff, obtaining competent staff, provincial schools not educating FN students, students being two years behind where they should be academically when they leave community schools to go to provincial schools, and the negative work environment.

**TABLE 4.31**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—General Challenges*

Survey Variable	Frequency of Responses	Percentage %
<b>A perceived crisis in education within your First Nation</b>		
Not a Problem	2	21
A Slight Problem	5	36
A Moderate Problem	1	7
A Major Problem	5	36
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<b>Demands from community groups</b>		
Not a Problem	6	43
A Slight Problem	3	21
A Moderate Problem	3	21

A Major Problem	1	7
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
<hr/>		
Pressure for provincial schools or other forms of parental choice		
Not a Problem	2	14
A Slight Problem	5	36
A Moderate Problem	3	21
A Major Problem	3	21
N/A (Not Applicable)	2	7
<hr/>		
Performance contracts/agreements between the board and the director		
Not a Problem	7	50
A Slight Problem	3	21
A Moderate Problem	0	0
A Major Problem	1	7
N/A (Not Applicable)	3	21
<hr/>		
Audits and reports from independent organizations		
Not a Problem	6	43
A Slight Problem	2	14
A Moderate Problem	3	21
A Major Problem	1	7
N/A (Not Applicable)	2	14
<hr/>		
Media focus on schools in First Nation issues		
Not a Problem	5	36
A Slight Problem	4	29
A Moderate Problem	1	7
A Major Problem	3	21
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7
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Coordinated support from community and/or First Nation Agencies

Not a Problem	2	14
A Slight Problem	6	43
A Moderate Problem	2	14
A Major Problem	3	21
N/A (Not Applicable)	1	7

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**4.15. Research Question 3**

3. In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education (ICIE)?

Indian Control of Indian Education, as first defined and outlined in 1973 by the National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, in a policy paper presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, listed the following as being the local Education Authority's area of responsibilities:

- Budgeting, spending and establishing priorities
- Determining the types of schools facilities required to meet the local needs (e.g., day school, residence group home, nursery, kindergarten, high school)
- Directing staff hired and curriculum development with special concern for Indian languages and culture
- Administering the physical plant
- Developing adult education and upgrading courses
- Negotiating agreements with provincial/territorial or separate school jurisdictions for the kind of services necessary for local requirements, cooperation and evaluation of education programs both on and off the reserve

- Providing counselling services

(National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, 1973, p. 6)

Research Question 1 addressed the responsibilities of the local authority via the education director. Question 2 addressed the challenges of the local authorities via its key educational representatives, the education director, and Question 3 outlined what amount of support is available for ICIE currently by First Nations and by the Federal government. As well, I also sought to clarify directors' views about FN students living in poverty and whether or to what extent this affected First Nations in meeting the criteria of ICIE. In looking to the future of FN education, education directors gave suggestions in relation to improving the effectiveness of education directors so far as implementing ICIE is concerned; and creating more effective schools on First Nations.

#### *4.15.1. First Nation Support for Local Control of Education*

Education directors were asked to rate how First Nation support for Indian Control of Indian Education (see Table 4.32). Seventy-nine (79) percent education directors rated the level of First Nations support as supportive and very supportive. Twenty-one (21) percent of education directors rated First Nations as unsupportive.

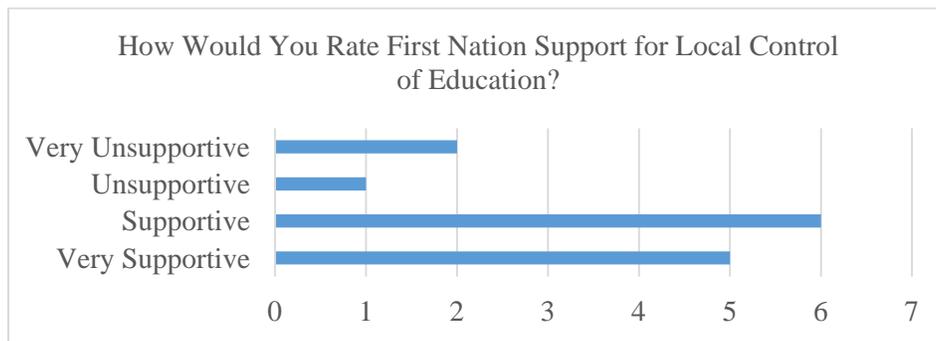
**TABLE 4.32**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / First Nation Rate of Support (N=14)*

Survey Variable	Frequency	
	of Responses	Percentage %
How would you rate First Nation support for local control of education		
Very Supportive	5	36
Supportive	6	43
Unsupportive	1	7
Very Unsupportive	2	14

**FIGURE 4.1**

*First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / First Nation Rate of Support (N=14)*



*4.15.2. INAC/Federal Government Support for Local Control of Education*

Education directors were asked to rate how INAC/Federal Government support for Indian Control of Indian Education (see Table 4.33 and Figure 2). Forty-three (43) percent of education directors rated INAC/Federal Government support as unsupportive and 14% as very

unsupportive. Thirty-six (36) percent education directors rated INAC/Federal Government as supportive.

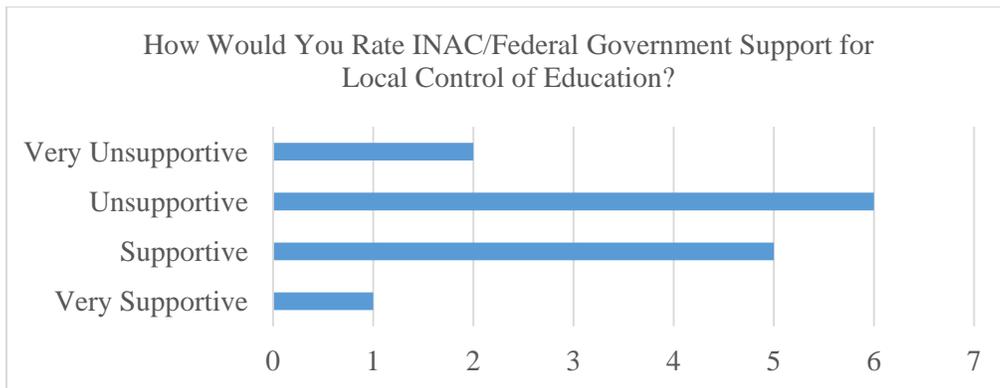
**TABLE 4.33**

*First Nation Education Director Survey Indian Control of Indian Education / INAC/Federal Government Rate of Support (N=14)*

Survey Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
How would you rate INAC/federal government support for local control of education		
Very Supportive	1	7
Supportive	5	36
Unsupportive	6	43
Very Unsupportive	2	14

**FIGURE 4.2**

First Nation Education Director Survey—Indian Control of Indian Education / Rate of Support



#### 4.15.3. *Effects of Poverty and ICIE*

Education directors who were interviewed were asked in what ways did the effect of so many First Nation students living in poverty shape what they do and the progress of First Nations (see Table 4.34). Thirty-four (34) percent of all responses centered on school initiatives to address poverty, 21% felt that support was needed for students to get out of the poverty cycle, 16% responded that parents required support and issues affecting parenting due to impacts of poverty. Other impacts identified by directors in relation to the effect of poverty were student attendance, home environment and student nutrition. Education directors commented that they provided "as much support as you can inside of the school for that" and that parent participation in schools is also affected because most of the students' families/parents live in poverty and "they are worried about other things."

**TABLE 4.34**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Effect of First Nation Students Living in Poverty*

Interview Variable	Frequency	
	Responses	Percentage %
Impacts of poverty—attendance	3	8
Impacts of poverty—home environment	2	5
Impacts of Poverty—nutrition	1	3
Networking/collaboration with other agencies	1	3
Parent support	6	16
Raising awareness	2	5
School initiatives	13	34
Student support	8	21
First Nation progress	2	5

Total	38	100
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#### 4.15.4. Leading to More Effective Implementation of Indian Control of Indian Education

In the interviews conducted with education directors, they recommended strategies to improve the effectiveness of education directors in First Nations as they come onto the job (see Table 4.35, First Nation Education Director Interview—Strategies Recommended to Education Directors coming into the Job). Eleven themes emerged from education directors’ recommendations: 23% of responses recommended First Nation orientation and acculturation, 15% centered on personnel recruitment and retention, 13% referred to the need for education directors to have education and relevant experience and 12% felt that education directors’ focus on curriculum and instructional leadership needed to be substantial. One education director recommended “accept everything won’t go your way, slow down, not running on your schedule, just be steady and honest.”

**TABLE 4.35**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Strategies Recommended to Education Directors  
Coming into the Job*

Interview Variable	Frequency of	
	Responses	Percentage %
First Nation school board—Review education policy and procedures	3	7
Education and experience background	5	13
Management—budget and school finance	4	10
First Nation orientation and acculturation	9	23
Federal government- AANDC/INAC orientation	1	2

Provincial government and Alberta Education orientation	3	7
Curriculum and instructional leadership	5	12
Public school district— tuition agreements	1	2
Management—personnel recruitment and retention	6	15
Leadership—vision, mission, strategy planning	3	7
Management—effective reporting procedures	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>

When posed with the question “what would it take to create more effective schools in First Nations and what capacities and powers would directors need to lead the necessary reform?” Twelve themes emerged on creating effective schools. Of those 12 themes, 19% of education directors identified the need for the most qualified staff, 13% focused on student achievement, and 8% on language and culture (see Table 4.36). One director indicated that education directors need “that power and ability to evaluate and remove people who are not effective in their position.” The capacities and powers education directors needed to achieve this reform were to be more innovative, network with others; have strong educational leadership; and develop a good communication plan.

**TABLE 4.36**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Creating Effective Schools on First Nations and Capacities and Powers Needed by Education Directors to Lead the Reform*

Interview Variable	Frequency of Responses	
	Responses	Percentage %
<b>To create more effective schools</b>		
most qualified staff	7	19
student achievement	5	13
language and culture	3	8
parent - community engagement	1	3
increased funding	3	8
competitive teacher salaries and benefits	2	6
First Nation support and commitment	2	6
technology	1	3
provincial tuition payments fully covered	1	3
more effective, efficient FN school board structures	1	3
staff training	1	3
student self-identity and self confidence	1	3
<b>Capacities and powers would education directors need to lead necessary reform</b>		
having a communication plan	1	3
networking	2	6
being innovative	4	10
offering educational leadership	1	3

Toward the conclusion of the interviews, when education directors were asked if there was anything they would like to add relevant to this topic, many of the education directors shared

more thoughts, ideas and made comments that related to the interview questions. By comparison with all the other interview questions, this final open-ended question garnered the most time in comparison to the other questions asked. Their responses were sectioned into nine themes (see Table 4.37). Twenty-two (22) percent of responses were on First Nations, 16% on education director and 16% on federal government. Ten percent expressed interest in seeing the research findings and requested for this information to be shared at education director and/or First Nation gatherings.

**TABLE 4.37**

*First Nation Education Director Interview—Summary Comments on Topic (N=8)*

Interview Variable	Frequency	
	Responses	Percentage %
Participant summary reflections with relation to the topic		
FN student	4	10
FN Personnel	3	8
education director	6	16
First Nation School Board	4	10
First Nation	8	22
provincial government	2	5
federal government	6	16
Memorandum of Agreement	1	3
research	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.16. Research Findings

Based on the data garnered through the education director survey and the education director interviews, the findings were groups by the demographics of education directors in Alberta, Research Question 1, 2, and 3 (see Table 4.38).

**Table 4.38**

*Research Findings Table*

Demographics and Research Questions:	Findings:
Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In Alberta, two-thirds of education directors are female</li> <li>2. Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors were 51 years of age or older</li> <li>3. In this case study, two-thirds of education directors were First Nation</li> <li>4. First Nation education directors have either prior public system experience or First Nation school experience</li> <li>5. More than half of all Education directors indicated that prior administrative experiences in schools and training and experience outside of education adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship</li> <li>6. Education directors surveyed were responsible for up to 1,000 students, with mean at 1–200 FTE students attending schools on-First Nations and have up to 600 FTE students attending off-First Nation schools</li> <li>7. Having processes and procedures in place for</li> </ol>

	education directors varied between First Nations
Research Question 1—What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?	<p>8. Education directors report to a range of internal and external authorities.</p> <p>9. There is discrepancy between genders and race/ethnicity in what is deemed most important and the most time-consuming in administrative tasks</p> <p>10. In terms of roles and responsibilities, education directors identified working with general education system management, providing instructional leadership, negotiating change and working with a school board, council or oversight body with its public face, were problematic.</p>
5.5.1. Research Question—What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?	<p>11. Education directors face particular difficulty with recruitment and retention of effective teachers.</p> <p>12. Education directors find federal education funding inadequate for the delivery of First Nation education program on First Nations</p> <p>13. First Nation education authorities are constrained by federal and provincial mandates</p> <p>14. Education directors believe the achievement gap is a critical and chronic challenge</p> <p>15. Language and culture programs and courses are not adequately funded in First Nations</p> <p>16. General challenges faced by education directors include a perceived crisis in education within First Nation, community pressure for provincial schools to be the preferred schools for FN students to attend or other parent choices rather</p>

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than First Nation schools being the automatic or first parent choice

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5.6.1. Research Question 3—In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?

17. First Nations are supportive of local control of education

18. Education directors perceive INAC/Federal Government as unsupportive of local control of education

19. Poverty on First Nations affects proper implementation of ICIE

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#### *4.17. Summary*

The purpose of Chapter Four was to introduce the eight First Nation education directors and identify their views of the current challenges in administering ICIE. Chapter Four began with restatement of the purpose of the study. Section two in this chapter provided the current demographics of education directors using both surveys, document analysis and interviews. Section three presented the study's findings through individual case snapshots and section three to six presented the study's findings organized in relation to the three research questions. Key interview findings were noted in addition to survey results from the education directors in Alberta.

Chapter Five presents a summary of this study, conclusions, and recommendations for future practice research, study implications and concluding statement.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

*“The government just wants to impose legislation which is what they are doing, which is not good, but you know First Nations people should have been taking that lead all along, saying we work together, this is what we want to do, instead of waiting, I think sometimes that’s our biggest, just kind of kicks us in the butt later cause we wait too long, I think we find ourselves in situations like this where something is going to be imposed because we never put anything in place to begin with, and you know that kind of makes it frustrating ... you know it needs to be done but nobody is taking the lead and doing it”*  
(First Nation education director, 2013)

### **5.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand the multi-site administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors and whether (and in what ways) these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children.

A further purpose was to study the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education directors from across Alberta (Treaty areas 6, 7 and 8) who directly administer to First Nation schools.

The questions that guided this study were designed to understand the multi-site administrative, economic, and political challenges faced by First Nations education directors. The questions also sought to clarify whether these challenges restrict education directors’ capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children. The research was based on two principal sources: a survey of education directors in Alberta and a series of one-to-one semi-structured interviews conducted with some of those directors. As this was largely a qualitative research study, the survey data provided a separate but mostly complementary source of information to that provided in the semi-structured interviews. Relevant documentation

pertaining to the study were also analysed. In turn, these three sources of evidence provided data triangulation on specific issues. Sixteen education directors in Alberta participated in this study.

Chapter Five is the culmination of the study and includes the following sections: the chapter introduction, study summary, a summary of the findings and conclusions, and study recommendations that include recommendations for future practice and future research, and study implications.

## ***5.2. Study Summary***

This was an exploratory case study that aimed at illuminating the key work of FN education directors in Alberta, particularly their role and the challenges they experience in the course of endeavouring to provide quality schooling for FN students. The study also provides suggestions for later investigation (given the dearth of specific understandings of FN education directors' work lives).

## ***5.3. Summary of the Findings and Conclusions***

### ***5.3.1. Demographics of Education Directors in Alberta***

The first step undertaken in this study was to seek numbers and characteristics of those education directors currently filling these positions, in particular, age, experience, gender, and race/ethnicity.

*Finding 1*—In Alberta, two-thirds of education directors in Alberta First Nations are female.

As per the Alberta Education First Nation education director listing (February, 2013) there are 29 female education directors and 17 male education directors. Percentage wise, 63% were female education directors and 37% were male education directors. These demographics stand in contrast to public school districts, where the vast majority of superintendents are male (Young, Ansara, 1998; Glass, 2000). As one example, women made up 64% of the teaching

force in Alberta in 1995, but only 5% of superintendents, 25% of assistant superintendents, 26% of principals, and 36% of assistant or associate principals were female (Alberta Education, 1995). Further afield, in the United States, there has been an increase in female superintendents since 1992. In one superintendent study, nearly one in four respondents (24%) were female. (In 2000, the percentage was 13) (The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study). However, with 65% of First Nations in Alberta having female education directors it is apparent male education directors are the minority in these positions and the reasons for this gender pattern should be explored, looking at why more woman are hired and how has this impacted (positively or negatively) a garnering support for FN education at the leadership level (namely Chief and Councils).

*Conclusion 1:* It can be concluded that there is a large contrast in genders between public school district superintendents and First Nation education directors' gender with majority of First Nation education directors predominately female and public school district superintendents predominately male.

*Finding 2—*Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors were 51 years of age or older

In the survey results, the mean age of education directors was 51 years or older, with 100% of all male superintendents 51 years or older. Although there are no comparable Canadian superintendent statistics regarding mean age for superintendents, these results are similar to the findings in one U.S.-based superintendent study with the mean age of those superintendents being between 54 and 55 years of age (The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study).

*Conclusion 2:* The findings of this research are consistent with the research findings (The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study) on the mean age of superintendents.

*Finding 3*—In this case study, two-thirds of education directors were First Nation. More specifically in terms of race/ethnicity: 57% of the participating education directors were First Nation, 36% were Caucasian, and 7% were other ethnicities.

*Conclusion 3*: It can be concluded that more than half of First Nation education directors' race/ethnicity were First Nation.

### *5.3.2. Education Directors Education background and Years of Experience*

*Finding 4*—First Nation education directors have either prior public system experience or First Nation school experience.

During the interviews, education directors were asked, in terms of their educational background and experience, what in particular prepared them to meet the demands of their directorship. Several themes emerged with the top two themes being years of experience in the public schools system and years of experience in a First Nation on-reserve school setting. Specifically, in terms of the types of experience education directors had, in the interviews there were a range of teacher experiences with 43% of education directors having 0–15 teacher experience, 14% having 16–30 years of experience, and 30% with over 31 years of experience. One explanation regarding the 43% of directors relates to the fact that some education directors did not have an education background. With education director experience, 50% of education directors had 0–5 years of experience as an education director and for years at their current position, 58% had 0–5 years of at their current experience, suggesting that for some, this is their first position held as an education director.

Analyzing this element of the demographic data by gender, a majority of the male education directors indicated that their years of experience in the public school system prepared them while female education directors had a variety of experiences. For most of the female

directors, their education backgrounds and years of experience in working in many jobs in First Nations were the top two explanations of what prepared them best. Of note is that male education directors had experience in both the public and the FN school systems, while the female education directors had experience in only FN education.

*Conclusion 4:* Prior experiences vary between FN education directors on the basis of gender but it is not clear whether those differences have any effect on their (educational/role) effectiveness.

*Finding 5—*More than half of all education directors indicated that prior administrative experiences in schools and training and experience outside of education adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship.

With this study of Alberta FN education directors, 65% of education directors' administrative experiences in schools adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship. Fifty (50) percent of education directors indicated that prior experiences in the central office was not applicable, meaning they did not have prior experience in the central office. Fifty-three (53) percent of education directors indicated training outside education adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship. Seventy-nine (79) percent agreed that experience outside of education adequately prepared them for the challenges of the directorship.

*Conclusion 5:* There were varying degrees of preparedness contributed by prior work experiences with education directors: Not all of the prior work experiences were school based.

### *5.3.3. Student Enrollment*

*Finding 6—*Education directors surveyed were responsible for up to 1000 students, with mean at 1–200 FTE students attending schools on-First Nations and up to 600 FTE students attending off-First Nation schools.

According to survey results, 71% of education directors had on-reserve student enrollment between 1–400 full time equivalent students. Seventy-three (73) of education directors had 1–400 (FTE) students attending off-reserve schools. What cannot be discerned is the percentage of those students attending on-reserve schools as opposed to those attending provincial public schools. Nonetheless, according to the Government of Canada, data from the 2011–2012 nominal roll, suggesting that Alberta First Nations had 15,922 FTE students; 57% attending First Nation schools and 42% attending provincial public schools and 1% attending other types of schools.

*Conclusion 6:* A majority of First Nations operate schools with student enrollment of 1–200 FTEs.

*Finding 7—*Having Processes and Procedures in place for education directors varied between First Nations.

For the most part, when education directors first came onto the job, there were no specifically provided mechanisms or procedures in place to assist the education director with understanding their roles and responsibilities. In the absence of any induction programs for them, most education directors mentioned reviewing relevant documents to assist them. Examples of what they reviewed include their job description, the policy manual (FN Human Resources and Education), the salary grid, staff lists, and terms of reference for conducting particular meetings. Twenty-six (26) percent of education directors indicated that there was no orientation while 7% indicated the education director must be proactive, “be self-responsible.” Another education director indicated “There was three file boxes I had to go through and familiarize [myself], be familiar of how the work was going to look like.” There was one education director who had an

opportunity to job shadow, where she attended meetings with and was able to ask questions of the departing director which she felt was valuable.

Education directors recommended strategies to improve their effectiveness in First Nations as they come onto the job. Those recommendations included First Nation orientation and acculturation, learning about personnel recruitment and developing a retention plan. Also noted was First Nations hiring: Education directors that have relevant education and experience were viewed as important job criteria. Incoming education directors should also focus on providing curriculum and instructional leadership directly (i.e. themselves) and indirectly (through others). *Conclusion 7:* First Nations ability to provide orientation for new education directors varies from First Nation to First Nation and that ranged from some education directors receiving no orientation to others where they were provided with opportunities to job shadow and review documentation relevant to position.

#### ***5.4. Research Question 1***

*5.4.1. Research Question 1—What are the key administrative practices of education directors currently in First Nations communities within Alberta?*

*5.4.2. Education Director Accountability*

*Finding 8—*Education directors report to a range of internal and external authorities.

With the understanding that accountability plays a huge part in the education directors' daily work, directors were asked to describe the reporting process, outlining who they are accountable to and report to on a daily, monthly, and yearly time frame. Eight themes emerged listing accountability/reporting to students, staff, parents/community, band manager/administrator, First Nation finance department, school board, Chief and Council, and the federal government.

Twenty-six (26) percent of responses centered on accountability to their staff followed by 15%

of responses regarding their accountability to Chief and Council. Band administrator, parents/community and school board all ranked third in terms of education directors being accountable to others.

When asked about the strengths in that process, comments ranged from having a better communication process, maintaining accountability to government, to parents, to students, and First Nation controlling their education. When asked about the shortcomings in that process, there were far more responses. Some education directors indicated that reporting to community was not always successful, for example, as there was low attendance at community meetings, while others detailed issues with school board governance, school staff accountability, First Nation finance not responsive to funding inquiries by education directors, not enough data gathering, federal government not providing sufficient information/training on the required reporting process and never enough funding to provide the services needed by students in particular.

*Conclusion 8: First Nation accountability requirements vary for education directors*

#### *5.4.3. Education Directors Most Important and Most Time Consuming Tasks*

*Finding 9—*There is discrepancy between genders and race/ethnicity in what is deemed most important and the most time-consuming in administrative tasks.

Of interest were the discrepancies between male and female education directors in regard to what they would consider important and what they felt was time-consuming. Female education directors' most important and most time-consuming administrative task was attending to parent/community relations. Male education directors' most important task was planning and goal formulation and their most time-consuming administrative task was curriculum and instructional leadership.

In looking at this from a race/ethnicity context, First Nation education directors' most important administrative task is budget and finance and most time-consuming administrative task was parent and community relations.

Caucasian education directors' most important administrative task was planning and goals formation and their most time-consuming administrative task was curriculum and instructional leadership. Other race/ethnicity education directors' most important and most time-consuming administrative task was curriculum and instructional leadership.

*Conclusion 9:* There was a discrepancy between what was viewed as important and where directors' time was most spent in relation to administrative tasks between gender and between race/ethnicity.

Of note, there were some directors' responses that did not typically fit into the mainstream public superintendent administrative tasks. These were grouped under other tasks such as daycare, post-secondary, employment and training, nominal roll, student discipline, student records and transportation. This is indicative of the diversity of challenges facing First Nations and the directors as well as showing that First Nations perceive their roles and responsibilities to be broad.

#### *5.4.4. Education Director Role and Responsibilities Difficulties*

*Finding 10*—In terms of roles and responsibilities, education directors identified working with general education system management, providing instructional leadership, negotiating change and working with a school board, council or oversight body with its public face, were problematic.

On average, 57% of education directors felt that overall, the general education system administration (such as central office staff, time management, reporting requirements, etc.),

negotiating change (such as managing conflict, creating coalitions and dealing with community relations, instructional leadership) and working with a school board, council or other oversight body with its own public face, were problematic. In interviews, education directors expressed concern about being under staffed in the central office and the level of staff competency in central office. School board and Chief and Council interference were also presented as challenging. Community relations were identified by female education directors as the most time-consuming aspect of their work and instructional leadership was identified by all education directors as most important.

Seventy-one (71) percent reported that Leadership—such as defining vision, setting goals, directions and education strategy, was not recognized as a problem and interestingly, 57% of education directors also indicated that management skills - such as finance, personnel, and facility—were also not a problem, despite finance being identified as most time-consuming of educational tasks.

*Conclusion 10:* The findings on problematic areas such as the general education system administration, instructional leadership, negotiating change, and working with a school board, council or oversight body with its public face are consistently identified in both the survey and interview results.

## ***5.5. Research Question 2***

*5.5.1. Research Question 2—What administrative, economic, and political contexts are those directors grappling with as they administer First Nations schools?*

To understand the contexts with which education directors are grappling with as they administered First Nation schools, their challenges were examined. These challenges were divided into administrative, economic, political, educational, and challenges in general.

### *5.5.2. Administrative Challenges*

In looking at the challenges and barriers of education directors working on First Nations, education directors were asked what the significant administrative challenges encountered were and how they overcame them. There were nine themes, the most frequently mentioned was staffing,

*Finding 11*—Education directors face particular difficulty with recruitment and retention of effective teachers.

Issues related to recruitment and retention of effective teachers and other staff included finding them, dealing with frequent staff turnover, issues with work performance (by maintenance staff and support staff who were also community members), resistance to change by long term employees, and the need for competent administrative/central office staff to assist with the workload.

The survey results indicated that 56% of education directors found that obtaining/hiring qualified central office staff was a problem. Crucially, 43% reported finding and being able to hire suitably qualified school principals as a problem. Suitably qualified principals would be those who possess not only educational qualifications but cultural sensitivities to First Nations.

Also of major concern was that directors could not hire sufficient qualified teachers, with 71% agreeing this was a problem. A probable reason for this as elucidated by Mueller, et al (2011) is that “Funding transfers, from the federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs to First Nations who manage educational services on Canada’s behalf, have not

addressed the historical disparity in teacher salaries between teachers employed in provincial schools and those employed in schools located on reserves. Furthermore, a lack of or limited pension and benefits funding, due to limited federal transfers, continues to detract from employment in First Nations schools” (p. 65). One implication of teacher retention that is linked to student achievement on First Nations concerns the fact that “participants in the initial study indicated that teacher attrition had a persistently negative impact on educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in their community-administered schools” (p. 65).

*Conclusion 11:* Recruitment and retention of teachers for FN communities will depend at least, in part, on teacher salaries being based on a competitive salary grid and being accompanied by a comprehensive benefits and pension package.

### 5.5.3. *Economic Challenges*

*Finding 12*—Education directors find federal education funding inadequate for the delivery of First Nation education programs on First Nations.

When asked about the significant economic challenges and how they overcame them, 42% of education directors stated funding constraints, 16% listed deficit recovery, and 11% reported Chief and Council. One education director mentioned the implications of funding shortages.

Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors strongly disagreed that the Federal Government core funding is adequate for the delivery of Alberta education programs that are provided in on-reserve schools to First Nation children. Eighty-five (85) percent of education directors disagreed that the non-core targeted programs adequately address the needs of on-reserve children (i.e. special education, school initiatives, capacity building, etc.). Forty-three

(43) percent of education directors disagreed that First Nation assists through their own band funding to meet the core needs of the students. Eighty-five (85) of education directors agreed that the rising cost of provincial tuition for students attending off-reserve schools is of great concern.

First Nations schools funding is determined by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) using a national funding formula developed in 1987 and last updated in 1996. The funding is expected (by government) to be sufficient for FN population and living costs. AANDC's national education funding formula adjustments have been capped at 2% per year since 1996 (not taking into account inflation and the First Nations population increases).

The Federal Government posted federal funding levels for First Nations K–12 education in 2013 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013a). On a national basis, AANDC provided approximately \$14,056 per full-time equivalent student in 2011–2012 for elementary and secondary education expenditures. In Alberta, \$229.9 million was allocated to First Nations which works out to \$14,442 per full-time equivalent student. Although this may appear to be reasonably similar to provincial school districts' student funding, what is included is the provincial tuition funding for students attending off-reserve schools and therefore makes determining actual funding for First Nations unclear. This is substantiated by AFN (2012) "In 1996, AANDC provided, on average, \$5,544 per-student to First Nation schools. This was up to 15% less than what INAC provided to First Nations attending Provincial or Private schools. Since 1996, the funding discrepancy has grown to an average of nearly \$3,500 less per-student. This means that AANDC now provides nearly 50% more funding to First Nations attending Provincial or Private schools than to those attending First Nation schools."(p. 1).

The Assembly of First Nations reported that "chronic underfunding of First Nations schools has created a First Nations education funding shortfall of \$747 million in 2010–2011,

and a cumulative funding shortfall of over \$3 billion since 1996. This funding shortfall does not include costs needed to support the educational components of a 21st century school system that are currently missing from INAC's funding" (Assembly of First Nation, 2012, p. 1).

*Conclusion 12:* Directors in this study found education financial allocations to be insufficient and hence their claims are similar to findings by AFN (2012). It can be concluded that funding levels prove to be a major problem for the implementation of First Nations education by education directors.

#### *5.5.4. Political Challenges*

*Finding 13*—First Nation education authorities are constrained by federal and provincial mandates

Seventy-three (73) percent of interviewed education directors indicate Chief and Council interference was the most challenging issue and 9% indicated lack of immediate or local FN political support was also of issue. However, 58% of education directors surveyed agreed Chief and Council ultimately respected the decision making of the school board and/or education director.

Thirty-six (36) percent of education directors disagreed with the proposition that School boards/committees understand their roles and responsibilities.

Forty-three (43) percent agreed Band offices are overly bureaucratic and, during interviews, directors agreed that First Nation administration office were also unsupportive of education directors' decision making.

In surveys, 79% of education directors agreed federal mandates constrain local First Nation authority. Sixty-three (63) percent of education directors agreed Provincial mandates constrain local First Nation authority.

*Conclusion 13:* Findings show that First Nation, provincial and federal mandates constrain First Nations education authority.

#### *5.5.5. Educational Challenges*

*Findings 14*—Education directors believe the achievement gap is a critical and chronic challenge.

Specifically, 86% of education directors agreed the achievement gap between students was a critical and chronic challenge. The federal government also recognises the problem, stating that “research shows that First Nation students lag behind non-Aboriginal students in literacy, high school completion and post-secondary graduation rates. There are First Nation examples of very successful student outcomes, but nationally fewer than half of First Nation youth graduate from high school. This compares with nearly 80 percent for other Canadians” (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2013c, n.p).

Faries (n.d.) provides causal factors behind the gap “Aboriginal students have been impacted by imposed education systems which have not addressed their needs, either through their own experience or through the education experience of their parents, grandparents and extended family. Negative experience in education has resulted in apathy and lack of interest in education, therefore education is not promoted nor valued by family members who have been negatively impacted by education. Aboriginal students need parental encouragement, positive role models, and Aboriginal content in order to succeed academically” (p. 1).

Sixty-four (64) percent of First Nation education directors were confident that the program they had in place would close the achievement gap within five years. Further inquiry in relation to this is necessary to clarify finding out what baseline measurement is in place to determine that the achievement gap is closing and how data collected from this evaluation are

being analyzed. As well, the types of educational programs that are in place to increase academic achievement need to be reviewed. Sixty-four (64) percent of education directors agreed that provincial standards, accountability and assessment create overwhelming pressure on them. Conversely, provincial school systems are not always accountable for education outcomes of First Nations and have not closed the achievement gap of First Nations students. In 2008, an education needs assessment was conducted by the Grand Council of the Treaty #3 in Saskatchewan with 26 First Nations. This education needs assessment looked at the current education system in Treaty #3 territory, both on and off-reserve, and looked at how the current policies, practices and procedures impacted education system the Treaty #3. Key findings of this assessment included:

- The curriculum that is being taught to students both on-reserve and off-reserve in provincial schools is limited to mainstream content with little to no First Nation specific content on First Nation worldview;
- Overall, the majority of the Treaty #3 high school students are still not graduating from provincial schools, despite being in a 5-year high school program where additional tuition dollars are provided to the provincial school to support their education;
- Provincial schools are not being held accountable for Treaty #3 student outcomes related to low graduation rates, retention, overall education achievement;

(Grand Council Treaty #3, p. 7)

*Conclusion 14:* Education directors' views are consistent with Canada-AANDC, (2013c) and Faries, (n.d.) insofar as First Nation student achievement being a critical and chronic challenge for First Nation education directors to deal with.

*Finding 15*—Language and culture programs and courses are not adequately funded in First Nations

Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors strongly disagreed that the language and culture programs/courses of the First Nation are adequately provided for in the on-reserve schools.

When the ICIE was initially developed, the vital inclusion of First Nation languages as part of First Nation educational programming was stressed. Since then, First Nations have continually lobbied for federal support for their languages. “In 1998, the Assembly of First Nations declared a state of language emergency, calling on Canada to recognize and financially support First Nation languages. In 2000, the Assembly of First Nations proposed a “First Nation Language Policy for Canada,” whereby Canada would recognize First Nation languages as Canada’s original languages and help First Nations protect, promote and use their languages, and deliver language programs and services under their own jurisdiction”(Canada - Taskforce on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, 2005, p. iii).

Yet, in Alberta, the benefits of having a second language are recognized and fully supported. In a study conducted in 1999 by Alberta Education on second language education; it was found that the benefits of learning a second language “are much broader than simply the ability to speak in another language. It reports on research that affirms the importance of second language education on intellectual potential, scholastic achievement, first language skills, citizenship and the economy” (Alberta Education website, 2014). As a result, in Alberta, the teaching of second language has been largely supported through language programming and funding.

In most First Nations schools in Alberta, there are various language and cultural initiatives, and programs geared to increasing language retention and cultural revitalization. However, community involvement is essential to reinforcing the schools language learning efforts. “Where languages are declining or severely threatened, school immersion programs can help—but a language will not live if it is not used in everyday life. It must be the medium of communication at work, in school, in the media, in government—and most of all, at home” (RCAP, 1996).

*Conclusion 15:* Findings of this research are consistent with findings from the Taskforce on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (13a) and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996). First Nation languages and culture in on-reserve communities continue to be under-resourced by the federal government.

#### *5.5.6. General Challenges*

*Finding 16*—General challenges faced by education directors include a perceived crisis in education within First Nation, community pressure for provincial schools to be the preferred schools for FN students to attend or other parent choices rather than First Nation schools being the automatic or first parent choice.

At present support from the parent community and First Nation agencies in relation to adequately supporting FN schools is lacking. Seventy-nine (79) percent of education directors indicated that a perceived crisis in terms of school-based education within their First Nation was a problem. On a another matter, 57% of education directors considered the media focus on schools in First Nation issues (such as poor student achievement) typically adopted a deficit view and as a problem.

Although only 49% of education directors indicated that demands made of them from community groups was a problem, 78% of education directors felt that achieving coordinated support from community and/or First Nation agencies was of larger concern. Another issue brought up by education directors was in relation to working within their own First Nation community: Unreasonable expectations and demands could be difficult and create personal conflict within family and amongst relatives. Another stressor for education directors, which for many women directors in particular was very time-consuming, was handling irate community members. Understanding and learning how to operate within the complexities of reserve politics also proved challenging for many directors.

Seventy-eight (78) percent of education directors felt that pressure for provincial schools to be the preferred educational provider or other forms of parental choice was viewed as a problem and the main thematic concern raised during interviews related to the dissatisfaction about how provincial schools were educating First Nation students.

Fifty (50) percent of education directors indicated performance contracts/agreements between the board and the director were not a problem and 43% indicated audits and reports from independent organizations were not a problem.

*Conclusion 16:* Survey and interviews both were consistent in determining other challenges faced by education directors including the perceived crisis in education within First Nation, other schools of choice rather than First Nation schools and coordinated support from community and First Nation agencies is lacking.

### ***5.6. Research Question 3***

*5.6.1. Research Question 3 – In what ways have First Nations communities met the criteria of Indian Control of Indian Education?*

Indian Control of Indian Education, as first defined and outlined in 1973 by the National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, in a policy paper presented to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1973), listed the following areas that the local Education Authority would be responsible for:

- Budgeting, spending and establishing priorities
- Determining the types of schools facilities required to meet the local needs: e.g. day school, residence group home, nursery, kindergarten, high school
- Directing staff hired and curriculum development with special concern for Indian languages and culture
- Administering the physical plant
- Developing adult education and upgrading courses
- Negotiating agreements with provincial/territorial or separate school jurisdictions for the kind of services necessary for local requirements, cooperation and evaluation of education programs both on and off the reserve
- Providing counselling services

(Assembly of First Nations, 1973, p. 6)

Research Question 1 addressed the ICIE responsibilities of the local authority via the education director. Research Question 2 addressed the challenges of carrying out the ICIE responsibilities of the local authorities via the education director. Research Question 3 outlined current support for ICIE by First Nations and by the Federal government.

#### *5.6.2. First Nation Support for Local Control of Education*

*Finding 17*—First Nations are supportive of local control of education

At present, the First Nations in Alberta support local control of education and see the value in education as a means of contributing to self-sustainability. However, First Nations prospects of achieving successful implementation of schooling is dictated by their own, sometimes limited, capacities. Their prospects are also severely hindered due to economies of scale (so far as being able to offer a well-defined, effective and efficient school system). In that respect, the weight of providing a fulsome education system rests largely on First Nation education directors' shoulders. Added to that, First Nation education sometimes gets mired in internal FN politics which then leads to instability within what is already a fragile education system. AFN (2010b) explained the path of ICIE "The Indian Control of Indian Education 1972 policy framework emerged from a time when First Nations education was in crisis and real change was necessary. The result was a number of successes by First Nations in First Nations education, despite the lack of full implementation of the ICIE 1972 policy by governments in Canada."(p. 3). Despite these challenges, 79% of education directors confirm that First Nation peoples are still supportive for Indian Control of Indian Education.

*Conclusion 17:* The research findings in this case study substantiate those of the Assembly of First Nations (2010b) and conclude that First Nations are supportive of having local control of First Nation Education.

### *5.6.3. INAC/Federal Government Support for Local Control of Education*

*Finding 18*—Education directors perceive INAC/Federal Government as unsupportive of local control of education.

Forty years ago, First Nations in Alberta were the catalyst for the call for change in First Nations education (with the 1970 Citizens Plus Policy paper). The end result of the call for devolution of education to First Nation, resulted in FNs winning the hard fought battle and

principle of local control. Despite this victory, and with colonial undertones, the Federal Government has over the last four decades provided only piecemeal in its financial support with the least minimum being provided to run an education system on First Nations. This is confirmed by 57% of Education directors who rated INAC/Federal Government support for Indian Control of Indian Education as being unsupportive. AFN (2010b) also confirm this lived reality “Successive federal governments have consistently failed to provide the necessary support to fully implement the comprehensive First Nations learning environments and systems envisioned by First Nations that would lead to an overall improvement in learning outcomes.” (p. 3). The federal government has placed conditions on First Nations communities in terms of requiring FNs to align their teaching and learning with provincial standards rather than respecting the autonomy of FNs in designing their own education system and curriculum. McCue points out “An insistence on comparability as a precondition to the exercise of jurisdiction by a First Nations government is unnecessary and retrogressive” (McCue, 1999, p. 24). McCue (1999) goes on to say “What is the point of insisting upon the transferability of students from a First Nations school to another system without academic penalty or identifying comparability of a First Nations education to a provincial or territorial system as a condition of the jurisdiction of First Nations education when there are countless examples of students from one education jurisdiction transferring half way around the world to another education institution in a different jurisdiction without academic penalties?” (McCue, 1999, p. 20). Essentially, what McCue refers to is that when students transfer to a provincial system, their academic history must be the same as their provincial counterparts or face academic penalty.

*Conclusion 18:* Education directors' perception of the federal government as being unsupportive of local control of education is confirmed by research findings (Assembly of First Nations, 2010b; McCue, 1999).

### ***5.7. Leading to More Effective Implementation of Indian Control of Indian Education***

In looking forward, education directors gave suggestions in relation to improving the effectiveness of education directors implementing ICIE and towards creating more effective schools on First Nations. One glaring 'elephant in the room' is the fact that the federal government does not take poverty on First Nations into consideration when developing school funding formulas and that drastically impacts the implementation of ICIE.. The current socio-economic conditions on First Nations have major implications on First Nation student progress and educational achievement. In 1997 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) reported Aboriginal people's living standards had improved in the past 50 years but, 17 years later, they still do not come close to those of non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

The differences listed by the 1997 Royal Commission continue to hold true today, namely that:

- Life expectancy is lower.
- Illness is more common.
- Human problems, from family violence to alcohol abuse, are more common too.
- Fewer children graduate from high school.
- Far fewer youth go on to colleges and universities.
- The homes of Aboriginal people are more often flimsy, leaky, and overcrowded.
- Water and sanitation systems in Aboriginal communities are more often inadequate.
- Fewer Aboriginal people have jobs.

- More Aboriginal people spend time in jails and prisons.

The commission stated the “picture it presents is unacceptable in a country that the United Nations rates as the best place in the world to live” (Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, retrieved from <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014597/1100100014637>).

*Finding 19*—Poverty on First Nations affects proper implementation of ICIE.

In terms of present day living conditions, Levin and Young’s quote from 20 years ago still applies: “In Aboriginal communities, poverty has been prevalent since treaties were signed and reserves created; it is no accident that Aboriginal communities, with the highest poverty levels in Canada, also have disproportionately high levels of suicide and disease” (Levin & Young, 1994, p. 299). This poverty is not short lived, children are born into it and life in poverty becomes the norm for the majority of Aboriginal people, through-out their lives. “Tragically, it is still the case in many Western countries that Indigenous and other ‘minority’ students are often the cohorts who spend lengthy periods—and sometimes all of their lives—in poverty. The enduring experience of poverty plus racial/ethnic discrimination in the lives of many students is still insufficiently understood by political and education leaders, and teaching professions in general” (Bishop & Mahoney, 2009, p. 323). Levin, in 2009, again found that the conditions were still the same as in 1994 and

“Many of these communities continue to suffer from poor housing, lack of fresh water, lack of infrastructure, lack of employment, and the associated problems of substance abuse and depression. Suicide rates among Aboriginal young people remain alarmingly high, and despite the progress in relationships, both active and passive discrimination against Aboriginal people continues to exist in Canada” (Levin, 2009, p. 689).

### *5.7.1. Implications of Poverty*

The overall implication of poverty is that it is not contained within the boundaries of Aboriginal communities but ripples throughout Canada. “it poses an economic and social cost to the entire Canadian society. Duffy and Mandell (2010) state that “poverty is one of the great unresolved and often overlooked social issues confronting Canadians” and indicate that despite periods of economic growth, “many sectors of the population have been left behind” (p. 251). A study by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards (Sharpe et al, 2009) estimated that, in 2006, the overall “excess spending on the provision of five core services to Aboriginals due to their below-average socio-economic condition amounted annually to \$6.3 billion” (Richards & Scott, 2009, p. 1). Ladson-Billings (2006) recognizes the far-reaching educational effects of poverty noting “it requires us to think about how all of us, as members of a democratic society, are implicated in creating these achievement disparities” (p. 236).

In the United States, some policies have harshly impacted and perhaps even kept certain populations in poverty. “I argued that federal and metropolitan policies-such as those regulating the minimum wage, job and housing availability, tax rates, and public transportation-maintain large poverty populations in U.S. cities and therefore create conditions that make systemic, sustainable reform of schools in low-income urban communities unlikely, if not impossible” (Anyon, 2006, p. 17).

“Many have suggested ... that underachievement in education is the result of a mentality of indolence, inferring that a sedentary lifestyle has developed among First Nations Peoples in Canada that is associated with economic dependence on government transfers” (Deer, 2009, p. 101). It is in fact, a “blame the victim” viewpoint that continues to marginalize First Nations people and, as Deer (2009) stated, the reality is that “opportunities for personal and social

development are still rare, economic development is still dependent on government assistance, and educational performance by First Nations still wanting” (p. 101).

### *5.7.2. Poverty Impacts on First Nation Schools*

For education, the issue of poverty then becomes, how does this affect academic attainment in relation to dominant society when many Aboriginal children’s lived experience is in the context of poverty? “A great deal of research shows that poverty is related to lower achievement in school, to greater risk of dropping out, and to lower eventual occupational status and income” (Levin & Young, 1994, p. 299).

Education directors who were interviewed were asked in what ways did the effect of so many First Nation students living in poverty shape what they do and the progress of First Nations. Thirty-four (34) percent of all responses centered on school initiatives they adopted to address poverty, 21% felt that support was needed for students to get out of the poverty cycle, 16% responded that parents required support and issues affecting parenting due to impacts of poverty. Other impacts of poverty identified by education directors were student attendance, home environment, and nutrition.

Children who live in poverty have limited access to resources afforded to those in more materially well-to-do families. First Nation children hardly see themselves portrayed in the Alberta provincial curriculum and material used in the classroom. “When they enter school, the child from the [advantaged] home is too often assumed to be more intelligent and more interested in learning than the child from the less advantaged situation. For the latter, homework assignments may require assistance they cannot access; they may not see their lives reflected in textbooks or test items; and their perspective is often neglected or marginalized in the formal curriculum” (Shields & Mohan, 2008, p. 295).

The completion rate of FN students in secondary schools is dismal and continues to perplex many educators and policy makers in government. “The 1996 Census found that approximately 60 percent of First Nations on-reserve residents aged 20 to 24 had not completed high school or obtained an alternative diploma or certificate” (Mendelson, 2008, p. 1). A decade later, some progress had been made as “The proportion of Aboriginal people who are high school graduates has grown from 54% to 66% in the last decade. Moreover, the public image of Aboriginal people among Canadians generally has improved significantly” (Levin, 2009, p. 689).

The prime reasons for high drop-out rates in schools by Aboriginal students were the socio economic factors: “research on dropouts, based mainly on statistical correlations, located the main ‘cause’ in socio-economic factors such as family background (parents’ occupation, income, educational background, ethnicity, family size, etc.), which lay largely beyond the control of the school system (MacKay & Myles, 1995, p. 95).

### *5.7.3. Parents’ Involvement*

Parent involvement in the FN or other schools where their children attend is still of concern. A key reason for this this may be due to their own experiences of schooling being negative: “Both Native and non-Native educators recognized that many parents are uncomfortable coming to school” (MacKay & Myles, 1995, p. 166). For some, the reluctance may not even have to do with the school but, rather, within their own homes. “Educators thought that problems facing single parents (family breakdown, alcoholism, finances) were so pressing that such parents had little time for the educational needs of their children” (MacKay & Myles, 1995, p. 166).

### *5.7.4. Towards Effective Schools*

For whatever combination of factors that contribute to poverty to be being prevalent in Aboriginal communities, the best way to combat poverty is through educational attainment of

our youth. “Our underlying conviction is that the most important means to alleviate the poverty and marginalization of Aboriginals in Canadian society is via improved education outcomes” (Richards & Scott, 2009, p. iii).

In the interviews in this study, education directors were asked what was needed to create more effective schools in First Nations and what capacities and powers directors were needed to lead the necessary reform. One education director indicated the education directors need “that power and ability to evaluate and remove people who are not effective in their position.” The capacities and powers education directors needed to do this reform was to be more innovative, network with others, have strong educational leadership and develop a good communication plan.

Mackay and Miles (1995) outline ways to address the quest for better educational attainments in Aboriginal communities as being through engendering band, board, and school support. Band Support was identified in those FN communities whose Chiefs and Councils rank the education of their children as a top priority and see it as an important contribution to the band’s strategic development plan. Board support was evident when those members recognize Native students both on and off reserve as legitimate learners whose particular needs and characteristics they are willing to address. Provincial boards need to also treat and serve all students equally and not perceive students from Aboriginal communities as “charity cases.” School support referred to those schools in which principals actively promote strategies for maximizing the academic success of all their students and are capable of engaging their teaching and support staff in the same mission. (p. 174).

#### *5.7.5. Programming*

Another area identified to improve education outcomes was providing appropriate programming. “There is convincing evidence that education programs that address problems of poverty can result in dramatically increased success rates for students. In particular, success has come from efforts such as preschool programs that help parents provide educational support to their children, and school programs that stress high expectations while providing high levels of support” (Levin & Young, 1994, p. 300).

Bishop and Mahoney (2009) indicated that the social capital must be addressed of students from non-dominate populations. “Social capital is what students from materially privileged backgrounds learn from their families, schools, and communities and it allows them to leverage opportunity and exercise influence both in and beyond school” (p. 308). They assert that students benefit from teaching done in light of teachers, principals, and schools knowing about students’ social capital. “Research from successful high-poverty schools shows that they provide a range of educational and social learning opportunities plus support structures that contribute to favourable student achievement” (Bishop & Mahoney, 2009, p. 308).

Teachers need to make classroom changes that lead to “pedagogical understandings and strategies that make the classroom more inclusive, more equitable, and that make it training ground for democratic citizenship” (Shields & Mohan, 2008, p. 297).

The teacher required to teach children from high poverty communities are teachers who have established rapport based on care and trust. “Effective teachers in successful high poverty schools, for example, typically place a high priority on establishing a deeply trusting and respectful professional relationship with students. These caring and committed teachers make a priority of getting to know their students’ interests, talents, qualities, values, beliefs, motivations, dispositions, and experiences” (Bishop & Mahoney, 2009, p. 312).

#### *5.7.6. Aboriginal language and culture*

The most significant outcome to be attained to move forward from poverty to economic prosperity for Aboriginal communities, and in at the same time, addressing the achievement gaps, is using the First Nations languages, restoring traditional beliefs, and providing cultural identities of Aboriginal students which not only bring about relevant education but will bring about sustainability from within (Richards, 2008; Richards & Scott, 2009; Tunison, 2007).

“Transforming the Eurocentric school curricula and pedagogical practices employed in most schools in postcolonial Canada into culturally appropriate programming for First Nations students may be a more appropriate means of addressing educational underachievement than focusing on inappropriate economic theories” (Deer, 2009, p. 102).

One problem using Aboriginal knowledge in today’s education is despite Aboriginal schools best efforts to provide teaching in Aboriginal languages and cultures; it is not recognized as significant to even measure in reporting educational achievement of Aboriginal students.

“Relative to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Aboriginal students are learning far more about their heritage and culture. Not only are Aboriginals learning about this heritage, so too are an increasing number of non-Aboriginal students. “This validation of the Aboriginal contribution to Canada is a measure of progress not captured by Census data” (Richards, 2008, p. 9).

*Conclusion 19:* Research findings strongly support the issue of poverty on First Nations being a prime consideration when developing a comprehensive education system for local control of education that will be effective and enable students to flourish.

#### ***5.8. Concluding Summary***

In consideration of all the findings listed, the most significant findings that restrict Alberta First Nation education directors capacity to improve the quality of schools are, in essence, the

inadequate core funding provided by the federal government, the rising cost of provincial funding, the achievement gap between First Nation students and other Alberta-based students, the underfunded language and cultural programs on-reserve and the poor level of First Nation support from the federal government for Indian Control of Indian Education.

In many respects, the writing has been ‘on the wall’ for over 30 years since the Indian control of Indian education was first demanded along with a demand that their language and culture be properly recognized. Until the rest of Canada recognizes this as the vital link to making educational achievement attainable for Aboriginal students, and government provides adequate language development and other resource funding the best educators available to assist First Nations to develop curriculum, and students’ mother tongue as the language medium, no major student achievement will occur. Such progress would also help government to being able to undo the wrong committed during the dark years of residential schools. Such progress would see proud FN parents overcome with emotion, when, for example, they watched their child attain the highest degree, saw their child sit among elders and converse respectfully in the mother tongue and to learn time honoured ceremonies, singing songs of creation, songs of dance. That is when we will be able to have attained success in in terms of local control of education.

### ***5.9.Study Recommendations***

#### *5.9.1. Recommendations for Future Practice*

*Recommendation 1:* Comprehensive, region-wide education director and Chief and Council Induction on First Nation Control of Indian Education. This should include a historical and contemporary view of issues relevant to First Nation control of Indian control of education. Education directors and Chief and Council members should be provided with historical documents such as the 1967 Hawthorn Report, the 1969 Indian Policy (White Paper), the 1970

Citizens Plus Paper, and the 1973 NIB/AFN Indian Control of Indian Education (Red Paper) to provide background in understanding the ICIE evolution in Canada and in Alberta. Introduction to Treaty 6, 7 and 8 First Nations History and current situations and affiliations with tribal councils and FNRMO with regard to FN education.

*Recommendation 2:* The development of a First Nation Education Director Orientation Framework to provided First Nation in orienting incoming education directors who are new to their First Nation. This could include: respective First Nation history on local control of education, and understanding of the current educational situation; FN cultural protocols with their respective language and culture; a tour and introduction of education director to FN Chief and Council, and managers; meetings with FN financial officers; and an information binder providing all relevant FN processes and procedures.

*Recommendation 3:* Collaborative Development of FN Education Authority Handbook between First Nation, INAC/AANDC education officers, FNRMOs' and the provincial government. The handbook should include 'reader friendly' federal government program funding requirements, nominal roll information, key provincial government curriculum, student programs, assessment information and useful educational contacts, historic and current information regarding how local control of education is being implemented by First Nations. Specifically, developers of this handbook should include First Nation Chief and Council representatives or school board officers, FN financial officers, FN education finance officers, FN elder, Alberta Education managers on curriculum, assessment and FNMI, INAC/AANDC Field Service officers and education officers and tribal council/FNRMO education directors. As a follow-up, an annual meeting could be held between all parties to update any such handbook and also provide a yearly handbook orientation or re-familiarisation provided to education directors.

*Recommendation 4:* Develop a series of seminars on FN education budget and school finance, FN personnel recruitment and retention strategies, effective time management, school board and committee training, education policy development, and developing instructional leadership at board level and school level.

#### *5.9.2. Recommendations for Future Research*

*Recommendation 5:* Further research on education director turn-over rate. This study did not ask for education directors' level of job satisfaction and whether they would again seek to occupy the same position if given the chance to do so.

*Recommendation 6:* A comparative analysis needs to be undertaken regarding FN education director salary and benefit packages compared with provincial counterparts. Issues such as “what counts” and “who decides” what are appropriate qualifications for FN education directors, needs to be part of that analysis.

*Recommendation 7:* Further research on female education directors is needed to ascertain whether there is any gender-based discrimination on First Nations exists (considering that there are predominately more male in First Nations leadership positions such as band administrators and Chief and Council).

*Recommendation 8:* A comparative analysis on female education directors and male education directors' leadership and management styles and work in First Nations education settings. With findings from this study, it appears there are two predominately ‘types’ of education directors in First Nations.

*Recommendation 9:* Further research using survey/interview and document analysis across Canada is needed to obtain a national perspective of education directors' implementation of ICIE.

### **5.10. Study Implications**

As this research was exploratory in nature, not surprisingly perhaps, there were some unexpected issues that were not anticipated. My hope that all education directors would end up participating in one or both phases of the study was optimistic but unrealistic, given that education directors have a multitude of tasks to complete on a daily basis and participation in study was not a top priority for any of them. This reality affected the sample size in the study. In First Nations, roles and responsibilities of education directors varied from one First Nation to another and sampling size may also have been affected by this. In retrospect, the possibility of conducting a survey via Survey Monkey may have garnered a more fulsome response. Survey item 6.b was a bit confusing and may have needed to be revised (6b. My prior experience in the central office adequately prepared me for the challenges of the directorship) appeared to be confusing and 40% ranked this item as not applicable. Academic achievement of students and language acquisition documentation were not part of this study in relation to determining ICIE success. Although student academic achievement has been set as the ultimate target for ICIE to represent success in the eyes of the federal government and many First Nations communities, it is difficult to measure or obtain across-the-board results when First Nations do not all participate in one common standardized assessment. First Nations have the inherent right to determine what their benchmarks of success will be and to collect baseline data so that success can be properly monitored and reported by First Nations education directors in respect to their accountability to the community, parents and students in that respective community.

#### *5.10.1. Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribCrit) Considerations*

Through the Tribal Critical Race Theory lens, the nine tenets, pinpoint the key considerations in understanding the current situation in First nations in Alberta:

1. Colonization is endemic to society. Considering the Alberta First Nations educators stress on competing with the provincial systems and dwindling student populations in some communities, tremendous effect by decolonized First Nations educators will need to take place to change the colonial mindsets of First Nation people, not only in Alberta but across Canada. When First Nation communities begin to have historical and contemporary discourses on the effects of colonization and oppression and embrace First Nations languages and cultures as the only way forward in the education of Alberta First Nations, will we then begin to transform First Nations schools and the success of students.
2. Government policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain. Unfortunately with the latest legislation tabled in parliament regarding First Nation education and other acts affecting First Nations, and being bull dozed forward by the present federal government, this has never become more apparent than now. First Nations educators in Alberta have indicated that they fear what the future will hold for First Nation education if these acts are passed by parliament.
3. Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities. The political/legalized aspect, specifically, in reference to Treaty 6, 7, and 8 are still very much recognized by the Alberta First Nations, so much so that, first nations affiliate each other by the treaty to which they belong to. The wilful disregard to those treaty obligations by present day governments continue to be at the forefront of political tables of First Nations in Alberta, particularly as it pertains to education.

4. Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification. First Nation educators in Alberta, whether they are First Nation or not, have explicit understanding that the goals of all First Nations they work for have and continue to be centered around attainment of tribal autonomy and self-determination.
5. The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens. Of the three concepts, many First Nation Directors, specifically with non-native directors, the academic knowledge becomes the primary focus. There are some efforts to ensure students understand what it means to be a member of their First Nation but very little or no emphasis is provided to the knowledge of survival (social capacity).
6. Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation. Many First Nations in Alberta have expressed dismay that government is pushing First Nations toward provincial education systems. These systems do not take into account the students First Nations ancestral heritage and culture and overlook the First Nations language emphasising English and French as language of choice.
7. Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups. Currently, on most First Nations, the concept of community and cooperation is still very much a part of lived experiences with children. With the exception of a few, the ownership and reaping of

lands is for the most part shared as a community but with the new legislation being introduced, it may have negative impacts on First Nations in the years to come.

8. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being. First Nation educators in Alberta have recognized the power of elder stories and have incorporated the use of elders in many classroom settings and in the professional development of teachers with ensuring an elder room is set aside in education conference settings in Alberta for conference attendees to go and listen to the stories shared.
9. Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. Many educational leaders that are First Nations in Alberta advocate for effective change constantly and as part of their duties, are expected to converse and brief First Nations leadership on the impacts of government policies.

### ***5.11. Closing Thoughts***

In spite of all the challenges I have had as a First Nation Educator, I have come to the realization that as Margaret Wheatley (1999) indicated, our core integrity creates patterns even when it seems like chaos. This is the natural way, the organic way of life. Humans are part of this living system. I liken this to the Horn way. Vine Deloria, Jr. indicates that our ceremonies take account of that:

It is time for the people to gather and perform their old ceremonies and make a final effort to renew the earth and its peoples— hooped, winged and others. Because many of these ceremonies are performed on behalf of the earth, all humans, and the other forms of life ... It remains for us to learn once again that we are a part of nature, not a transcendent species with no responsibilities to the natural world (Deloria, 1992, p. 23).

I feel that the state of First Nations is at a crossroads, with the current federal government seemingly being in direct opposition to First Nations. The Alberta Provincial education so far as FN culture and languages are concerned, is also in direct opposition to FN interests. What are current realities in First Nations education? Are First Nations able to revitalize their languages and teaching their customs, traditional practices and beliefs? Where do I stand in all this? Ask this of me 25 years ago, I would have focused specifically on test results, graduation rates, literacy rates, post-secondary rates, etc. Now, I am of the view that it is time: Time to begin tearing down the education system, and putting a more fluid education arrangement in place that is structured on core FN beliefs, ensuring that we prepare First Nation students, first and foremost, for retention and revitalization of their own languages and with that, their ways, bringing the ownership of language back them, and then providing students with the necessary requirements to be successful in both the western and First Nation worlds.

I believe that with all our environmental problems globally, more and more western society will be forced to become in tune with native world views and more environmentally 'light' practices over the coming decades. I say this because environmental impacts were known and acknowledged in our ceremonies and traditional ways of life well before non-indigenous society recognized them. An example of this is when we hold our annual sundance, we never have it at the same place, twice. The reason for that is that we need to let that land and habitat replenish itself. Respect for taking from the land was part of every ceremony and we made offerings to the mother earth before we took from her.

What the future holds for FN students, in absolute terms, is unknown. What is known, is that there are many themes circulating and being reinforced by research I have come across. These themes relate to the absolute failure of the current education system in Canada for First

Nations, and more broadly, the linguistic genocide by western society of indigenous languages. What can be done about it and native spirituality is important for sustainability. The underlying current in this research is to move in a new direction which is out of the box and into the circle! Vine Deloria Jr., in his book *Red Earth, White Lies* (1997) contends that if First Nations continue with our present view of government, our avoidance of allegiance to high spiritual powers and our exclusively scientific understanding of our world it will bring us to complete collapse (p. 3).

I look back to my grandmother's teachings and remember an instance when I wanted comfort and security, I would lay beside her and wrap my arms around her while she lay on her side quietly puffing her pipe, smelling that pipe tobacco as it wafted through the air and looking up and seeing the buckskin fringes hanging down from the sacred bundle my grandmother cherished, providing an additional overhang of protection and I'd take comfort in the presence of it. I would bury my face into her hand sewn dresses and she would call out *siputsisaaki, ki kiapatsis* "night smoke woman, what is going on with you" and when I didn't answer, she didn't persist and we laid in complete silence for however long I needed her security. If I answered and told her about how someone was being mean or complained I was being treated unfairly, she would respond *piinoottapistiitat, akskitapsi*. "don't worry about it, it will go back'.

Today, I see how her words are reverberating across the continent and into every caucus, round table and forum on the unprecedented financial and environmental crisis that current government leaders are grappling with due to the complete disregard to native land and people and animals indigenous to it. This situation is not ever to be thought with smugness but with an awareness of it.

Finally, regardless of what happens in First Nation education and what my role entails, I know it will be an arduous task but there is a Siksika saying, “*iitsikoo, iitsikoo*” meaning “it is difficult, because it is difficult,” there is no way around that.

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## Appendix A: Invitation Letter for First Nation Chiefs

December 3, 2012

Chief \_\_\_\_\_

Address

Dear Chief \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is a request for permission to undertake a multi-site case study research with your education director. This study aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta. As well, the aim is to establish what levels of support are provided for them and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation. This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Participation in the study involves asking education directors to complete a face-to-face interview with the researcher (up to 1 hour duration) which, subject to your permission, will be recorded. The focus of the interview will be to talk about the roles and responsibilities of First Nations Education Directors who have education authority over students and who manage First Nation schools in the province of Alberta.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your education director may withdraw from participating in the study now, or at any point without any prejudice or repercussions. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the data and a randomly assigned number between 1–60 (i.e. education director, 42). Any unique identifiers will be removed from the data (i.e. location, First Nation) and replaced with generic information in parenthesis. Only the researcher (Daphne Eagle Speaker) and her supervisor (Dr. Pamela Bishop) will have access to the data.

I will follow-up with a phone call in the next few days to discuss the research; and clarify any questions you may have about participating in this study. If a Band Council Resolution (B.C.R.) is required, I can send a draft sample B.C.R., and/or if you already have Research Guidelines for your First Nation, I am willing to fulfill all requirements that are outlined in those guidelines.

If you have any concerns during or after the research study, you are encouraged to discuss these at any time with the researcher, Daphne M. Eagle Speaker at (toll free)1-855-483-9991 or by email at [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca), her supervisors Dr. Pamela Bishop (519) 661 2111 ext. 88879 or by email at [pbishop@uwo.ca](mailto:pbishop@uwo.ca) and Dr. John Friesen at (403) 220-7266 or by email [jwfriese@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jwfriese@ucalgary.ca) or the Senior Ethics Resource Officer at the University of Calgary, Russell Burrows, at (403)220-3782 or by email at [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

Research participants may request a copy of the final dissertation or a summary of the findings to be emailed to them. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker,  
Doctor of Education Candidate, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

I agree to allow the researcher, Daphne Eagle Speaker, who is a doctoral student at the University of Calgary, currently undertaking research for that degree, to approach my education director (or equivalent senior person) with a view to requesting their participation in her study entitled: *Current Administration of Indian Control of Education in Alberta: Key Implications and Challenges*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Telephone Script for First Nation Chiefs

**Researcher:** Hello, (Good Morning/Good Afternoon). My Name is Daphne Eagle Speaker. I sent you an email awhile ago asking for permission to undertake a multi-site case study research with your [education director name]. Did you have a chance review this request yet?

**If Chief answers yes:**

**Researcher:** Do you have any questions with regards to this request?

**Chief:** No

Researcher will answer all questions and concerns.

*If they have further permission requirements, the researcher will make arrangements to gain further consent (Chief & Council interview, treaty area research guidelines, etc.)*

**Researcher:** If you don't have problem in having your education director participate, can you please fill out the attached agreement to participate and fax it back to me at number listed in email?

Researcher: Thank you for your time, good-bye

**If Chief answers no:**

**Researcher:** Would you like me to call you back or would you want me to give you some information about the study I am conducting at this time?

**Chief indicates for researcher to call back:**

**Researcher:** When would you like me to call you back?

*Researcher will arrange a call back time and then thank Chief for their time and say good-bye.*

**Chief indicates they want more information on the study:**

**Researcher:**

The study I will be doing aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta and what levels of support are provided for them and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation.

This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Participation in the study involves me inviting the education director to complete a (if they have on-reserve schools), I would also like to undertake a one to one face-to-face interview with the education

director that will take up to 1 hour which, subject to director permission, will be recorded. The focus of the interview will be to talk about the roles and responsibilities of First Nations Education Directors who have education authority over students and who manage First Nation schools. It will also address what levels of support are provided for them and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your education director may withdraw from participating in the study now, or at any point without any prejudice or repercussions. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the data and a randomly assigned number between 1–60 (i.e. education director, 46). Any unique identifiers will be removed from the data (i.e. location, First Nation) and replaced with generic information in parenthesis. Only the researcher (Daphne Eagle Speaker) and her supervisor (Dr. Pamela Bishop) will have access to the data.

**Researcher:** Do you have any questions or concerns?

**Chief:** yes

Researcher will answer all questions and concerns.

*If First Nation has further permission requirements, the researcher will make arrangements to gain further consent (Chief & Council interview, treaty area research guidelines, etc.)*

**Researcher:** Thank you for your time, good-bye

If Chief's email has been viewed, and questions and concerns addressed, and other ethic requirements have been met, the researcher will request for the Chief's support for research to proceed form (in either first email or after other further consent requirements have been met:

**Researcher:** If you don't have problem in having your education director participate, can you please fill out the attached support for research to proceed form and fax it back to me at number listed in email? Once I have received that form, I will contact your education director.

**Researcher:** Thank you for your time, good-bye

Appendix C: Telephone Script for Education Directors

**Researcher:** Hello, (Good Morning/Good Afternoon). My Name is Daphne Eagle Speaker. I sent you an email about a week ago asking for your permission to participate in an interview undertake a multi-site case study research. Did you have a chance review this request yet?

**If Education Director answers yes:**

**Researcher:** Do you have any questions with regards to them?

*Researcher will answer all questions and concerns.*

Research: If you don't have any further questions, are you interested in participating in this study?

Education Director: Yes

Researcher: When would be a good time to set up this interview? (arrange time)

Researcher: Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to seeing you. Good-bye.

or

Education Director: No

**Researcher:** I thank you for your time, have a good day, good-bye.

**If Director answers no:**

**Researcher:** Would you like me to call you back or would you like me to provide you with some information about the study I am conducting, at this time?

**Education Director indicates for researcher to call back:**

**Researcher:** When would you like me to call you back?

*Researcher will arrange a call back time*

Researcher: I thank you for your time, have a good day, good-bye.

**Education Director indicates they want more information on the study:**

**Researcher:**

This study I will be doing aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta and what levels of support are provided for them and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on First Nations.

This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Participation in the study involves completing a survey and a face-to-face interview with the researcher that is up to 1 hour which, subject to education director permission, will be recorded. The focus of the interview will be to talk about the roles and responsibilities of First Nations Education Directors who have education authority over students and who manage First Nation schools in the province of Alberta.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participating in the study now, or at any point without any prejudice or repercussions. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the data and a randomly assigned number between 1– 60 (i.e. education director, 46). Any unique identifiers will be removed from the data (i.e. location, First Nation) and replaced with generic information in parenthesis. Only the researcher (Daphne Eagle Speaker) and her supervisor (Dr. Pamela Bishop) will have access to the data.

**Researcher:** Do you have any questions or concerns?

**Education Director:** yes

*Researcher will answer all questions and concerns.*

Or

**Education Director:** no

Researcher: If you don't have any further questions, are you interested in participating in this study?

**Education Director:** Yes

**Researcher:** When would be a good time to set up this interview in the next two weeks? (arrange time)

**Researcher:** Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to seeing you. Good-bye.

Or

**Education Director:** No

**Researcher:** I thank you for your time; have a good day, good-bye.

## Appendix D: E-mail Invitation to Participate in a Survey

**Date:**

Dear potential participant,

**Invitation to participate in doctoral research**

This is an invitation to participate in doctoral research being conducted by Daphne M. Eagle Speaker, Doctoral Candidate under the supervision of Dr. Pamela Bishop, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary.

The purpose of this study is to understand the multi-site administrative, economic and political challenges faced by First Nations directors and if these challenges restrict their capacity to improve the quality of schooling for First Nations children.

This study will also form the basis of the dissertation that is a partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree that I am pursuing on campus through the University of Calgary.

Participation in the study involves completing the attached survey and returning the completed survey via the supplied stamped envelope or via email. This is phase one of my research and phase two involves face-to-face interviews with willing survey participants.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participating in the study now, or at any point without any prejudice or repercussions. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the data and a randomly assigned number between 1–60 (i.e. education director, 42). Any unique identifiers will be removed from the data (i.e. location, First Nation, etc.) and replaced with generic information in parenthesis. Only the researcher (Daphne M. Eagle Speaker) and her Supervisor (Dr. Pamela Bishop) will have access to the data.

I look forward to your response to my request. I may be reached by phone at (toll free)1-855-483-9991 or email at [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca). Likewise, my supervisors Dr. Pamela Bishop may be reached at (519) 661-2111 ext. 88879 or by email at [pbishop@uwo.ca](mailto:pbishop@uwo.ca) and Dr. John Friesen at (403) 220-7266 or by email [jwfriese@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jwfriese@ucalgary.ca) or the Senior Ethics Resource Officer at the University of Calgary, Russell Burrows, at (403)220-3782 or by email at [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

Research participants may view a copy of the final dissertation at the University of Calgary library or a summary of the research findings can be emailed if requested. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker,  
Doctor of Education Candidate, Graduate Programs

## Appendix E: Survey Consent Form

### **Name of Research, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker, Faculty of Education, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education  
(Phone) tollfree 1-855-483-9991, (E-mail) [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca)

### **Supervisor:**

Dr. John Friesen, University of Calgary, Faculty of Education, Graduate Program, EDT 1004,  
2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, AB, Canada, T2N 1N4 (Phone) 403-220-3183, (E-mail)  
[jwfriese@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jwfriese@ucalgary.ca)

### **Sponsor:**

Not applicable

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask me. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta. The study aims to establish what levels of support are provided for education directors and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation. This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Both your [First Nation/ school board] have been informed of this study.

Education directors from various First Nations school districts have been invited to participate in this study. My plan is to study the roles and responsibilities of education directors from across Alberta who have First Nations children in their student population.

### **What Will I Be Asked to Do?**

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a short survey. I anticipate this will take about 10 minutes to complete.

### **What Type of Personal Information will be collected?**

Should you agree to participate in this study; the following personal information will be requested from you:

- Your first and last name
- Your gender, age and ethnicity
- The First Nation/school board for which you work
- The length of time that you have held this position

### **Are there risks or benefits if I participate?**

There is one minimal risk to your participation in this study. The questions usually won't upset the participant but some questions might because they are a reminder of oppression and/or discrimination and/or disadvantage.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will identify a number of complex issues that you and others involved in supporting the education of First Nations students, face in their work. As well, it is hoped that the findings from this study will be published. So my hope is to provide a benefit for First Nations.

### **What happens to the information I provide?**

No one except the researcher and the supervisor will be allowed read any of the surveys. In addition, I have put a place for your name to **only** be on the first page of the survey so that when a survey is returned, I will put that page in a separate locked storage place in the remaining survey pages. This will mean your answers cannot be traced to you and so keeps your anonymity protected.

The electronic versions of the surveys will be kept in two locations: on a personally-owned, password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher and on a backup USB drive in a locked cabinet assessable only to the researcher. The data will be stored until December 31, 2015, or the date, on which this dissertation is accepted, at which time, it will be permanently destroyed.

Also, when I write the research report (thesis), I will use pseudonyms and refer to "one participant answered ..." In other words; I want to use the data in conceptual ways when reporting what the surveys identified. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym.

It must be understood that your participation in this survey is **absolutely voluntary**. Should you withdraw from this study, all data that you have provided up until the point of withdrawal will be retained and the data will be used.

### *Consent*

By returning the completed or partially completed survey you are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

### **Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or participation, please contact:

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker  
Faculty of Education  
Graduate Programs  
Phone: (toll free)1-855-483-9991  
E-mail: [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca)

or

Dr. Pamela Bishop  
University of Calgary  
Faculty of Education  
Graduate Programs  
Phone: (403) 220-3183  
E-mail: [pbishop@uwo.ca](mailto:pbishop@uwo.ca)

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact Russell Burrows, Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; e-mail [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator, Daphne M. Eagle Speaker, has kept a copy of the consent form.

## Appendix F: Email Invitation to Participate in Interview

[insert date]

[insert name of First Nation Education Director]  
[insert address of Nation Education Director]

Dear [insert name of Nation Education Director],

### **Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Interview**

This letter is a request for permission to undertake a multi-site case study research with yourself and [First Nation]. This study aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta. As well, this study aims to establish what levels of support are provided for education directors and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation. This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Participation in the study involves asking you to take part in a face-to-face interview with the researcher (up to 1 hour duration) which, subject to your permission, will be recorded. The focus of the interview will be to talk to you about the roles and responsibilities of First Nations Education Directors who have education authority over students and who manage First Nation schools in the province of Alberta.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participating in the study now, or at any point without any prejudice or repercussions. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, ultimately participants will be assigned a pseudonym in the data and a randomly assigned number between 1–60 (i.e. education director, 42). Any unique identifiers will be removed from the data (i.e. location, First Nation) and replaced with generic information in parenthesis. Only the researcher (Daphne Eagle Speaker) and her supervisor (Dr. Pamela Bishop) will have access to the data.

You can respond to this invitation by email to indicate your initial interest in participating in the study. A follow-up telephone session or face-to-face meeting can be arranged to discuss the research and clarify any questions you may have about participating. Once I receive confirmation of your interest, I will email you an interview consent form. If you agree to participate, you must sign the Interview Consent form prior to the interview. I will make you a courtesy copy of that signed form and send it to you by email or give it to you at the time of the interview.

If you have any concerns during or after the research study, you are encouraged to discuss these at any time with the researcher, Daphne M. Eagle Speaker at (toll free)1-855-483-9991 or by email at [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca), her supervisor Dr. Pamela Bishop at (403) 220-3183 or by email at [pbishop@uwo.ca](mailto:pbishop@uwo.ca) or Russell Burrows, Senior Ethics Resource Officer at the University of Calgary, Russell Burrows, at (403)220-3782 or by email at [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

Research participants may request a copy of the final dissertation or a summary of the research findings to be emailed to them. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker,

**Name of Research, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker, Faculty of Education, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education  
(Phone) 403-962-0720, (E-mail) [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca)

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Pamela Bishop, University of Calgary, Faculty of Education, Graduate Program, EDT 1004,  
2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, AB, Canada, T2N 1N4 (Phone) 403-220-3183, (E-mail)  
pbishop@uwo.ca

**Sponsor:**

Not applicable

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, fill free to ask me. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to determine what are the current roles and responsibilities of education directors on First Nations reservations in Alberta. As well, the study aims to establish what levels of support are provided for them and the implications and challenges of implementing First Nations education on your First Nation. This study will form the basis of the dissertation that is a requirement of the Doctor of Education degree that I am pursuing on campus at the University of Calgary.

Both your [First Nation/ school board] have been informed of this study. Your [First Nation/school board] has agreed to allow the use of its building for the purpose of interviewing participants in this study.

Education directors from various First Nations school districts have been invited to participate in this study. My plan is to study the roles and responsibilities of education directors from across Alberta who have First Nations children in their student population.

## **What Will I Be Asked to Do?**

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The interview will need to occur in a private location in your workplace where your responses will not be heard and where we will be free to converse without disruption. Alternately, you may choose to schedule it to another, mutually acceptable location. The interview will be scheduled at a date and time that are convenient to both you and the researcher.

During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions. With your permission, these questions and any of your responses to them will be audio recorded. The interview will take approximately up to one hour, though this may vary depending on the length of your responses. At the end of the interview, the researcher may ask you if there are any public documents that relate to your district that may provide background about of your present school system or your interview comments.

After the interview has been transcribed, likely within one month of your interview, you will receive a copy of the transcript of your interview through an attachment to an e-mail account of your choice or in a sealed envelope delivered to a street address of your choice. You will be invited to review this transcript and make any additions or deletions that you wish to make. If I have not heard from you within three weeks of my sending the material, I will assume that you approve of the material as it is.

Participation in this study, the interview process, and the review of the transcript are completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study or portions of the study, you may decline to answer any interview question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

## **What Type of Personal Information will be collected?**

Should you agree to participate in this study; the following personal information will be requested from you:

- Your first and last name
- Your gender, age and ethnicity
- The First Nation/school board for which you work
- The length of time that you have held this position
- The education level you have attained

### **Are there risks or benefits if I participate?**

There are two minimal risks to your participation in this study. The questions usually won't upset a participant but some questions asked during the interview process might because they are a reminder of oppression and/or discrimination and/or disadvantage. There is also a small amount of time required of you and the inconvenience of finding an interview location, ideally in your workplace, where there are no disruptions.

Further, if the interview session is conducted at your workplace, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and it is possible that colleagues or students may recognize your research participation. It is hoped that the findings from this study will identify a number of complex issues that you and others involved in supporting the education of First Nations students, face in their work. As well, it is hoped that the findings from this study will be published. So my hope is to provide a benefit for First Nations.

### **What happens to the information I provide?**

Participants are informed in the consent form that their participation in this study, the interview process, and in the review of the transcript are completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in the study or portions of the study, decline in answering any interview question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

No one except the researcher and the supervisor will be allowed to hear any of the audio tapes of the interviews. The audio tapes of the interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible to the researcher. The interview recordings may be transcribed by a professional under a signed confidentiality agreement. These electronic transcriptions will be kept in two locations: on a personally-owned, password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher and on a backup USB drive in a locked cabinet assessable only to the researcher. The data will be stored until December 31, 2015, at which time, it will be permanently destroyed.

Also when I write the research report (thesis), I will use pseudonyms and refer to "one participant answered ...." In other words, I want to use the data in conceptual ways when reporting what the surveys and interviews identified. All participants data will be either assigned a pseudonym and/or a coding number.

Should you withdraw from this study, all data that you have provided up until the point of withdrawal will be retained, but the data will be used.

**Consent Form Signatures:**

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or participation, please contact:

Daphne M. Eagle Speaker  
Faculty of Education  
Graduate Programs  
Phone: (toll free)1-855-483-9991  
E-mail: [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca)

or

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## Appendix G: First Nation Education Director Survey

### Current Administration of Indian Control of Education: Key Implications and Challenges

**Demographic Information:**

Please circle/fill in the most appropriate response:

- |   |                                     |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>1. What is your age:</b><br>30 or younger<br>31– 40<br>41– 50<br>51 or older | <b>2. Gender:</b><br>male<br>female | <b>3. Race/Ethnicity:</b><br>First Nation<br>Caucasian<br>Other: _____ |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|

**4. How many years of experience do you have:**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>a). as a teacher:</b><br>0 – 5 years<br>6 – 10 years<br>11 – 15 years<br>16 – 20 years<br>21 – 25 years<br>26 – 30 years<br>More than 30 years | <b>b). as education director:</b><br>0 – 5 years<br>6 – 10 years<br>11 – 15 years<br>16 – 20 years<br>21 – 25 years<br>21 – 25 years<br>More than 30 years | <b>c). in your current position:</b><br>0 – 5 years<br>6 – 10 years<br>11 – 15 years<br>16 – 20 years<br>21 – 25 years<br>21 – 25 years<br>More than 30 years |
|---|--|---|

**5. In terms of the First Nation full time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>a. The total (FTE) students currently attending on-reserve school/s is:</b><br>None<br>1–200<br>201–400<br>401–600<br>601–800<br>801–1000<br>1000 or more | <b>b. The total (FTE) students currently attending provincial school/s is:</b><br>None<br>1–200<br>201–400<br>401–600<br>601–800<br>801–1000<br>1000 or more |
|--|--|

<b>6. Please check (✓) most appropriate answer:</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A (not applicable)
a. My prior administrative experiences in schools adequately prepared me for the challenges of the directorship					
b. My prior experiences in the central office adequately prepared me for the challenges of the directorship					
c. My training outside education adequately prepared me for the challenges of the directorship					
d. My experience outside education adequately prepared me for the challenges of the directorship					

<b>7. In terms of Indian Control of Indian Education and of local control of schools/education please check one of the following:</b>	Very supportive	Supportive	Unsupportive	Very unsupportive
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a. How would you rate First Nation support for local control of education				
b. How would you rate INAC/federal government support for local control of education				

Directions: please check (✓) off the most appropriate answer

<b>8. In terms of some of your role and responsibilities as an education director, please rate how you find the following:</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>A slight problem</b>	<b>A moderate problem</b>	<b>A major problem</b>
a. Overall, general education system administration (central office staff, time management, reporting requirements, etc.)				
b. Instructional Leadership- such as setting standards, matching curriculum and assessment to standards and assessing instructional methods				
c. Management skills - such as finance, personnel, and facility				
d. Leadership - such as defining vision, setting goals, directions and education strategy				
e. Negotiating change - such as managing conflict, creating coalitions and dealing with community relations				
f. Working with a school board, council or other oversight body with its own public face				
<b>9. In terms of the general challenges faced by you, please rate the following:</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>A slight problem</b>	<b>A moderate problem</b>	<b>A major problem</b>
a. A perceived crisis in education within your First Nation				
b. Demands from community groups				
c. Pressure for provincial schools or other forms of parental choice				
d. Performance contracts/agreements between the board and the superintendent				
e. Audits and reports from independent organizations				
f. Media focus on schools in First Nation issues and school or failing of education in First Nation				
g. Coordinated support from community and/or First Nation Agencies				
<b>10. In terms of personnel challenges, faced by you, please rate the following:</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>A slight problem</b>	<b>A moderate problem</b>	<b>A major problem</b>
a. Finding qualified central office staff				
b. Finding qualified school principals				
c. Finding qualified teachers				
<b>11. In terms of political challenges faced by you, please rate the following:</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>A slight problem</b>	<b>A moderate problem</b>	<b>A major problem</b>
a. Chief & Council respect the decision making of the school board and/or education director/superintendent				
b. Chief & Council <b>do not</b> respect the decision making of the school board and/or education director/superintendent				
c. School boards/committees understand their roles and responsibilities				
d. Band offices are overly bureaucratic and resist change				
e. Federal mandates constrain local First Nation authority				

f. Provincial mandates constrain local First Nation authority				
<b>12. In terms of educational challenges faced by you, please rate the following:</b>	<b>Not a problem</b>	<b>A slight problem</b>	<b>A moderate problem</b>	<b>A major problem</b>
a. The achievement gap between students is a critical and chronic challenge				
b. Provincial standards, accountability and assessment create overwhelming pressure				

<b>13. Please rate the following claim:</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
a. I am confident that the program First Nations we have in place will close the achievement gap within 5 years				
b. The language and culture programs/courses of the First Nation are adequately provided for in the on-reserve schools				
<b>14. In terms of economic challenges and funding, please rate the following claims:</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
a. Federal Government core funding is adequate for the delivery of Alberta education programs that are provided in on-reserve schools to First Nation children				
b. The non-core targeted programs adequately address the needs of on-reserve children (i.e. special education, school initiatives, capacity building, etc.)				
c. The First Nation assists through their own band funding to meet the core needs of the students				
d. The rising cost of provincial tuition for students attending off-reserve schools is of great concern				

**In the next questions, I am keen to know what you consider are your most important tasks in your role as Director, and what tasks take the greatest amount of your time:**

<b>Education Director/Superintendent Task</b>	Please rank in order of importance each task from one (1) to ten (10) with one (1) as most important:
Budget and school finance	
Planning and goals formulation	
Parent/community relations	
Curriculum and instructional leadership	
Personnel recruitment/retention	
Professional growth/staff development	
School board relations/training/policy development	
Legal issues	
Political/Chief & Council issues	

School facilities management	
<b>Education Director/Superintendent Task</b>	Please rank each task in terms of the time it typically takes from one (1) to ten (10) with one (1) as most time-consuming:
Budget and school finance	
Planning and goals formulation	
Parent/community relations	
Curriculum and instructional leadership	
Personnel recruitment/retention	
Professional growth/staff development	
School board relations/training/policy development	
Legal issues	
Political/Chief & Council issues	
School facilities management	

**Thank you for your time. Your responses will be kept confidential.**

**Please do not hesitate to attach additional pages if you want to bring other issues to our attention.**

Please return by: Friday, April 3, 2012. Email to [dmchugh@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dmchugh@ucalgary.ca) or fax to: 403-901-7971

## Appendix I: Interview Questions

### **Current Administration of Indian Control of Education: Key Implications and Challenges**

For the purpose of this study, up to 30 semi-structured interviews will be conducted with willing education directors who administer Indian Control of Indian Education and have schools on-reserve. The researcher will introduce open-ended questions as appropriate in order to engage the interviewee in a discussion on the topic and elicit opinions and experiences related to the topic. Each interview is anticipated to be 1 hour in duration.

#### Semi-structured interview questions:

1. What are your key roles and responsibilities at present?
2. In thinking back to your first month or two on the job in your position would you please describe the processes and procedures that were in place to assist you in familiarizing yourself with the roles and responsibilities of your position?
3. In terms of your educational background and experience, what in particular prepared you to meet the demands of your directorship?
4. Understanding of education directors' work in the age of accountability is important. Would you please describe your reporting process, outlining who are you accountable to and report to on a daily, monthly, and yearly time frame.
  - a. What are the strengths in that process?
  - b. What are the shortcomings in that process?
5. In looking at the challenges and barriers of your position:
  - a. What significant administrative challenges, if any, have you encountered and how did you overcome them?
  - b. What significant economic challenges, if any, have you encountered and how did you overcome them?
  - c. What significant political challenges, if any, have you encountered and how did you overcome them?
  - d. What other significant challenges have you encountered?
6. What strategies would you recommend to improve the effectiveness of education directors in First Nations as they come onto the job?
7. What in your own opinion, would it take to create more effective schools in First Nations; and what capacities and powers would directors need to lead the necessary reform?
8. In what ways does the effect of so many First Nation students living in poverty shape:
  - a. What you do?
  - b. The progress of First Nation?
9. And finally, is there anything you would like to add relevant to this topic?