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Weaving Instructional Leadership and Indigenous Knowledge: An Exploratory Case Study

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Weaving Instructional Leadership and Indigenous Knowledge: An Exploratory Case Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the research question "What constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective?" The purpose of the study was to find out what constitutes instructional leadership through a First Nation and school community perspective. The hope of the research is that by weaving together Indigenous knowledge teachings and instructional leadership student outcomes would be improved. This qualitative case study implemented focus groups and semi-structured interviews that were respectful of local Indigenous protocols. Focus groups were used for teachers and semi-structured interviews were held for school leadership. Information was obtained through semi-structured questioning, and both focus groups and interviews were recorded then manually analyzed.

The research study involved an extensive literature review on instructional leadership theories and practices, and Indigenous knowledges. The study found that instructional leadership in a First Nation school setting should: 1. Draw from First Nation teachings; 2. Focus on developing relational trust with students; 3. Demonstrate an ethic of care for the students and the community; 4. Have strong evidence of active and ongoing efforts to learn about First Nation teachings by the school community (e.g., teachers, staff, school leaders). It is recommended that instructional leaders in First Nation school contexts include Elders and community members in school planning and decision-making processes, and that instructional leaders create bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge teachings and content in curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Candace. Her unconditional support and love has made this accomplishment possible. Her examples of patience inspired me to keep going with this endeavour, for without her, this project is not possible. I would also like to dedicate this to my Mom and Dad. I will always be grateful for what they have done for me.

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Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

Introduction

This study investigated instructional leadership in a federally-funded on-reserve First Nation band-operated school (in southern Alberta). The research explored how First Nations cultural practices and Indigenous knowledge can impact educational instructional leadership with the long-term goal of improving student outcomes. In this dissertation I examined the principles of instructional leadership alongside a First Nation epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy of teaching and learning. By weaving First Nations cultural teachings and Indigenous knowledge into regular classroom instruction, the study's findings inform and strengthen current instructional leadership theories and practices for both indigenous and non-indigenous students.

My Story

After my training as a secondary social studies teacher during my undergraduate studies at the University of Regina, I worked for various school boards in both Saskatchewan and Alberta. I returned to university seven years later to complete a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Saskatchewan. Following my post-graduate work, I took a teaching position with a First Nation school board in Alberta, where I have been employed for the last eight years in various roles including: a kindergarten to grade 12 physical education teacher, a senior high knowledge and employability teacher, and (in my current role) a high school academic guidance counsellor. From working at this Alberta First Nation School, I have admired how First Nation students are able to hold onto their vibrant cultural identity and traditions. This has been demonstrated to me by the amount of students who can still fluently

speak their cultural language, and by students who have shared with me their weekend experiences of picking medicinal plants with their grandmothers, or how they have skinned and tanned hides from animals that they hunt with their family members. As a fourth-generation Canadian of Western European heritage, many of the cultural and linguistic practices of my ancestors have been lost to me as I have been assimilated into mainstream Canadian culture.

The school where I work weaves many components of First Nation culture into the daily instructional program of Alberta curriculum. Examples of this integration include First Nation language and culture classes, a traditional "Hunt Camp" run twice a year by local community members and Elders, and weekly opportunities for peer groups (e.g., junior high or high school students) to converse with Elders about any issue that they are encountering (whether school related or of a personal nature). During my time working at this First Nation school, I have seen how First Nation cultural integration into the education process has translated into academic success and has had a positive effect on the climate, culture, and learning of the school. My experiences working with this First Nation school has inspired me to continue my educational journey and pursue this doctoral research.

After witnessing the effects of such a positive environment, I began to wonder if there was a way for this First Nation school (despite the social, technological, and economic challenges faced by many of the people who make up its community) to share its wealth of cultural traditions and practices with other students (both First Nations and non-First Nations) who do not reside on this reserve? I also began to wonder whether or not some of the ideas that I had been exposed to during my graduate studies could benefit First Nations students. I became particularly interested in the concept of instructional leadership and how it might be weaved with Indigenous knowledge to suit the First Nation students that I had been teaching and counselling.

This line of initial inquiry led to the primary research question of this dissertation: What constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective?

Researcher Assumptions

I have gained experience working with First Nations youth during my educational career, most significantly through my over eight-year employment in one particular First Nation school. My academic experience includes an undergraduate degree in secondary social studies and a post graduate degree in curriculum and instruction. These educational and professional experiences have shaped my assumptions and philosophical orientation. Due to the oppression of certain demographic groups by Western societal structures, I have had to orientate myself to the philosophical perspectives of critical theory in order to uncover these uncover hidden structures. In particular, I have learned that understanding the ways one is oppressed enables one to take action to change oppressive forces (Little John, 1992, p. 238). A critical perspective to my research has helped me better understand the institutions, symbols, and structures that oppress First Nations peoples in our democratic society. Critical theory teaches that knowledge is power, and the weaving together of traditional Indigenous knowledge and current mainstream models of instructional leadership could empower First Nations youth with the knowledge they need to succeed.

Background and Context

The Aboriginal population (which includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples) is one of the fastest growing demographics in Canada. According to the Government of Canada, between 1996 and 2006 the Aboriginal population increased by 45% (CBC News, 2010). In 2011, the National Household Survey (NHS) showed that 1,400,685 Canadians were of Aboriginal identity (e.g., First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), representing 4.3% of the total Canadian

population. From 2006 to 2011, the Aboriginal population increased by 232,385 people, a 20.1% increase, which is nearly four times greater than the increase of the non-Aboriginal population (a 5.2% increase) in the same time period (NHS, 2011). First Nations are the largest group of Indigenous people in Canada, accounting for 60.8% of the total Indigenous population at 851,560 people in 2011 (NHS, 2011). Statistics Canada (2011) data found that many First Nations people reside in Ontario and the Western provinces. As a percentage of the total population, First Nations people proportionally made up a larger percentage of the population of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories (NHS, 2011).

The Aboriginal population is a young demographic as people under the age of 24 years old made up close to half (46%) of the total Canadian Aboriginal population (NHS, 2011). In comparison to the rest of Canada, the 24 years and under group accounts for only 31% of the population. Aboriginal children aged 14 and under made up 28% of the total Aboriginal population in Canada and 7% of all children in Canada. Non-aboriginal children aged 14 and under represented 16.5% of the total non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal youth between the ages of 15 and 24 represented 18.2% of the total Aboriginal population and 5.9% of all youth in Canada, whereas the non-Aboriginal youth accounted for 12.9% of the total non-aboriginal population. The median age for all First Nations people was 26 years old (NHS, 2011, p. 2).

Data from Canada's NHS (2011) reveals that younger Indigenous Canadians have greater levels of educational attainment than older Indigenous people. Indigenous peoples ages 35 to 44, have a high school completion rate of 68% compared to 58.7% of Indigenous people aged 55 to 64. In contrast, non-Aboriginal Canadians aged of 35 to 44, have a high school completion rate of 88.7%, while those aged 55 to 64 had a completion rate of 79.5%. Unfortunately, Indigenous students experience low educational successes. In 2011, almost one in four Indigenous people

between the ages of 25 and 64 (22.8% according to Statistics Canada [2012]) did not have a high school diploma; this was twice the national average when compared to other Canadians within the ten provinces (Statistics Canada, 2012). It has been these statistics that has led me to ask: How can we improve these results? As I argue in this dissertation, providing quality instructional leadership together with traditional First Nations cultural practices in the educational institutions that Indigenous peoples attend may be one answer.

The Purpose and Goal of the Research

The theories and practices of instructional leadership have been identified in a few studies (Leithwood, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Whalstrom, 2011). According to Hallinger (2005), instructional leadership is defined in a school setting as those people in positions of responsibility (e.g., school administration, district leadership, school counseling team and teachers) who impact student outcomes and influence student learning (p. 229). My research investigates "mainstream" instructional leadership theory and Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy of learning and teaching. What practice(s) would Indigenous knowledge that is woven with mainstream instructional leadership constitute? A goal of this research was to positively impact teaching and classroom instruction in a way that is more authentic to First Nations students, so that they can see their traditional values and cultural teachings reflected in daily instruction. The purpose of this research was to understand what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. The goal of this research is to improve student outcomes by weaving together Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership.

The Research Question

The research question for this study is: What constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective? Secondary questions for this study include:

a) How is instructional leadership implemented in a First Nation educational setting?

b) How can Indigenous knowledge be woven together with mainstream instructional leadership in a First Nation secondary school context?

c) How can instructional leadership be strengthened in First Nation schools?

d) How would Indigenous knowledge practices be strengthened within an Indigenous school setting?

e) What classroom instruction works best for First Nation students and could the quality of instruction be improved?

Brief Overview of the Methodology and Methods

This qualitative study will incorporate case study methodology and Indigenous methodology. Cherubini (2014) has claimed that case study is ideal when working with Indigenous people because it provides flexibility to discuss, document, and hear distinct issues (p. 23). Chilisa (2012) stated that case study is a common research design for working with Indigenous peoples when oriented towards an interpretive paradigm (p. 34). As for Indigenous methodology, Kovach (2009) has provided an example from the Plains Cree First Nation perspective called Nehiyaw Methodology, which six key qualities are: holistic epistemology, story, the experimental, tribal ethics, tribal ways of gaining knowledge, and lastly, an overall consideration of the colonial relationship (p. 44). The characteristics of the Nehiyaw

Methodology include: tribal epistemology, decolonizing, an ethical aim, research preparations involving critical protocols, research preparation involving standard research design, making meaning of knowledge gathered, and giving back (Kovach, 2009, p. 45).

The epistemology of this study originates from one particular First Nation. Wilson (2008) explained epistemology as the study of the nature of thinking or knowing. It simply asks the question, "How do I know what is real?" Epistemology involves the theory of how we come to have knowledge or how we know that we know something, and includes entire systems of thinking or styles of cognitive functioning that are built on specific ontologies (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). Wilson (2008) described ontology as the theory of the nature of existence or the nature of reality. Ontology simply asks, "What is real?" and makes people question whether there is one "real world" that each of us observes differently through our own senses, or if there are various worlds depending upon the point of view of the observer (p. 33). By using an Indigenous methodology in this research, I hope that this Nation will exercise what Giroux (2005, p. 511) promotes—voice—in order to balance the hegemony of the dominant cultural groups that control many structures currently within society. Graveline (1998) referred to Giroux's idea as "First Voice," which is one's own interpretation of experience that guides our knowledge base. "First Voice" is a critical pedagogical tool that challenges dominant cultural control because it is rooted in feminist, anti-racist, Aboriginal and experiential discourse (p. 118).

Research methods for this study included a focus group for teachers and community members. Focus groups allow for all participants to express their views and share ideas, and they also have characteristics similar to the First Nations'practice of the talking circle (Chilisa, 2012, pp. 213-214). Semi-structured interviews with individuals who were in positions of authority in the school or district setting (including the principal, vice-principal, superintendent, respected

Elders and district coordinators) were also conducted in this study. Excluding positional

leadership from the focus group setting allowed teachers and community members to express

their views in a setting where there was no power imbalance.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

- First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word
  "Indian," which some people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely
  used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples"
  refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status. Some Indian peoples
  have also adopted the term "First Nation" to replace the word "band" in the name of their
  community" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada [AANDC], 2012).
- Band: "A body of Indians for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart
  or money is held by the Crown, or declared to be a band for the purposes of the Indian
  Act. Each band has its own governing band council, usually consisting of one chief and
  several councilors. Community members choose the chief and councilors by election, or
  sometimes through custom. The members of a band generally share common values,
  traditions and practices rooted in their ancestral heritage. Today, many bands prefer to be
  known as First Nations" (AANDC, 2012).
- Aboriginal: "The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian
  Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people—Indians, Métis and Inuit.
  These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and
  spiritual beliefs" (AANDC, 2012).

- Indigeneity: This term emphasizes the opportunity of Indigenous people to play a transformative role in society. This is done by symbolically enacting a sense of resistance to the imposition of Eurocentric values, education, and culture and thus furthering Indigenous autonomy (O' Sullivan, 2007, p. 1).

- Indigenous Knowledge: "Indigenous knowledge (IK) is part of the collective genius of humanity. It represents the accumulated experience, wisdom and know-how unique to nations, societies, and or communities of people, living in specific ecosystems of America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. It represents the accumulated knowledge of the earth's people that represent over 5000 languages and cultures contained in more than 70 nation-states" (Littlebear, 2009, p. 8).

- Instructional leadership: This refers to those in positions of responsibility (e.g., School Administration, district leadership, school counseling team, and teachers) who impact student outcomes and influence student learning (Hallinger, 2005, p. 229).

- Transformational leadership: The ability of some leaders who inspire staff to new levels of energy, commitment, and moral purpose. This vision allows organizations to transform so that they can overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals by developing the capacity to work collaboratively (Burns, 1978).

- Indigenous: This term refers to people and peoples who identify their ancestry with the original inhabitants of Australia, Canada, and other countries worldwide. The term Indigenous is also used to describe things that belong to those peoples (Wilson, 2008, p. 34).

Rationale for and Significance of the Study

Currently, First Nations' educational attainment levels are below those of other Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2012). The purpose of this project is to show how instructional leadership that incorporates traditional First Nations knowledge systems and teachings can support First Nations students on reserves and in public schools in order to achieve stronger educational outcomes. Examples of these outcomes would include higher rates of high school completion and better attendance rates. While much has been written about instructional leadership (Leithwood, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Seashore Louis, 2012), scant material has been published about the practice and impact of instructional leadership in First Nations band operated schools.

By implementing mainstream instructional leadership theory and practices and weaving them with a First Nations perspective, the overall positive school experience for First Nations people might increase. Instructional leadership might not only have a positive impact on First Nations communities and students but also on the educational practitioners who work with them. As such, the teachers I interviewed might have been intrinsically motivated to participate in the study because it provided them with some professional benefits, such as a space to reflect on professional growth, the opportunity to be exposed to current instructional leadership literature by educational researchers, and the ability to interact in discourse about instructional leadership pedagogy and practice. Hallinger (2005) has noted that the concept of instructional leadership needs to be practiced by teachers if student learning is going to be positively impacted. The study did weave instructional leadership with First Nations wisdom, culture, and pedagogy to improve educational outcomes such as attendance and academic achievement for First Nations students.

The results of the study will be shared and may be applied in federally funded band operated schools, and provincial school systems that have First Nations students.

Role of the Researcher

In my role as the researcher, I strove to be as transparent as possible throughout the process of the study. As transparency was important during this research—because participants needed to know that their actions and comments would not be misinterpreted or misrepresented in any way—a member-checking process was employed. I ensured that I asked for meanings and clarifications from community members or elders whenever I was unsure or unclear about the traditions and practices of the First Nation culture. I have also been careful to be respectful and sensitive to cultural practices and realities of the First Nation throughout the study. The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans TCPS 2 (2014) was met prior to the initiation of the study. The research data was collected and analyzed in a systematic manner, and the findings of the study were shared with the First Nation and educational community participants during various parts of the research process in order to gain validation. Throughout the research process, I worked closely with my academic advisor, supervisory community members, and Elders of the First Nation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

My study explored what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. This chapter provides a definition and discussion of Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership, with a specific focus on the efficacy of Indigenous knowledge and public schools, the implementation of First Nations culture in public schools, and reveals the gaps in the literature regarding the relationship between Indigenous leadership and instructional leadership. The chapter concludes with giving attention to Indigenous leadership in education, identifying the gaps in the literature regarding instructional leadership, and putting forward a conceptual framework of the study.

Indigenous Knowledge/Aboriginal Education

What is Indigenous knowledge and how is it defined? According to Villegas, Newebaur, and Venegas (2008), Indigenous knowledge includes the inextricable intergenerational relationship with the land, which is both experiential and intimate. Indigenous knowledge is about relationships and explores place and power (Villegas, Newebaur, & Venegas, 2008). Durie (2005) has described Indigenous knowledge as a system where the individual is a part of the environment and is an equal in that relationship. This Indigenous knowledge, however, is often at odds with the Western science worldview because of its interrelationship to spirituality (Durie, 2005). Cajete (1994) believed that "traditional systems of Indian education represent ways of learning and doing through native centred philosophy. They are among the oldest continuing expressions of environmental education in the world" (p. 20). Furthermore, according to Battiste (2002), "Indigenous knowledge is systemic, covering both what can be observed and what can be

thought. It comprises the rural and the urban, the settled and the nomadic, original inhabitants and migrants" (p. 7). Indigenous peoples have had and continue to have complex and sophisticated knowledge systems that have existed for thousands of years prior to colonization.

Indigenous scholars Battiste and Skinner provide insight into Indigenous knowledge by describing Indigenous values and skills that are passed on generationally. According to Battiste (2002), technologies that were passed on from generation to generation by modelling, practice, and animation, and that were also sustained and developed by Indigenous civilizations, comprised Indigenous knowledge (p. 2). Despite the vast cultural diversity among Indigenous groups across the world, Skinner (as cited in Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 56) found that Indigenous knowledge, which he referred to as a "tribal code of education," shared seven common values: respect for elders and wisdom; responsibility and courage; connectedness and love; cooperation and generosity; non-interference and indirect communication; independence and freedom; reflection, silence, and spirit. Relatedly, Grenier (1998) defined Indigenous knowledge as the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men Indigenous to a particular geographic area (p.1). Indigenous knowledge is continually expanded from one generation to the next, is cumulative, and is the result of generations of trial and error experiments, lived experiences, and careful observations. Indigenous knowledge does not pertain solely to the management of the natural environment but covers all aspects of life. Grenier (1998) also noted that all forms of Indigenous knowledge can be innovated to adapt to external knowledge (p.5).

Semali and Kincheloe (1999) have defined Indigenous knowledge as the way that residents of an area understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives (p.

3). They deconstruct the term "Indigenous knowledge" to where its epistemological meaning dates back to the relationship between subjected Indigenous peoples and European nation-states whose aim was to incorporate resources into the global economic system. This process resulted in cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples through subsequent "reeducation" in the colonizer's language (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, pp. 12-13). However, Semali and Kincheloe (1999) demonstrated instances where Indigenous knowledge was used by these European colonizing nation-states to their advantage and where these states took ownership of it (e.g., China's use of harnesses for horses, the invention of cast iron, the development of mechanical clocks and magnetic science, and that Indigenous Polynesians contributed knowledge of both navigation and sea currents (p. 25). According to the government of Canada, Aboriginal peoples in this country invented or discovered numerous technologies such as: "olefin hydrocarbons and methane to make petroleum jelly and used it to hydrate and protect animal and human skin," "the first chewing gum, which was collected from spruce trees," and, "the active ingredient in pain relievers such as Aspirin was known to First Nations for centuries. It is found in species of the willow tree, including the pussy willow" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2011).

Barhardt (2008) has described Indigenous knowledge as ways of being that encompass values. The Alaska Native Knowledge Network, according to Barhardt (2008) for instance, has incorporated the following values into their education system: respect for elders, respect for nature, respect for others, and love for children; providing for one's family; knowledge of one's traditional language; knowledge of the virtues of wisdom, spirituality, unity, compassion, love, dignity; and honour of ancestors. Other virtues that are important according to the findings of the Alaska Native Knowledge Network included humor, humility, honesty, sharing, caring, and

being cooperative, as well as the ability to embody the characteristics of endurance, hard-work, self-sufficiency, and peacefulness (pp. 120-121). It could be argued that these values are universal when incorporated in an education system, not only benefitting Alaskan Native students, but all students regardless of their cultural background.

The Efficacy of Indigenous Knowledge and Public Schools

Indigenous knowledge may provide the tools and strategies needed to overcome the cultural, psychological, and social challenges and struggles flowing from a history of oppression, marginalization, and racism that Indigenous youth have faced within the mainstream school setting. O'Sullivan (2007) has expanded on Indigenous knowledge by emphasizing how Indigenous peoples can change society by promoting Indigenous autonomy through resisting the symbolically Eurocentric educational structures, values, and culture that are imposed on them. O'Sullivan (2007) refers to this form of Indigenous knowledge as *Indigeneity*. The New Zealand term of Indigeneity was similar to Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred's (2005) "new warrior" theory, which showed how Aboriginal youth reconnected with their culture by embracing their language, spirituality, and traditional lands.

Is it possible for Aboriginal peoples in Canada to use Indigenous knowledge within the traditional mainstream education system? The Canadian government conducted a major study that showed that Aboriginal people experience disparity in many social, economic, and health indicators (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996) in comparison to the general population. Indigenous knowledge is vitally important for our Aboriginal youth because when they witness their cultural philosophies, practices, and beliefs being represented and embraced in

a positive way, they are more likely to be engaged in learning and to develop a more positive self-concept (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

Implementation of First Nations Cultures in Education

If Aboriginal youth are struggling in Canadian schools, how then do educators implement strategies or create environments where Aboriginal youth can be more successful in school as well as develop their overall wellbeing? Harrington and CHiXapkaid (2013) have proposed, what they term, culturally relevant education that has specific pedagogical and curricular objectives as a way to attain this success. Harrington and CHiXapkaid see culturally relevant education as simply, "What works"? and "What does not work?" in regards to meeting the needs of Native children (p. 499). Such practices have been effective with First Nations youth in the United States (American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian).

Historically, the idea of incorporating First Nations values into education was recognized (in post-colonial times) by Lewis Meriam, when he was commissioned by the US Department of the Interior to examine the educational system of American Indians. His findings—the "Meriam Report"—were published in 1928, in which he challenged the forcible removal of American Indian youth from their homes and recommended that education should focus on individual needs, interests, and abilities. He recommended that a standard "native" curriculum or method of instruction would be unsuccessful because of the diversity of American Indian tribes (Meriam 1928). More recently, Pewewardy and Hammer (2003) found that culturally responsive education would better support American Indian learning. Culturally responsive learning has the following criteria: self-reflective analysis of one's attributes and beliefs, trusting, caring, cultural

literacy, transformative curriculum, inclusive classrooms, and respect for diversity (Perewardy & Hammer, 2003).

A five year research study (2004-2009), Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development Project (LUCID), investigated the components of culturally responsive education and Indigenous educational research at Simon Fraser University, in Haida, Ts'mysen, and St:lo First Nations, and within three school divisions of the province of British Columbia (Nielson, 2010). Nielson (2010) reported that projects were successful when educators valued Indigenous culture and when non-Aboriginal teachers gained confidence through the sense of belonging they felt in their First Nation community. LUCID took place after many of the non-Aboriginal teachers expressed that they had been unprepared to incorporate First Nation teachings into their pedagogy. In response, Nielson's (2010) concept of Imaginative Education promotes the creation of a more memorable and enjoyable learning path while the student is processing the learning content, and which situates imagination as helping both emotional and logical functions within the brain during this process (p. 414). Nielson (2010) defined Imaginative Education as the use of images and connections with human feelings in order to engage students emotionally in the learning content (p. 414). While some teachers within the study challenged the concept of Imaginative Education as put forth by Nielson (2010), the majority acknowledged that incorporating one's own Aboriginal language into pedagogical practice created a culturally relevant learning environment and an emotionally engaging experience for Indigenous learners.

Another study that investigated ways to improve Indigenous educational outcomes was the Gunn, Pomahac, Good Striker, and Tailfeathers (2011) study in Alberta. This study looked at 16 selected projects that were funded by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)

over a 10-year period (1999-2009). The projects were designed with the goal of improving

student performance and learning. All of the 16 projects had an action research design with the

goal of improving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) educational outcomes. The four main

themes for improving the academic potential of FNMI students according to the Gunn et al.

study (2011) included creating a more inclusive sense of belonging for FNMI students,

enhancing cultural awareness within schools, increasing the communication and involvement of

FNMI guardians/parents, and, lastly, improving the academic potential of FNMI students.

The Gunn et al. study (2011) findings revealed that the involvement of Elders in the

school community not only helped the students but was also beneficial to both teachers and

administrators. The project recognized strategies to increase FNMI students' sense of belonging

by incorporating strategies such as developing Aboriginal history, culture, and language courses

for the school, the adoption of a caring and safe school approach, and the hiring of an Aboriginal

liaison officer. The themes of cultural awareness and sense of belonging overlapped. The most

prominent theme in the Gunn et al. study (2011), however, was that most AISI projects focused

on the improvement of academic potential (through the development of literacy programs, the

improvement of instructional strategies for teachers, attendance initiatives, and academic skills

counselling). The Gunn et al. study (2011) also found that academic achievement and attendance

were linked. Some of the barriers to attendance that were mentioned in the study included the

impact of poverty, lack of housing, no transportation to school, and personal trauma related to

suicide and addictions (p. 339). Learning can only really begin to take place once these barriers

are removed. The study also found that students who were proud of their heritage were more

engaged in learning. According to the study, this instilled sense of cultural pride could only take

place if FNMI culture was visible at school events (such as assemblies), Aboriginal children's

literature was used in the regular Language Arts programs, and if there was a successful joining with provincial Science and Technology programs.

Although AISI is no longer part of the Alberta Provincial educational landscape, the claims made for improvement in Aboriginal education by the Gunn et al. (2011) study were increased High School graduation rates, increased Aboriginal student attendance, and improved grade level completion results. The AISI projects indicated that the Alberta educational system was concerned with Aboriginal education (this included Aboriginal identity and culture); however, while gains made in educational outcomes by Aboriginal students have shown a slow and steady improvement, they have not kept pace with non-Aboriginal Canadians (Richards, 2008).

Gaps in Aboriginal Education

Studies indicate that while there has been marginal improvement in educational attainment by Aboriginal students, it lags behind their non-Aboriginal peers (Statistics Canada, 2012). Some of the strategies and studies for improving Aboriginal student educational attainment have come from outside agencies (i.e., different levels of governance), and many of the recommendations for improving Indigenous education come from the outside (e.g., the university or government researcher) and not from the community itself. This has created what is called an "outside-in" approach (Cochran-Smith & Lyttle, 1993; Smith, 2012; St. Denis, 2009). As a way to counteract this trend, my study has focused on what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation school community school perspective. It is my hope that the Indigenous community which is part of this study will be able to empower and strengthen the instructional leadership of their teachers. The community could do this by providing teachers

with essential Indigenous knowledge that will help them improve their practice which could help positively impact educational outcomes for their students.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership theory originated from the theory of transformational leadership. First appearing in education in the late 1980s, transformational leadership became synonymous with restructuring, which meant some version of de-centralization and site-based management, by the mid-1990s. It has its origins in the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), who advocated that transformational leaders use the personal goals and values of their organizational colleagues, which are then transformed in the collective interest of the organization. This framing differed from the practice of management that used the manipulation of extrinsic rewards and positional power to achieve objectives. Transformational leadership theory suggests that change is driven by one individual, such as a principal or superintendent (Lynch, 2012, p. 2). However, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) saw instructional leadership as a collective responsibility. Mulford (2008) imagined a collective capacity where the efforts of the staff as a whole will have a positive effect on students (p. 42). Goddard et al., (2000) found that there was a close link between improved student learning and the school community and environment. Hallinger and Heck (1999) also came to this conclusion but noted that larger schools produce smaller student achievement gains, and, in sites where the lead teacher was more supportive and strived for instructional excellence and school improvement, the school community was seen as positive.

While Leithwood was originally a supporter of transformational leadership, he felt that change could not be driven by one individual. In their study, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) concluded that

most models of transformational leadership are flawed by their underrepresentation of

transactional practices (which we interpret to be "managerial" in nature). Such practices

are fundamental to organizational stability. For this reason, we have recently added four

dimensions of our own model based on review of the relevant literature. (as cited by

Hallinger & Snidvongs in Brundrett, 2013, p. 185)

The following three dimensions (practices) of transformational leadership became the core

practices of instructional leadership according to Leithwood and Jantzi (2009): setting directions,

developing people, and redesigning the organization (pp. 46-47). Later on, Leithwood (2012)

also added another core practice to the list: improving the instructional program. This fourth core

practice has "the most direct effects on students, as compared with the three previous categories

of practices, and because [it] directly shape[s] the nature and quality of instruction in classrooms,

[it is] the [practice] typically evoked by the term "instructional leadership" (p. 61). Hallinger

(2007) saw similarities between instructional leadership and transformational leadership as they

both focused on creating a shared sense of purpose in the school, developing a climate of high

expectations, innovation and improvement, providing staff with intellectual stimulation and

continuous development. Last, the leader acted as a model in both instructional leadership and

transformational leadership (as cited in Mulford, 2008, p. 41).

Defining the term Instructional Leadership

For many years, the goal of instructional leadership has been to improve teaching in order

to foster better student outcomes. In one of the earliest uses of the term, Gray (1934) described

instructional leadership simply as "the improvement of teaching" (p. 417). In *The Sixth Yearbook*

of the Department of Supervisors and Directors, Gray further elaborated on instructional

leadership by saying that it was "participation in the formation of instructional policies;

stimulating variation in educational thinking and planning, encouraging experimentation to test

the values of such variations and provide for the maximum self-development of self-direction,

self-appraisal, and self-control of teaching staff" (p. 471). This early definition of instructional

leadership has changed and evolved considerably since the 1930s. Hallinger (2005) said that in

the 1970s and 80s instructional leadership was something that was entirely in the job description

of principals and was not to be distributed to others, defining it as "those in positions of

responsibility" (e.g., school counseling team, lead teachers, school administration, and district

leadership) who impact student outcomes and influence student learning (p. 229).

In the 1990s, instructional leadership theory focused on the personal attributes and

characteristics of individual principals. Bandbury and Andrews (1991) saw instructional

leadership as successful only when a principal/administrator was able to "turn a school around"

either academically or through strong directive leadership (p. 188). This framing was further

enhanced by Barth (1990), who believed principals exhibited instructional leadership only when

they had expectations for both students and teachers and when they created a culture of high

standards in their school. More recently, Elmore defined instructional leadership as the

"guidance and direction of instructional improvement" (2004, p. 13). These ideas on leadership

were based on Tannenbaum's (1961) four styles of leadership: anarchic, autocratic, polyarchic,

and democratic. Since the evolving definition of instructional leadership in the 1980s and early

1990s was based on the abilities and characteristics of the individual educational administrator, it

had a lot in common with Burn's (1978) idea of transformational leadership. This form of

leadership depended on the ability of the leader to inspire those around them to increasingly high

levels of commitment and energy by overcoming challenges to reach lofty goals. This example

of transformational leadership led to developing capacity and transformed the organizations for the better.

Instructional leadership has progressed since the days of Gray (1934) and now encompasses many different individuals (e.g., teachers, support staff, counsellors, etc.) that can take part in instructional leadership. This important component of student learning is no longer directly attached to the roles of the principal/vice principal, but is now distributed to different areas of the school instructional team. The principal is now seen as someone who leads the process of instructional leadership among their staff and are no longer seen as the sole authority in this matter. Instructional leadership involves many aspects and stakeholders including members of the community, teachers, district specialists, counsellors, and other members of the school administration team. Instructional leadership must move away from being the domain of only one individual (the principal) as there are many elements that infringe on school leadership.

There are several recent examples of instructional leadership. Hallinger (2005) has proposed that the role of the principal was made up of three separate roles: define the school's mission, manage the instructional program, and promote a positive learning climate. Yong-Tan (2012) elaborated further on Hallinger's model by promoting the idea of buy-in of instructional leadership amongst staff. Yong-Tan said that, by buying-in, individual teachers would learn to share best practice and develop contextual knowledge creation, which would reflect the needs of the individualized school. Instructional leadership was seen as too large a job for one individual (e.g., principal) to carry out and so he advocated that the leadership be shared by others in the school (e.g., department heads, counsellors, and classroom teachers). This form of leadership is called distributed leadership. Yong-Tan (2012) believed that an action-research process was the best way to carry out this model of distributed leadership (p. 183).

Distributed leadership. Distributive leadership is seen as teacher leadership and has been described as "the development, support and nurturance of teachers who assume leadership in their schools. Teachers who formally or informally acquire leadership positions can make change happen" (Liberman & Miller, 2004, p. 154). Bennett, Wise, and Woods (as cited in Mulford, 2008) viewed distributive leadership of being composed of seven dimensions. These seven dimensions were: seeing leadership as an outcome of the dimensions of interpersonal relationships rather than individual action; trust and openness as a basis of interpersonal relationships; "letting go" by senior staff (instead of simply delegating tasks); extending the boundaries of leadership, not just within the teaching community, but to other communities within the school in order to create a team culture throughout the school; not mandating leadership into existence but growing it; recognizing expertise rather than formal positions as the basis of leadership roles within groups; and seeing leadership as fluid rather than located in specific formal roles or positions blurring the distinction between "leaders and followers" (p. 44). Mulford's (2008) main concern about distributive leadership was that it could become all things to all people. He believes that distributive leadership may have superficial appeal to principals who may feel that they are barriers to its implementation or that they overestimate their own success. Distributed leadership will not occur unless it is supported by the principal (p. 45).

Anderson (2012) conducted a study on distributed leadership across four states in the United States. The study found three patterns that were evident within distributed leadership: instructional leadership roles crossed curricula and grade levels due to greater teacher collaboration; the principal had control of key ideas in the school improvement plan; and teacher leadership was limited to certain grade levels or specific programs. Anderson's (2012) study

found that principals were motivated by the practice of distributed leadership because they expected that it would improve student learning. The findings from this study revealed that: the principal had the greatest influence when practicing instructional leadership; the principal's authority and influence was not diminished when other people shared responsibilities; and higher levels of collective influence were positively associated with student achievement, teacher's motivation, and teacher's working conditions (p. 54).

Instructional action and ethos. Whalstrom's (2012) study explored instructional leadership and how it was demonstrated in effective schools. The elements that were looked for were: clear cohesive school policies, an ethos or culture oriented towards learning expressed in high achievement, and professionalism of teachers who were involved in the decision-making process. Whalstrom's two most important components in regards to instructional leadership were instructional actions and instructional ethos. Instructional ethos is about influencing the context in which instructional leadership takes place. Emphasizing the value of research based strategies, this ethos was placed in a context and vision that all students can achieve at high levels. By gathering research information and applying it to a local setting, the school vision instructional ethos can be implemented in a practical way (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 76). Instructional actions simply refer to how the principal carried out the tasks they planned to do (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 77). Leithwood (2012) stated that examples of instructional actions could be focusing the school on goals for student achievement, keeping track of teacher professional development needs, creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate, and lastly, monitoring teachers work in the classroom (p. 65).

Whalstrom (2012) identified behaviours that principals who carry out instructional leadership regularly practice. These practices included aligning teachers to their vision by

empowering them to grow and learn by using their own interpersonal skills, dealing directly with teachers, and providing feedback to teachers about best practice to improve both teaching and student learning. Whalstrom's (2012) study found that instructional leadership is difficult for principals because of all the duties and responsibilities for which they are accountable on a daily basis. Whalstrom stated that "being visible" or just "popping in" was not instructional leadership (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 83). Instructional leadership, then, had to be purposeful as well as planned in advance so that teachers and instructional leaders could dialogue and converse about pedagogical ideas and instructional issues. Whalstrom's (2012) study found that it appeared easier to implement instructional leadership in elementary schools than in secondary schools. The reasons stated for this included the views of secondary teachers themselves. The teachers noted that in a secondary school setting instructional leadership was often delegated to department heads or lead teachers. However, many of the classroom teachers being observed by these individuals felt that they were more concerned with administrative procedures (such as budgets) than they were with improving classroom teaching. Whalstrom's (2012) final findings dealt directly with principal-teacher interaction. Instructional leadership suffered from what she referred to as a "double whammy," which was a low professional growth ethos connected with few actions that supported and promoted classroom instruction in the school setting (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 84).

School leadership. Robinson (2011) conducted two meta-analysis studies involving 27 longitudinal studies done in the mid-2000s. The first meta-analysis study compared the effects of instructional leadership and transformational leadership on student outcomes. The second meta-analysis study compared five inductively derived sets of leadership practices on student outcomes. She was interested in researching whether the quality of teaching in schools was

influenced by school leadership. Her study concluded that there were four specific ways that this was accomplished: leadership involvement in classroom observation, the coordination of active oversight of the instructional program, discussions with staff members and teachers about how instruction impacted student achievement systematically, and the monitoring of student progress for the purpose of program improvement (pp. 82-83). Robinson (2011) suggested that leaders provide useful feedback to teachers, use data to track student progress, and coordinate the implementation of the instructional program within their schools or districts (pp. 101-102).

Robinson (2011) also claimed that educational leaders used three types of leadership influence to encourage student achievement: exercising authority in a reasonable manner, offering knowledge and skills to others (expertise) so that they can complete the tasks assigned to them, and the notion that the leader is influential among their colleagues because of their charisma or personal qualities that they possess. Robinson (2011) expanded on these three sources of school leadership by developing five dimensions of student leadership to support them, which she called "Student Centred Leadership" (p. 16). The five dimensions of student-centered leadership are ensuring a safe and orderly environment, leading teacher learning and development, ensuring quality teaching, establishing expectations and goals, and resourcing strategically (2011, p. 16). Examples given by Robinson (2011) about implementing these dimensions in a school setting include the ability to effectively identify and resolve conflict, set high expectations for school behaviour, build strong parental and community ties with the school and promote professional development amongst school staff. Robinson (2011) echoed the importance of professional development advocated by Elmore (2004) in saying that effective professional development had specific characteristics, such as: integrating practice and theory, providing worthwhile content, focusing on the relationship between student learning and

teaching needs, and providing model opportunities to learn. To increase teacher development, instructional leaders must make their expertise available to support individual teachers and increase the coherence of the instructional program. This can be done in a collaborative learning model (Robinson, 2011).

Mulford (2008) saw three inter-relational elements of school leadership, which were school context, school organization, and the school leader. School context referred to complex forces and their implications for schools. The element of the school organization meant moving beyond systematic bureaucracy and creating a community of professional learners. The school leader did not have a generic leadership style but was concerned with developing successful teachers and with recruiting and retaining these leaders (p. 2). The complex and contextual forces that influenced the school were: (a) advances in science and technology, (b) pressures on the environment, (c) changes in demography such as the ever changing nature of work due to innovations in mass communication, and (d) globalization (p. 5). Mulford (2008) saw two outcomes that were a result of these four contextual forces—product and process. Product was explained as broadening what counts as good education and being cognitive of non-cognitive skills such as self-esteem, attentiveness, and social skills (p. 13). Mulford (2008) believed that the product would help create balance and make choices between competing forces (e.g., continuity-constant change, independence-dependence, homogeneity-heterogeneity, and individual-community). Process was described as the way that the school division was organized and run, such as a school system moving from a mechanistic to a more organic living system, from a hierarchical structure to a more network based, more personalized participation, and more democracy within the school system (p. 13).

Robinson (2006) identified the following three strategies that school leaders could do to practice instructional leadership in their schools: school leaders need opportunities to extend and update both the breadth and depth of their pedagogy and their pedagogical content knowledge; school leaders need a balanced program of professional preparation and development; and, rather than have school leaders teaching instructional leadership as an additional responsibility, existing leadership practices need to be adapted so that they are better aligned to the overall goal of instructional improvement (pp. 72-73). Robinson (2006) mentioned many of the adjectives of current leadership, which include "sustained," "transformational," "authentic," and "transactional." She goes on to state that many traditional theories of leadership are grounded in value positions about leader-follower relationships and explains how to accomplish generic tasks such as setting and achieving challenging goals and promoting organizational learning (p. 65). Theories of educational leadership should not be the starting point of research on instructional leadership but perhaps guide how teachers can make a difference in the achievement of their students (Robinson, 2006, p. 65). In the 1990s, emphasis was on the effective management of schools, but today it is shifting towards the leadership of teaching and learning (Elmore, 2004; Firestone & Kiehl, 2005; Robinson, 2006). Schools should not only be learning environments that are run efficiently and are safe, but also they should be places of teaching and learning (Robinson, 2006, p. 63).

Leithwood et al. (1999) initially put forth a model of instructional leadership that was comprised of the following six dimensions under the name of transformational leadership: vision and goals; culture; structure; intellectual stimulation; individual support; and performance expectation (as cited in Mulford, 2008, p. 41). Leithwood and Jantzi, (2006) expanded on the idea of transformational leadership (as usually directed by one individual) to include many

different stakeholders (such as principals, assistant principals, department heads, counsellors, and teachers) in the school setting in order to create change. This model was later modified by Leithwood (2012) into four categories under the heading of "core leadership practices" that are part of instructional leadership: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and improving the instructional program (p. 59). Setting directions included the leadership practices of building a shared vision, creating high performance expectations, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and communicating direction (Leithwood, 2012, p. 59).

The leadership practice of "developing" people included providing individualized support and consideration, modeling appropriate values and practices, and intellectual stimulation. The primary aim of developing people was capacity building. Capacity was enhanced by providing staff members with the skills and knowledge to accomplish organizational goals but also the disposition needed so that staff members persevered and were persistent in applying the skills and knowledge they obtained (Leithwood, 2012, p. 60). The core practice of refining and aligning the school organization consisted of the educational administrative tasks of building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organization to support collaboration, connecting the school to the wider community, and building productive relationships with community and families. Refining and aligning the school organization allows staff members to make the most of their capacities and motivations by establishing the workplace conditions for this to take place (Leithwood, 2012, p. 60). Improving the instructional program was accomplished by the tasks of staffing the program, monitoring school activity, providing instructional support, aligning resources, and buffering staff from distractions to their work (p. 60). Leithwood (2012) viewed this last core leadership practice as the one that is most closely associated with the term "instructional leadership" because it has the most direct impact on student learning as it shapes

that nature and quality of instruction in classrooms by improving the process of teaching and learning (pp. 60-61).

Another form of educational leadership that has been used alongside instructional leadership is sustainable leadership. Theorists who have applied sustainable leadership are Fullan (2005) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Fullan (2005) explained sustainability as the capacity for an education system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement in ways consistent with deep values of moral purpose (pp. 14-15). Fullan (2005) understood sustainability as composed of eight elements, which were:

- Public service with moral purpose. A commitment to raising the bar and closing the gap of student achievement, treating all people with respect and oriented to improving the environment including our schools.

- A commitment to changing context at all levels.

- Lateral capacity—building through networks.

- New vertical relationships that are co-dependent encompassing both capacity building and accountability done through the lens of self-evaluation.

- Deep learning through collaborative cultures of inquiry and the exchange of good ideas.

- Dual commitment to both long-term and short-term results.

- Cyclical energising because the set of strategies that bring us initial success may not be the ones that take us to higher levels.

- The long lever of leadership to put in place the seven previous elements simultaneously and have them working off of each other. (p. 14)

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) augment Fullan's (2005) eight elements of sustainability with their seven principles of sustainability:

- depth—it matters;

- length—it lasts;

- breadth—it spreads;

- justice—it does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment;

- diversity—it promotes cohesive diversity;

- resourcefulness—it develops and does not deplete material and human resources; and

- conservation—it honours and learns from the best of the past to create an even better

  future (pp. 18-20).

Hargreaves and Fink's seven principles expanded on Fullan's eight elements by including a

vision of sustainability and providing a roadmap on how to achieve it. They explain their

principles of sustainability as "sustainability is a meal, not a menu. You can't pick and choose.

All the principles fit together. You have to eat all your 'greens' (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p.

253).

The above discussed leadership theories and practice help to set the framework for a clear

definition of instructional leadership. Sustainable leadership, transformational leadership,

distributed leadership, and collective leadership have all influenced how instructional leadership

is currently defined. Instructional leadership has evolved from being the responsibility of one

individual in a position of authority (e.g., the principal) to responsibility shared by groups of

individuals whose collaboration can positively impact student outcomes. The British Columbia

Principals and Vice-Principals Association Standards Committee (2007) has defined

instructional leadership as

improving the quality of teaching and learning processes for students and adults in

schools through regular dialogue about learning and how to improve it based on

understanding of the body of research on learning and teaching and evidence of student learning outcomes. (p. 27)

The Alberta Education Principal Quality Practice Guideline (Alberta Education, 2009) listed instructional leadership as one of seven dimensions by which principals and assistant principals are evaluated. Instructional leadership is seen as the principal's responsibility and the document states that "the principal ensures that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching and learning opportunities to meet the principle goals of education" (p. 5). The instructional leadership dimension was augmented by the following nine descriptors detailing specifically what a principal must do to ensure that instructional leadership is provided in their schools:

- demonstrates a sound understanding of current pedagogy and curriculum;

- implements strategies for addressing standards of student achievement;

- ensures that student assessment and evaluation practices throughout the school are fair, appropriate, and balanced;

- implements effective supervision and evaluation to ensure that all teachers consistently meet the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard;

- ensures that appropriate pedagogy is utilized in response to various dimensions of student diversity;

- ensures that students have access to appropriate programming based on their individual learning needs;

- recognizes the potential of new energy technologies and enables their meaningful integration in support of teaching and learning; and,

- ensures that teachers and other staff communicate and collaborate with parents and

  community agencies and resources, where appropriate to support student learning.

  (Alberta Education, 2009, p. 5)

These instructional leadership descriptors not only focus on the improvement and enhancement

of student learning but also note the importance of other administrative tasks, such as technology

implementation, community collaboration, and the supervision and evaluation of teaching staff.

Given the goal of this project, however, I must also address how Indigenous elements of

leadership enhance learning, administration, implementation, collaboration, supervision and

evaluation.

Indigenous Leadership and Education

Elders are those people who are most important to Indigenous leadership and are

considered an authoritarian body because of their combined wisdom and expertise (Young Leon,

2012, pp. 50-51). The community chooses their Elders, not because of their age, but due to their

knowledge of the protocols associated with cultural teachings, spiritual values, and history

(Archibald, 2008). Elders demonstrate a life path, which, according to Cajete (1994), is one that

embodies a high sense of integrity for one's family, environment, and nation, as well as being

able to think with the highest thoughts. Cajete (1994) defines "thinking the highest thought" as

thinking of one's community, and one's environment, richly. This thinking in the highest

respectful and compassionate way systemically influences the actions of both individuals

and the community. It is a way to perpetuate a "good life," a respectful and spiritual life,

a wholesome life. (p. 45)

Elders pass on their wisdom in an oral tradition through lived experiences, stories, and

oral histories. Archibald (2008) has called this process "storywork" (p. 3), referring to

Indigenous ways of leading and knowing, which is connected to the land and is based on the principles of responsibility, respect, holism, reciprocity, reverence, synergy, and interrelatedness. Cajete (1999) has stated that Elders are "respected as carriers of Native knowledge, wisdom, and experience. Therefore, they are utilized as the first line teachers, facilitators, and guides in learning" (p. 71). "Storywork" can be used as a framework for Indigenous leadership as well as for the transmission of Indigenous traditions and Elders' knowledge. "Storywork" (or Indigenous knowledge) that is woven with Western instructional leadership could help to shape the future of instructional leadership in an Indigenous context.

According to Calliou and Wesley-Esquimaux (2015), the development of effective Indigenous leaders

> requires a blended approach of revitalizing traditional cultural principles and values while teaching them the core competencies required for success in the modern business world. The wisdom of Indigenous knowledge systems must also be developed, along with Western knowledge and skills to run the governments, organizations, and businesses of today's Indigenous communities. (p. 31)

Cajete (2005) found that Indigenous education is not only a life-sustaining and cultural process, but that it also consists of a relationship between the natural world and one's social group (pp. 69-70). Cajete stated that Indigenous education consists of 15 characteristics, which are were summarized as:

- The sacred view of nature permeates and contextualizes the foundational process of learning and teaching.
- Interconnectedness and integration are universal traits.

- Relationships between elements and knowledge bases radiates in concentric rings of process and structure.

- The principle of reciprocity between all other things and humans adhere to its processes.

- Recognizes the different levels of cycles that exist and that deeper levels of meaning can be found in the process of teaching and learning.

- Every stage of life presents something to learn for everyone.

- Recognizes that all genders develop levels of readiness and maturity. The recognition of the different developmental levels is incorporated in educational foundations.

- Language and linguistics are seen as a sacred expression and this is incorporated in educational foundations.

- That each culture and each person contain the seeds of all that are essential to positive development and well-being.

- Recognizes and applies ordering through ritual ceremony and community activity.

- Both entities of nature and individuals contain true sources of knowledge.

- When honouring and participating in relationships which include both the natural community and humans, true learning occurs.

- Language and thought create the worlds we inhabit.

- Maps of the world that assist us through our life's journey are created.

- The tribal structures of the community and the home resonate and build learning. (pp. 70-71)

Robinson (2006) noted that school leaders often say that they would like to engage more deeply with leadership of teaching and learning but that other administrative tasks (such as a staff crisis or dealing with negative student behaviour) take up more of their time (p. 63). The

McKinsey and Company (2007) study, "How the world's best performing school systems come out on top," identified the key aspect of effective school leadership was that of being able "to develop principals into drivers of improvement in instruction" (p. 33). The report also endorsed the continued evolution and study of instructional leadership at all levels by concluding that: "In order to improve instruction, school systems need to find ways to change fundamentally what happens in classrooms" (p. 30).

Gaps in Instructional Leadership Literature

Many of the studies mentioned in this literature review were done in mainstream schools. There is scant existing research on what instructional leadership might look like in a First Nation school. Would it be similar to what distributed leadership educational researchers have noted (Leithwood, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Wahlstrom, 2011; Yong-Tan, 2012), or would it be something that is entirely different due to the influences of traditional Aboriginal teachings? My study investigates the constitution of instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. Indigenous participant (e.g., Elders as well as culture and language instructors) knowledge of instructional leadership has strengthened and added to the existing mainstream models of instructional leadership and education. The participants were asked to offer information about the practices that could meet the needs of Aboriginal youth.

By examining what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective, a model of instructional leadership that weaves both mainstream and Indigenous knowledge may develop, which could support Aboriginal student learning.

My study explores how Indigenous knowledge and practices could help improve instructional leadership in the classroom. A possible research outcome would be the

empowerment of the participants to improve their practice and perhaps explore ways to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their practice and improve their teaching and learning practices in general.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2013) defines a conceptual framework as the "theories, beliefs and prior research findings [that] will guide or inform your research and [the] literature, preliminary studies, and personal experience will you draw on for understanding the people or issues you are studying (p.4). Critical theory has informed this study's conceptual framework, and qualitative and case study methodology has guided the research. I have come to the awareness of critical theory during my years of professional practice, teaching and counselling on a First Nation reserve. I have seen firsthand many of the barriers that First Nation people face in order to attain the same quality of life as other Canadian citizens. These barriers include high rates of unemployment, a high number of students impacted by the justice system, and low rates of post-secondary enrollments. These issues and several others were found in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 and still remain today. Critical theory examines how knowledge itself works and tries to search for ways to help to improve the lives of the oppressed in our local communities and those worldwide without the false notion of the superiority of Western knowledge and ways of doing (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 140).

The conceptual framework within this study incorporates a critical theorist perspective. According to Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008) a research project with critical theory as its foundation asks the following questions:

- What research do we want done?

- Whom is it for?
- What difference will it make?
- Who will carry it out?
- How do we want the research done?
- How will we know it is worthwhile?
- Who will own the research?
- Who will benefit? (p. 9)

Critical theory makes the assumption that all Western democracies are entirely free, it rejects economic determination, capitalism, and consumerism that dominates much of these societies (Kincheloe, 2005; Smith, 1999). Critical theorists want to produce practical knowledge that is both structural and cultural (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008, p. 26). Critical theorists value Indigenous knowledge because it is transformative. Indigenous knowledges precepts challenge the knowledge claims put forth by Western science and emphasises self-determination in a contextual and anti-essentialist way. Critical theorists examine and expose how knowledge is produced and how it is used as the foundation of repressive structures in science (e.g., the idea that knowledge in Western science is empirical and absolute whereas traditional Indigenous knowledge is superstition), which often places a lesser value on traditional Indigenous knowledge (Kawagley, 2006; Smith, 2012). Battiste (2002) has argued that there are similarities and connections between Western science and Indigenous knowledges:

Indigenous scholars discovered that Indigenous knowledge is far more than the binary opposite of western knowledge. As a concept, Indigenous knowledge benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory—its methodology, evidence, and conclusions-reconceptualises the resilience and self-reliance of Indigenous peoples, and underscores the importance of their own philosophies, heritages, and educational processes.

Indigenous knowledge fills the ethical and knowledge gaps in Eurocentric education,

research, and scholarship. By animating the voices and experiences of the cognitive

"other" and integrating them into educational processes, it creates a new, balanced centre

and a fresh vantage point from which to analyze Eurocentric education and its

pedagogies. (p. 5)

By using Indigenous knowledge to observe Western science, Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005)

found that both knowledge systems had common ground in: Organizing Principles (the "universe

is unified" and the "body of knowledge is stable but can be modified"); Habits of Mind (honesty,

open-mindedness, perseverance, and inquisitiveness); Procedures and Skills (pattern recognition,

inherence and prediction, empirical observations in natural settings and verification through

repetition); and Knowledge (plant/animal behaviour, position and motion of objects, properties

of objects and materials, cycles of earth and sky) (p. 16).

Rabindranath Tagore, a critical theorist who predated Friere, argued that the colonial

education system was neither conducive to the formation of aesthetic senses nor to independent

thinking. Tagore saw that colonial education was obsessed with reasoning but not with

imagination, emotions, or aesthetics, and it failed to establish a relationship between education

and nature (Ghosh, Naseem, & Vijh, 2012, p. 63). Tagore experienced how colonial education

was used to establish a superiority by discrediting traditional and local knowledge systems with

labels such as "archaic," "traditional," and "irrational" (Ghosh, et al., 2012, p. 64). Friere (1993)

believed that through critical theory the oppressed and the oppressors in a society could liberate

themselves (p. 26). Friere described his "pedagogy of the oppressed" by stating:

This pedagogy makes oppression and it causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and

from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their

liberation. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument in critical discovery that both, they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization. (p. 30)

Friere's (1993) humanist and liberation pedagogy has two stages:

- The oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through praxis commit themselves to its transformation.

- The reality of the oppression has already been transformed; the pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. (p. 36)

Friere (1993) also viewed education in "the exercise of domination which stimulates the credulity students with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression" (p. 59). He saw liberating education taking place in acts of cognition and not transferrals of information.

On another note, Kincheloe (2008) has argued that critical pedagogy in an educational context re-examines not only the purpose of schooling but also reconceptualises the following: the organization of schooling and the relationship between teachers and learners; what human beings are capable of achieving; the role of the social, cultural, and political in shaping human identity; the ways schooling affects the lives of students from marginalized groups; the relationship between community and schooling; how teachers and students might relate to knowledge; and the ways power operates to create purposes for schooling that are not necessarily in the interests of the children that attend them (p. 6). Both Friere and Kincheloe have stated that a critical pedagogy or theory has a variety of different contexts including social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Kincheloe (2008) argued that education cannot attempt to be

politically neutral, that by doing so it reinforces and supports the existing and dominant power structure which only may perpetuate existing inequities (p. 11).

Wilson (2008) explained critical theory as offering an alternative to the positivist and post-positivist view as critical theory views reality as more fluid than as one fixed truth. This theory also contends that reality has been shaped into its present form by cultural, gender, social, and other values (p. 36). In critical theory, knowledge in itself is not the goal, rather the goal is the change that this knowledge may bring about (Wilson, 2008, p. 37). Levinson et al. (2011) have written that critical social theories "are those conceptual accounts of the social world that attempt to understand and explain the causes of structural domination and inequality in order to facilitate human emancipation" (p. 21). Levinson et al. (2011) also noted that critical theories stimulate dialogue about educational practice (p. 6).

Furthermore, critical theory looks at different ways to resist the sometimes harmful effects of dominant power such as eurocentricism, patriarchy, and imperialism. Kincheloe (2008) stated that the goal of using Indigenous forms of knowledge within critical pedagogy has two outcomes: first, to help serve people who are threatened by neo-colonial, Western neo-liberal, and positivism's definition of "progress" (e.g., Canadian's First Nations' traditional ways and capitalism); second, it allows the researcher to learn from the profound insights and perspectives of peoples who have been standing up against Western colonialism and oppression for centuries (p. 140). Understanding Indigenous knowledge through critical theory allows the voices of individuals to be acknowledged and amplified regardless of gender, social class, their relationship to Western colonialism, or physical ability. This approach allows for new dimensions and concepts to be revealed and examined with the potential to change human lives for the better (Shoham, Smith, Reason, & Bradbury as cited in Kincheloe, 2008, p. 140).

Apple (2004), a critical theorist, criticized the process of education as a whole because it was a way to maintain the status quo, thereby preserving societal power structures even if they were oppressive or unjust. Apple (2004) saw the process of education as a political entity as well and observed how it could contribute to the inequality of American society as a whole through factors such as: how it was funded; the nature of textbooks and learning resources; the objectives and goals; the way in which these goals and objectives are evaluated; attendance rates of students; and who controls the decision-making process in schools. Apple believed that these factors keep schools at the forefront of a political struggle defined by important questions such as "What is the meaning of democracy?" "Who should benefit from government action?" and "Whose culture is legitimate?" (Kincheloe, 2008, pp. 80-81). Apple contended that education perpetrates societal inequality because the privileged elites control education regulatory bodies and perpetuate a political hierarchy that justifies inequality through the guise that those who succeed in the education system are rewarded and those that do not have no one to blame but themselves (Apple, 2004). Apple referred to this as "conservative restoration," as right-wing elites have much more control over what constitutes knowledge. Apple stated that corporation control over textbook publication, emphasis on patriotism in American citizenship education, a free-market economic policy, and a school curriculum that favours business needs is what counts as knowledge (Apple, 2004, p. 174).

The conceptualization of critical theory in an Indigenous perspective can be clarified by Smith's (2005) following Indigenous theory characteristics:

- user friendly as people understand what the theorist is talking about;
- located within a culturally contextual site;

- the product of a theorist who has an understanding of the cultural epistemic foundations of an Indigenous worldview;

- workable for a variety of sites of struggle;

- born of organic process involving community;

- flexible;

- engage with other theoretical positioning;

- although not universal, portable to other sites;

- focused on change. (as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 47)

These characteristics make up a conceptual framework that is designed to decolonize education. Conceptual frameworks focus on inquiry within a theoretical knowledge system (Kovach, 2009, p. 42). According to Estrada (2005, as cited in Kovach, 2009) conceptual frameworks of Indigenous peoples have the following three components: (a) the culture that informs one's research choice; (b) a way to interpret knowledge so as to give it back in a relevant, helpful, and purposeful manner; and (c) the methods used in researching (pp. 43-44). These three components, as well as research from critical theorists, have guided my study from a critical theory perspective.

Even though I am of European Canadian ancestry I tried to investigate the research phenomenon through a decolonizing lens. The strategies I used to combat the forces of colonization included keeping a journal throughout the study to reflect and critically analyze on the experience of the study. It was hoped that throughout this act, that I would be able to observe unintentional biases more easily. I also partook in First Nation customs such as smudging and "sweat" ceremonies on a regular basis while working at the research site so that I could experience First Nation culture authentically and develop a greater awareness and appreciation

for it. I found that the colonization process was too historically entrenched to overcome at this point in my research journey.

The conceptual framework for this study could have had a more decolonizing lens with the incorporation of Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Race Theory. Brayboy (2005) believes that Critical Race Theory is an important component of any decolonization process because he envisions colonization as endemic to society and thus it is difficult for one's self to escape from isolating a phenomenon from the colonizers perspective.

Tribal Critical Race Theory has nine tenants that can help the researcher analyze the research problem in a more culturally appropriate way (Brayboy, 2005, p. 430). The nine tenants of Critical Race Theory as categorized by Brayboy (2005) are:

1. In a society, colonization is endemic.

2. The policies of the American government towards Indigenous peoples are rooted in white supremacy, a desire for material gain, and imperialism.

3. Due to the radicalized and political natures of Indigenous people's identities they occupy limited space.

4. Indigenous peoples hope to obtain self-determination, self-identification, tribal sovereignty, and self autonomy.

5. When examined through an Indigenous lens the concepts of power, knowledge, and culture take on new meaning.

6. The goal of policies (both educational and governmental) towards Indigenous peoples is assimilation.

7. Tribal traditions, philosophies, beliefs, and customs demonstrate both the lived realities of Indigenous peoples but also their differences.

8. Stories are legitimate sources of data because they create theory and are ways of being.

9. Scholars must work towards societal change because of the connection of practice and theory. (pp. 429-430)

Although Tribal Critical Race Theory has its origins in the United States, it can be applicable to research involving Indigenous peoples in Canada because of the shared history of imperialism and colonization experienced by Indigenous people world wide (Smith, 2012). Any future research in this area of study should incorporate Critical Race Theory in its conceptual framework (Brayboy, 2005).

Conclusion

This literature review analyzed Indigenous knowledge, instructional leadership, and critical theory. The literature reviewed does point to the need for this research study. There is an existing educational achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadian students. By engaging Aboriginal voices and the school community in conceptualizing instructional leadership based on mainstream instructional leadership theories and woven with Indigenous traditional knowledge a new model of instructional leadership could possibly be developed with input from the participants in the study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodologies

Introduction

This chapter will reiterate the research questions, the purpose of the research and introduce the research methodology as well as a rationale for addressing the research questions. There will then be a brief explanation of the research setting and sample population. This is followed with a description and justification of the methods that were used in the study: tools, procedures, and instruments used in data collection, as well as the methods for data analysis. Then, I set out the requirements of procedures for ethical obligations and the protection of participants, as well as the measures that were used to establish trustworthiness. Next, there will be a brief discussion of the study's limitations and delimitations, and then the chapter conclusion.

The purpose of this research was to find out what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. This instructional leadership framework was constructed by using the information participants shared as to what they believe works best for First Nation youth based on their personal and professional experience. Secondary questions of the study include:

- How is instructional leadership implemented in a First Nation educational setting?
- How can Indigenous knowledge be woven with mainstream instructional leadership in a First Nation secondary school context?
- How can instructional leadership be strengthened in First Nation schools?
- How would Indigenous knowledge practices be strengthened within an indigenous school setting?
- What classroom instruction works best for First Nation students and how could the quality of instruction be improved?

Research was conducted in a First Nation community. The First Nation participants were asked to share what worked for them as educators, leaders and/or perhaps as students, and to speak on how their epistemology could support or strengthen instructional leadership theory and practice in a focus group. Non-First Nation staff were also a part of a different focus group in order to provide another perspective on the issues under investigation. This study asked First Nation and non-First Nation educators to help define what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective.

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research study. Qualitative methodology is designed to capture educational reality not in categories predetermined by the researcher but in the experiences of the participants. These methods can involve meanings attached by participants to their lives and to events with a focus on human subjectivity. An orientation to the social context of educational activities and inductive reasoning are examples of qualitative methods (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 189). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) also echoed these sentiments, stating that: "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructive nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is to be studied, and the situational constructs that shape inquiry" (p. 13). Qualitative research is often interpretivist, which is the belief that multiple realities exist and that no one reality is truth (Hinchey, 2008, p. 23). The goal of interpretivist educational research is to view the multiple perspectives of various stakeholders and to align the goals and strategies of specific situations as to foster a deeper understanding of the issue (Hinchey, 2008, p. 30).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) simply defined qualitative research as "any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical means or other means of qualification" (p. 11). Strauss and Corbin (1998) also stated that qualitative research is confusing because of the

multiple interpretations that make it difficult to contrive a formal definition of the term. The best that they could come up with was to define qualitative research as a "nonmathematical process of interpretation for purposes of spotting patterns within the data and from which a theory can emerge" (p. 11). Kovach (2009) stated that, in the early 20th century, qualitative research was closely aligned to the research paradigm of positivism, which led to ethnographic research designs framing Indigenous peoples as the "other." This resulted in Indigenous people being disenfranchised from the knowledge that they shared with the researcher. This further enabled the continuation of Indigenous peoples being marginalized through the use of educational ethnographies becoming a powerful tool, that through education assisted in the enculturation of Indigenous people (p. 27).

There is danger in viewing research through the lens of only one perspective. Smith (2012), has noted that all early forms of Western research were from travellers who came with a mission (entrepreneurial, religious, or scientific) and many of these travellers decided to stay permanently on Indigenous lands (p. 81). The history of Indigenous research according to Smith (2012) shows how similar events can be seen through multiple perspectives. The colonization of the South Pacific country of Aotearoa/ New Zealand, for example, is seen by many Western colonizers, historians, and researchers as following five stages: (i) initial discovery and contact, (ii) population decline, (iii) acculturation, (iv) assimilation, and (v) a "reinvention" as a hybrid ethnic culture. The same historical experience of colonization as seen through an Indigenous perspective, however, is expressed by: (1) contact and invasion, (2) genocide and destruction, (3) resistance and survival, and (4) recovery as Indigenous peoples (p. 91). The experiences and perspectives of the Maori (New Zealand's traditional Indigenous group) and the Pakeha (European settlers) who now make up the largest demographic group in New Zealand are

significantly different (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Such a difference in perspective is also evident in Canada between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Abdi (2012) believes that "the formations of centre-periphery dichotomies (and all their subordinated and oppressive educational outcomes) were not accidental formations, but were deliberately set up so as to sustain levels of interdependency that actually developed the West, while under developing the rest" (p. 7). Creating continuities of colonially-based education and attached ways of reading and relating to the world are defined by the colonizer. The organized process of mental colonialization is constructed in ways that unite strong trajectories of living and being, which eventually affirm their durability (Abdi, 2012, p. 6). Although this study has a qualitative orientation, it is important that it decolonizes using both Western and Indigenous research traditions. This can be done by incorporating elements of Indigenous knowledge with Western research methodologies.

Grenier (1998) listed six characteristics of Indigenous knowledge that summarize the framework for an Indigenous research methodology:

- Indigenous knowledge represents generations of experiences, trial and error experiments, careful observations, and is cumulative.
- Indigenous knowledge adds external knowledge from other sources to suit the local community setting.
- All members of the community have Indigenous knowledge and not just Elders or individuals of high social status.
- Indigenous knowledge will vary in its quality and quantity based on an individual's roles and responsibilities in the community, their age, socio-economic status, and gender.

- People's memories store Indigenous knowledge and they are expressed by various cultural activities that include language, artifacts, stories, dances, cultural beliefs, values and rituals, as well as myths, songs, and community organization.

- Indigenous knowledge is shared and communicated in an oral manner and through cultural practices such as rituals and dances. (pp. 1-2)

Kawagley (2006) found that one could attempt to decolonize oneself by combining traditional Indigenous teachings with Western knowledge. He provided a practical example using the science curriculum. In order to weave Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge together, Kawagley's proposal included:

- blending modern science perspectives with Indigenous ones;

- practicing in everyday life the effective application of scientific processes;

- fostering effective thinking in everyday life and practice flexibility in levels of thinking;

- developing simpler technology in tune with nature from complex scientific technology; while maintaining and enhancing life support systems and essential ecological processes

- practicing using Indigenous language when discussing genetic diversity;

- sustaining utilization of ecosystems and species;

- improving the natural environment and enhance natural processes of food production by using creative applications of visualization and imagination and by using creative writing;

- using a blend of Indigenous and modern scientific principles and adapt them to changing conditions; and,

● maintaining a holistic approach at all times by sustaining a network of collaborative

   effort and thought between disciplines. (p. 106)

Cajete (1994) challenged educational practitioners to critically re-examine their

fundamental beliefs about teaching, learning, and education by stating that each individual's

teaching and learning is connected to their life process. Meaning is found in nature by being

open to what it can teach us. The art of storytelling, mythology, and ritual, along with an

individual's relationship to family and community, help an individual realize their potential for

learning. When individuals learn how to trust their natural instincts and begin to see things more

deeply, they begin to honor and recognize the teacher of the spirit within themselves and the

natural world. Cajete viewed this as the educational legacy of indigenous people (as cited in

Reagan, 2005, pp. 126-127). Indigenous knowledge helps decolonize Euro-Western research

methodology and methods by presenting new theoretical frameworks and concepts that challenge

Western perspectives. This process involves a resistance to Euro-Western methodological

imperialism as well as adapting conventional methodologies by including Indigenous

perspectives and methodology that draw from the philosophies, worldviews, experiences,

mandates, and knowledge of cultural groups that have been marginalized, oppressed, or

historically colonized (Battiste, 2000; Chilisa, 2012; Porsanger, 2004; Rigney, 1999; Smith,

1999).

Types of Case Studies

The research methodology for this study involved case study. Case studies emphasize the

study of a phenomenon within a real world context (Yin, 2012, p. 5), and the case study method

favours the collection of data in natural settings as compared to relying on "derived data"

(Bromley, 1986, p. 1). Yin (2009) defined a case study as an "empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a case) set within a real world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Additionally, Yin (2014) stated that case study is the preferred method of research in situations when: (a) the main research questions are "how" and "why"; (b) a researcher has little or no control over behavioural events; and (c) the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon (as opposed to entirely historical). Willis, Inman, and Valenti (2010) understood case studies not as a singular research method, but as collection of many different research methods. They justified their claim by pointing out that many qualitative methods such as historical research, observation, and interviews encompass the data collection process of a case study (p. 209). Since there is no clear and concise definition of what actually constitutes a case study, Stake (2005) has stated, "Here and there, researchers will call anything they please a case study" (p. 445). Stake argued that case study is as a holistic phenomenon that includes studies in a larger context than just independent large or small units.

Since there is such a discrepancy in what actually constitutes a case study, there is also a difference of opinion on the types and variations of a case study. Yin (2002) described three types of cases: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. An explanatory case study looks at why an event or phenomenon happened the way it did. An exploratory case study investigates a specific phenomenon with hope that the information gathered in the study will develop more knowledge about the phenomenon as well as shape and guide any additional research about it. A descriptive case study is not interested in generalizations (like the other two types of case studies), but in the details of the setting where the phenomenon takes place (as cited in Willis, Inman & Valenti, 2010, p. 211).

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) added to Yin's three types of case studies by providing five additional types of their own: collaborative case study, collective case study, cumulative case study, reflective case study, and longitudinal case study (p. 15). Collaborative case studies involve work across institutions, and they have and involve colleagues who have a shared purpose to generate evidence from data collection that is more grounded and substantive in different contexts. A collective case study involves the researcher working asynchronously with a general purpose. The particular innovation that results from the collective case study will be the data collected with differing approaches and quality by the researcher. Cumulative case studies that involve previous case studies are enhanced by more evidence to develop or explain a particular phenomenon (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 19). In a reflective case study, the researcher emphasizes a personal evaluative component through reflective processes such as journaling, expanded field notes, or self-analysis of feelings (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 15). The key aspects of a reflective case study include: evaluating different kinds of evidence; the researcher being the central focus of the research, which focuses on the use of reflective data collection methods (e.g., video, observation, audio-taping); and the research is conducted over a concise period of time. Challenges and difficulties of reflective case study include the researcher's personal bias, ethical issues in relation to colleagues and pupils, drawing on different forms of data collection, and the need for additional perspectives to balance the researcher's focus (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 16). A longitudinal case study builds on an existing case study and focuses on changes that might have occurred since the initial case study (e.g., a different cohort that is studied or a change in strategic objectives). Pollard (2011) has suggested that the most important elements necessary for a longitudinal case study (or any

case study) is the relationship that the researcher develops with the participants, especially in terms of trust, reciprocity, and respect (as cited in Hamilton & Corbett Whittier, 2013, p. 17).

This study is an exploratory case study, involving both focus groups and semi-structured interviews with school administrators (Superintendent, Principal, Vice-Principal), community members, and school staff in the school setting. I chose an exploratory case study because the research was conducted over a concise period of time (May and June of 2016) and I wanted to allow time for further inquiry once the initial research was completed. The research involved a single case (one school) instead of multiple cases (e.g., one or more schools or different school districts). The case study was of a holistic design because it consisted of one unit of analysis (one school) (as opposed to an embedded design, which would have several units of analysis in the same context) (Schryen, 2009, p. 43). The data collection methods employed the use of field notes and audio recordings. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds with a range of experiences. The case study for the research also had similarities to the qualitative case studies described by Merriam (1998).

Merriam (1998) saw case studies as being qualitative in nature, but consisting of three types: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (pp. 29-30). Particularistic refers to case studies that focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. A descriptive case study means that the end result is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study ("thick" is a term borrowed from the social science of anthropology and means a complete literal description of the incident or entity under study). Synonyms for descriptive case study include "lifelike," "holistic," "grounded," and "exploratory." Instead of using numerical data in reporting, it uses literary techniques and images in reporting (e.g., artifacts or quotes) (Merriam, 1998, pp. 29-30).

The exploratory case study in my research included elements of heuristic research as it explored what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. The goal was to have instructional leadership explained in a new way (and consequently strengthened) by the insights of the participants. Moustakas came across the word heuristic when searching for a word that would meaningfully describe the human experience of research. It originates from the Greek word *heuriskein,* meaning to discover or find. Moustakas (1990) defined heuristic research as:

> a process of internal research through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. (p.9)

Furthermore, Merriam (1998) stated that a heuristic case study has the following aspects:

- it explains the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened and why;
- it explains why an innovation works or why it failed to work;
- it discusses and evaluates alternatives not chosen; and,
- it evaluates, summarizes, and concludes thus increasing its potential applicability. (p.32)

The case study approach also has some limitations, including:

- The finished product of case studies may be too lengthy for busy educators and policy makers to read. To overcome this limitation, the researcher may provide a smaller report highlighting the main findings of the study for community members, educators, and policy makers, and/or a presentation.

- There is a danger that a case study may oversimplify a situation because the reader may make incorrect conclusions about a phenomenon (because what may be taken as a small part may in fact be assumed to apply to the whole).
- The subjectivity of the research may affect the researcher's unintentional bias and may lead to issues of validity, reliability, and generalizations. (Merriam, 1998, pp. 42-43)

Methods

The instructional staff and community members were asked to participate in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. They were asked about what classroom instruction works best for their First Nation students and what suggestions they had to improve the quality of instruction. Smith (2005) brought attention to the quality of instruction in Indigenous classrooms when she wrote about Indigenous epistemologies in education:

The problem of educational underachievement has been studied from different and theoretical perspectives and seems now to be more frequently defined as being about the quality of teaching and learning. Questions of Indigenous knowledge, language, and culture have usually been viewed as potential solutions to make classrooms, the curricula and teachers more responsible and inclusive with students more engaged in schooling and therefore more likely to achieve. Although the research generally asks deep questions of structure, of systems and policies, an underlying assumption of much research is that school is inherently good for Indigenous children and their communities and the greater challenge is about how to get the best match, how to make it work better . . . how to fit students. (p. 94)

Much of the research done previously with Indigenous people was carried out with disparity. It was important to me that this research was dependent on First Nation participation and perspectives. Cameron, de Leeuw, and Desbiens (2014) expressed the importance of Indigenous ontologies in research involving Indigenous populations:

> To invoke Indigenous Ontologies, for these scholars is to tread on intellectual terrain that is heavily shaped by colonial inheritances and interests. It is not so much that critical colonial scholars do not acknowledge that Indigenous ontologies are distinct, rather they are wary of how Indigenous knowledges, beliefs and practices are represented and mobilized within colonial structures of knowledge production, and have thus tended to shy away from directly engaging Indigenous ontologies as subjects of research. (p. 19)

In order for this research to be authentic, it needed to have not only input and support from the Indigenous community of where the project took place, but it had to also involve Indigenous knowledge and teachings. I ensured this approach by incorporating participants in my study who were Indigenous stakeholders in the educational process (whether they were elders, parents, community members, teachers or administrators).

Trustworthiness

As this research project was qualitative, the issue of trustworthiness revolved around the criteria of credibility, dependability, and transferability. The concept of credibility refers to whether the participant's perceptions match the portrayal that the researcher has of them (Bloomberg &Volpe, 2012, p. 112). Credibility refers to whether the actions, thoughts, and feelings of the participants in the study are being accurately recorded by the researcher. Some of the ways that credibility can be supported are:

● The researcher may keep a journal throughout the research process to promote self-reflection and as a way to clarify any bias or preconceived notions about the study.

● Prolonged involvement in the field will create a greater and deeper understanding of the phenomenon involved.

● The researcher should also accurately present any negative findings or instances that happened during the study so that all perspectives are included even those that are contradictory to or outright challenge or disconfirm evidence.

● The researcher can also employ "member checks" for credibility, which involves sending summaries or transcribed interviews to each of the participants for them to review.

● The researcher can also use "peer debriefing" to strengthen the accuracy of the account by having a colleague ask the researcher questions and examine field notes. This allows the researcher to examine his assumptions and will help him develop new ways of interpreting the data. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, pp. 112-113)

Dependability is a criterion of trustworthiness that refers to the procedures and processes used to interpret and collect data. Dependability can be demonstrated by:

● Having the researcher develop an "audit trail" by providing thorough and detailed explanations of how the data was collected and analyzed. The researcher can also make the data from the study available for review by other researchers upon request.

● The researcher establishes inter-rater reliability by asking colleagues to code several interviews. By checking the consistency between raters this will reduce the potential of bias by a single researcher analyzing and collecting the data. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113)

The criteria of transferability refer to how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will work in their own communities by understanding how they occurred at this research site. Transferability can be assessed in the following ways:

- Denzin (2001) refers to "thick description," which is a way of communicating to the reader a realistic and holistic picture that demonstrates a shared experience (as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 112).

- An element of shared experience can be demonstrated by the amount of detailed information that the researcher provides regarding the context or background of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113).

Throughout the stages of this research, I used the above outlined strategies to demonstrate the criteria credibility, dependability, and transferability for overall trustworthiness of the study.

Research Setting or Context

The research setting that the study was a rural First Nation federally-funded secondary school. This First Nation community is in close proximity to an urban centre. Due to the rural environment of the reserve, the vast majority of students do not live in close proximity to the school and so school bus lines are often the only means of transportation to and from the school. At the time of the study, the faculty of the school consisted of 22 full-time teachers, two educational assistants, one guidance counsellor, one First Nation cultural coordinator, one vice principal, and a principal. The vast majority of the teaching staff were of a non-First Nation background (about 75%) with the remainder being from various First Nations (about 25%). Four of the teaching staff lived within the community while the remainder of the staff lived away from the community in urban centres.

The students at the school struggle daily to overcome the many barriers to academic success. Although there were some difficulties with Eurocentric parameters of achievement (such as achieving grade level reading or above average scores on grade 12 Provincial Departmental Diploma examinations), there were some extremely positive innovations taking place in this learning environment. Many of the youth could still speak their traditional language, and many took part in traditional cultural events such as Pow Wows (a social gathering where First Nations peoples celebrate their culture through dancing, drumming, and singing), sweat lodges (a First Nations religious ceremony of healing and prayer for spiritual purification), and round dances (originally a healing ceremony, now known as a social dance including songs and singing through which traditions and ancestors are honoured). The school also operated a hunt camp for students twice a year where they leave the traditional school setting and, along with community members and elders, they learn traditional skills such as hunting, beading, teepee construction, and navigation skills. While these skills may not be valued in the Eurocentric curriculum of the province, however they are strongly valued by the community and the school's student body.

Participant Selection

The research sample for this study was made up of 12 individuals, who had roles as teachers, school leadership, and as community members. By having both teachers, school leaders, and community members in the research sample, I was able to explore instructional leadership from the teachers' and school leaders' perspectives, as well as Indigenous knowledge from the community members within this particular First Nation context. The sampling method for this study was purposeful "qualitative" sampling because I intentionally selected both the research site and the participant criteria for their usefulness in providing information about the

central phenomenon (i.e., the plausibility of weaving Indigenous knowledge with Western concepts of instructional leadership) (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The community members and First Nation educators who participated in the study helped me to develop a more detailed understanding of instructional leadership as these participants "walk in both worlds"—for example, a teacher who has had formal educational training and is also a community member of the First Nation community.

Such people who "walk in both worlds" have what, in traditional Mi'kmaq understanding, is called "Two Eyed Seeing," which is the gift of multiple perspectives (a gift treasured by many Indigenous peoples). Elder Albert Marshall has explained that "Two Eyed Seeing" is "learning to see from one eye with the strengths, or the best in the Western knowledges and ways of knowing, but most importantly learning to use both these eyes together for the benefit of all" (Bartlett & Hogue, 2014, p. 25). Two Eyed Seeing implies responsibility for reciprocity, mutual accountability, and co-learning. Bartlett, Hatcher, Marshall, and Marshall (2012) define Two Eyed Seeing as equal representation of knowledge from two cultural contexts (p. 350). Two Eyed Seeing recognises that in a particular set of circumstances we may call upon the strengths of Indigenous scholars and in another set of circumstances we may choose to call upon those of Western science (Bartlett, Iwama, Marshall, & Marshall, 2009, p. 4). In weaving back and forth between knowledges, Two Eyed Seeing avoids a clash or domination and assimilation of knowledges. Western sciences emphasize objectivity and de-emphasize the subjective human element, yet we depend heavily upon them and their technologies in our modern lives. In the Indigenous worldview, emphasis is placed on the concept of "all my relations," which includes the human and animal world as well (Bartlett et al., 2009, p. 4). Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall has stated, "Two Eyed Seeing teaches to awaken that spirit

within you. You become a student of life, observant of the natural world, Two Eyed Seeing teaches that everything is physical and spiritual" (Bartlett et al., 2009, p. 3).

Purposeful sampling will be used in this study. I specifically chose individuals and sites that weave Indigenous knowledge with Western concepts of mainstream instructional leadership in a First Nation secondary context. The sample size of twelve individuals included both school district leaders and school instructional staff (Creswell, 2012, p. 208).

This qualitative study involved 12 participants. Those who participated in this study were either teaching staff or school/district administration. The participant breakdown was eight high school teachers, one vice principal (secondary school), two principals (one at a secondary school and one at an elementary school level), and one district school superintendent. The gender configuration of the participant sample was even with six female participants and six male participants. The heritage of the participants included five First Nation participants and seven non-First Nation participants. There were two high school teacher focus groups. One focus group consisted of First Nation members and the other focus group consisted of non-First Nation members. The non-First Nation teacher group consisted of four teachers of varying backgrounds and experiences. Two of the teachers had been working at the school between five and ten years and two teachers had been at the school five years or less. One of these teachers was a first year teacher at the school but had previous teaching experience. Two of the participants had teaching expertise in Fine Arts and the other three teacher participants had teaching expertise in core subject areas (e.g., Math, Science, English, and Social Studies). Two male high school teachers and two female high school teachers made up this cohort. Two of the four teachers had educational backgrounds beyond the bachelor degree level. One teacher had a Master of Education degree and another teacher had a professional designation in law.

The First Nation teacher focus group consisted of four high school teachers who were from the First Nation where the study was conducted. The gender formation of this group were two males and two females. Although all four members belonged to the same First Nation, only two of the participants resided on the First Nation with the other two participants commuting to the school from a nearby urban centre. The academic and professional backgrounds of the First Nation participants varied as follows: one First Nation participant was a core subject area teacher (e.g., Math, Science, English, and Social Studies), and the other three First Nation participants taught Aboriginal Language and Aboriginal Studies courses to junior high and high school students. Two of the First Nation participants had been working at the school between 10 and 15 years, while one First Nation participant had been working there from between five to ten years. One First Nation participant was a first year teacher; although this participant was employed in various roles at the school prior to teaching (e.g., as an educational assistant). All the First Nation staff were certified teachers within the province of Alberta.

Data Collection Methods

The data was collected through observations, focus group interviews, and the utilization of a digital recording device. Observation is the process of gathering open-ended first-hand information by observing places and people at a research site (Creswell, 2012, p. 213). Like all data collection techniques, there are advantages and disadvantages to this approach. Advantages of observation includes the ability to record information in a setting and allow for individuals who have difficulty expressing themselves to be heard. Disadvantages of observation may have included having difficulty developing rapport with individuals, and limited access to specific sites/locations. The main forms of data collection for this study were focus group and semi-structured interviews. A focus group is a qualitative method that involves unstructured group

interviews in which the focus group leader actively encourages discussion among participants on the topic of interest (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 188).

Focus Groups

Focus groups are suggested as the best research method for interviews involving sensitive issues and working with vulnerable people (Kitzinger, 1994; Owen, 2001; Warr, 2005; Zeller, 1993). These researchers have suggested that focus group interviews allow for the establishment of a group dynamic and shared lived experiences. In group work experiences, as Kitzinger (1994) has contended, priority is given to the respondents' hierarchy of importance, their language and concepts, and their framework for understanding the world. As such, focus groups access the element that other methods may not be able to reach. The method permits researchers to disclose aspects of understanding that may remain hidden in the more conventional in-depth interviewing processes (p. 108). Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2005) stated that group work is inviting to researchers working from "power-sensitive" theoretical frameworks such as post-modernism or feminism. Group work may reduce the imbalance in power relationships between myself who may come across as an "authoritative" voice and focus groups also create data from "multiple voices" (p.199).

Focus groups are groups of individuals that are formed by a researcher or a third party who may lead them in a group conversation for approximately one to two hours. Focus groups do not involve representative samples but instead are selected by the researcher to participate because they have pertinent knowledge and share key characteristics with the target population. The researcher must begin the focus group by creating the expectation that all individuals will participate (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 205). Krueger and Casey (2000) (as cited in Check & Schutt, 2012) provide the following important suggestions to running successful focus groups

- A great moderator is an exceptional listener who can draw people out of their comfort zone to participate, they respect their participants, and they are neutral.

- Their main questions provide useful answers because the questions are clear and understandable and can be answered by the participant.

- The participants are homogenous by relevant category for comparison with no power differentials within the group.

- The sampling is purposeful, representing the entire range of responses, and is random within the pools meeting criteria.

- Recording for focus groups has an individual taking notes as well as an audio recording device for participant's responses.

- Analysis of responses can be comparing answers to different questions through a coding scheme.

- For reporting, it is important for the researcher to answer the questions of the study, and to speak directly to the participants in order to lead to discussion.

- When in doubt, ask the participants for help with anything from setting, to issues dealing with food or the moderator (a third party designated by the researcher). (p. 206)

The main reason that I (as the researcher) chose to conduct focus groups is because the process is similar to an Indigenous research method: the sharing circle. The difference between a focus group and a sharing circle is that an elder or cultural person often leads the sharing circle and the researcher leads a focus group. Further more, participants take turns speaking in a clockwise pattern within a sharing circle. However, both groups (focus groups and sharing circles) honour the First Nation's oral culture as well as provide space, time, and an environment for participants to share their story in a manner that they can direct and feel valued (Kovach,

2009, p. 124). Augustine (2008) stated that Indigenous knowledge can be inspired through talking circles because a common linguistic group has a shared experience of the land (p. 5). He further argued that oral tradition and Indigenous people's knowledges hold information about the land, which is more than the settler society that has settled on the land for less than 500 years (p. 5). Augustine (2008) did not differentiate between oral history and oral tradition through repetition of stories, ceremonies, songs, and dances over many generations Indigenous knowledge systems have expanded over time and space (p. 3). Augustine (2008) has posited that systems of validation used by literate societies should not be used to compare the dreams, emotions, or beliefs of an oral culture (p. 5). He stated his belief that researchers need to be accepted by both the leaders of the community and the community members if they are to do research involving First Nation people (hence the importance of taking the time to build relationships and active listening) (p. 5).

Since focus group interviews were used in this study, individual interviews were also used as a data collection method. A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask open-ended questions to participants and then record their answers followed by transcribing and analysis (Creswell, 2012, p. 217). Some of the advantages of a focus group include more personal interaction between the researcher and the participants. Focus group interviews also allow for a forum where all participants can be heard. Disadvantages of focus groups include difficulty in differentiating between various voices on audiovisual equipment and losing control of the discussion by the researcher (Creswell, 2012, pp. 218-219). Setting boundaries and general rules of dialogue help to support the conversation.

For this study, there were two focus group sessions involving four individuals in each group (one for Indigenous staff members and one for non-indigenous staff members) and were

conducted at the research site during May and June 2016. The reason for conducting two

separate focus group sessions was that some First Nation members requested that they be in a

separate focus group comprised of only First Nation participants. I collected the data by

facilitating and recording the focus group interview on a digital recorder. I also made field notes

for data analysis during the focus group sessions.

Interviews

In addition to focus groups, I also conducted four interviews with individuals who were

in leadership positions. This includes the district superintendent, school administration from both

the Elementary and Secondary school. School staff may be more forthcoming and honest with

their answers if administration is not present during the focus group, therefore individual

interviews were conducted with individuals within school leadership roles. These individuals

were chosen because they had occupied leadership positions at the research site for many years.

An interview is a purposeful interaction in which one person obtains information from

another. They can provide information that is inaccessible through observation (e.g., information

about past events) (Gay, Mills, & Airasion, 2012, p. 386). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) have

described interviews as consisting of oral questions asked by the interviewer (the researcher) and

oral responses by the research participants. The research participants' words and responses are

recorded on audiotape, note-taking, handwritten or computer generated notes (p. 228).

There are three main types of interviews: unstructured interviews, semi-structured

interviews, and structured interviews. Gay, Mills, and Airasion (2012) defined an unstructured

interview as little more than a conversation that allows the qualitative researcher to inquire about

something that has presented itself as an opportunity to learn about something at the research

setting (p. 386). The semi-structured interview involves asking a series of structured questions and then probing more deeply with open form questions to obtain more information (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2007, p. 246). A structured interview happens when a researcher asks a specific set of questions that elicit the same response (Gay et al., 2012, p. 387). For this research project, I used an semi-structured interview format, which allowed the participants to share more of their experiences and reflections of working in a First Nation educational environment. By using a semi-structured interview format, I wanted to allow the interview process to be more directed by the respondents and to alleviate any unintentional cultural bias that I may have put in a set of predetermined questions.

Although the major strengths of using interviews in a qualitative study is that it allows participants to share their opinions, experiences, and personal history in relation to a phenomenon, there are some problems that may arise with using the interview method. These include: (a) respondents may not fully cooperate to complete a questionnaire or interview; (b) respondents must tell what is, rather than what they think the researcher would like to hear; and respondents must know what they feel and think in order to report it (Tuckman & Harper, 2012, p. 244). Tuckman and Harper (2012) have encouraged researchers to consider the following questions when conducting interviews:

- To what extent might a question influence respondents to show themselves in a good light?
- To what extent might a question influence respondents to attempt to anticipate what researchers want to hear or learn?
- To what extent might a question ask for information about respondents that they may not know about themselves? (p. 245)

This study included an Interview Protocol (Appendix) that included the title of the research project and pertinent information such as the date, time of the interview, and the positions of people interviewed. All of the names of the interviewees have been made into pseudonyms. Pseudonyms were used because the majority of participants wanted their responses to remain anonymous. Following this data on the interview protocol form, there was a brief paragraph that included the purpose of the study, names of individuals being interviewed, the sources of data that are being collected, what will happen to the data once collected, and how long the interview session was to take. The last part of the interview protocol form listed the questions that were asked during the focus group session (Creswell, 2012, p. 226).

Audiovisual tools were used to record the data in this study. Audiovisual tools consist of sounds or images that researchers collect to help them understand the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2012, p. 224). The main advantage of using audiovisual tools is that it allows the researcher to capture sounds and the voices of the participants. A disadvantage of using audiovisual tools in a study is that they can be very difficult for the researcher to analyze because of the quality of data that is recorded (Creswell, 2012, p. 224). For this study, a digital recorder was used to record the focus group interview.

Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected from the research site, I needed to organize it. I developed a matrix for the focus group session held on site (at the school) to make organizing the data easier, and the transcriptions were done by me by hand. Transcription is the process of converting field notes and audiotape recordings into text data (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). The transcription had two margins so that allowed me space to jot down ideas in the margins and

highlight questions in the text (to differentiate where one question began and where another ended). I performed a hand analysis of the qualitative data as opposed to using a computer program (Creswell, 2012, p. 239). This approach was chosen because of my discomfort with technology and the desire to get close to the data and develop a "hands on feel" for the data.

Analysis involves reducing a whole to the sum of its parts in order to explain a phenomenon. Research analysis within many qualitative approaches requires organizational grouping of data for the purpose of showing patterns that exist within the research of the phenomena. Analysis works to deconceptualize knowledge through the organizational act of sorting data. The practice involves working with transcripts to arrive at a "meaning unit" or what is commonly referred to as "coding" (Kovach, 2009, p. 130). Researchers may use Indigenous inquiry methods alongside a Western research approach to organizing data. The data can then be coded and emergent themes grouped and bracketed (Kovach, 2009, p. 35). As the researcher goes about the process of coding they may begin their own self-reflection in the meaning-making process. Kovach (2009) referred to this experience as "reflexivity" (p. 32).

Once the data is transcribed, a coding process for the text is developed. Creswell (2012) describes a coding process as trying to make sense out of the data; it entails dividing the data into coded segments, then labelling the segments with codes, and examining codes for redundancy and overlap, and finally collapsing these codes into broad themes (p. 243). The goals of coding data are to eventually find themes or categories in which to organize the data around. Themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the data (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). Codes and themes come about by analyzing and transcribing the data. A preliminary model of the coding process would involve a thorough reading of the initial text data in its entirety. The segments of text will be broken down into smaller segments of information. It would be from

these segments of information that the labelling of codes will begin. From these codes, themes emerge. Once the focus group and interviews were completed, the data was transcribed by hand from the digital recording device. The transcribed data from the focus groups and interviews was then typed into a word processor and printed out in hard copy. I then went through the task of analyzing each focus group and interview question responses to find emergent themes. The data was coded over the months of August and September 2016. While I found the task tedious, I chose not use a software data sorting program because I felt that by pouring over the raw data repeatedly and meticulously would provide me with a deeper understanding of the findings (Kovach, 2009).

While coding the data, as emergent themes appeared and were identified, each was colour coded. This was a lengthy process as there were over 18 pages of single spaced typed raw data to analyze. The codes that emerged were then bracketed into themes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study operated under the basic ethical principle of respect for people. Respect, as employed here, is treating people as autonomous agents and protecting those with diminished autonomy. Such ethical principles maximize benefits and minimize possible harm. Additionally, the concept of justice necessitated the involvement of the fair distribution of benefits and risks of research (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 46). Steps were taken to ensure that compliance is met in accordance with the Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) (2014). School division and community approval was granted prior to participants taking part in this study. Protocols included letting participants know that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that my identity

would be known to participants. The permission of the participants were granted through an initial consent form that will be given to each participant (Appendix). The consent form outlined the purpose of the study and informed participants of their anonymity when the research was published (whether in this dissertation or any other format). The participants also received a copy of the initial consent form. These initial consent forms were only given to participants once I had achieved approval from the Research Ethics Board from the University of Calgary.

Once ethics approval was granted and the consent forms were received back from the participants, then the research project commenced. Information included on the consent form included an introduction and the contact information for myself and my supervisor. This was followed by a description of the project, the risks, discomforts and the perceived benefits of the project. It also contained sections on rights, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. The form concluded with the presented names and signatures of both myself and the participant.

An important part of the consent form is that participants are informed that neither their name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. The form also explained to participants how data was going to be collected. Options include having the tape transcribed, having an interview taped, and knowledge that use of portions of the written transcript would be used in my dissertation. The participant was informed that he/she could withdraw from the study at any time. The consent form included the date when all data on the tape will be destroyed.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study has the following limitations:

- I have no control over whether the data from the focus group interviews was true, as they are from the perception of the person interviewed (and may not always be true).

- Due to anonymity, I was not permitted to distinguish certain characteristics of a participant, such as their role within the school or certain demographic information (e.g. gender or First Nation Board membership), which would have provided additional context and clarity on perspective orientation.

- The study is limited by the number of First Nation certified teachers who participated in the research.

- The focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and not in the language of the First Nation.

Furthermore, the study has the following delimitations:

- there were only individuals from the educational community involved in this study;

- there were no private enterprise organizations (businesses) or political affiliations (First Nation Chief and Council);

- the focus of this study was limited to one First Nation;

- the study took place in a rural setting and so the data collected was indicative of First Nation students in rural areas;

- the study was limited to one grade 6-12 secondary school and K-5 elementary school and,

- the study was limited by the methodology and data collection techniques used.

Conclusion

This chapter explained in detail the research methodology and methods. The research paradigm of qualitative research and case study methodology are explained. A description of the research context and participant sample are also elaborated upon. The data collection methods of focus groups and interviews as well as how the data will be collected, analyzed, and coded are discussed. Ethical considerations and the protection of participant's rights as well as the measures needed to establish the trustworthiness of the study are discussed. The final elements of the chapter are the limitations and delimitations of this research study.

Methodological Reflections

The focus of the study originally was instructional leadership and how this concept could be defined within a First Nation community school setting. Much of the research in the literature review examined instructional leadership from the lens of how it would be practiced in large school districts. Some of the important theorists who contributed to the concept of instructional leadership (e.g. Robinson and Leithwood) had done their research studies in large school districts. This experience led to findings that supported educational change from a more hierarchical approach of initiating from the higher levels of the school districts and not from the classroom teacher.

My study explored instructional leadership from both a transformational perspective and distributive perspective. During the literature review many of the theorists presented had furthered their instructional leadership concept in larger educational setting where it was possible to model and shape instructional leadership on a much larger scale (e.g. a larger urban school district or multiple schools) than where my study took place. I found there to be the main factor

as to why many of the findings were more appropriate at the classroom teacher level and not broad policy changes in how instructional leadership should be implemented on a larger scale.

The Hallinger definition of instructional leadership that was provided to participants prior to the study was of a distributed framework where all those individuals who impacted student learning (e.g. including classroom teachers) can be instructional leaders and not just people who have a position of authority or leadership (e.g. Principal or District Superintendent). This factor may help to shed light on the question of why many of the findings of the study were not compatible with the concept of instructional leadership as it was presented in chapter 2 of this document. As researchers we sometimes go into an area of study expecting to find a solution to my research question. However, the answer that reveals itself at the end of the study can be of a completely different nature from what one hopes to find in the beginning. That is what happened in this study.

Although the study took place in a Frist Nation Band operated school, I had hoped to have more First Nation participants that who took part. One of the many factors for this limitation was that there were only five First Nation certified teachers who on site. Ideally the study would have benefitted from more First Nation participants, but due to the limited number of First Nation certified teaching staff at the research site's location this was just not possible. This was true of the classroom teachers who took part in the focus group and the administrator who participated in the semi-structured interview.

The research setting itself may account for why the findings of the study were more oriented for classroom teachers instead of instructional leaders. Although instructional leadership can be classroom teacher initiated in the distributed form, this specific research site was limited by the number of instructional leaders outside of the classroom. With only two schools and four

educational administrators (a superintendent, two principals and a vice-principal) it would be difficult to get a broader, more diverse and larger sample to size to inquire about the concept of instructional leadership at this research site. The potential to do a similar study in a larger First Nations band operated school division may offer more of an instructional leadership component and more First Nations participants in comparison to where this research study took place.

The concept of weaving instructional leadership with Indigenous knowledge can be a difficult concept to execute based on where the balance is between the two. The model of instructional leadership as presented in the literature review had not been applied to First Nations Band-run schools in its development and origins. A model of instructional leadership that is practiced in First Nations schools should incorporate the Indigenous knowledge of the local First Nation that the school is operated by. The difficulty of weaving instructional leadership with Indigenous knowledge is the process of decolonization itself. Instructional leadership as it is practiced in mainstream schools can potentially be tainted by the historical colonizing forces of imperialism and unintentional cultural bias. It is absolutely imperative that when weaving instructional leadership with Indigenous knowledge that the local First Nation has input and a voice in how instructional leadership is implemented in their district or school and how much local Indigenous knowledge they wish to share in the instructional program. Since their concept of weaving instructional knowledge with Indigenous knowledge is relatively a new practice, it may take time and a process of trial and error before it can be successfully implemented at the school or district level. The process of colonization makes weaving instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledge a challenging endeavour where the balance between the two is not easy to navigate and may look different for each First Nations community.

The study allowed me to reflect on what a successful interweaving of instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledge would look like in practice if it was to be implemented in a school or district setting.

The study examined how instructional leadership could be practiced in a First Nation Band operated school when woven with Indigenous knowledge. This is difficult to predict because it is hard to envision a school community completely free of the decolonization process where a true and authentic experience of instructional leadership could be practiced while being woven with the strands of Indigenous knowledge. I believe a school that was practicing instructional leadership as a way that was decolonized would look very different than the current educational structure that is present on First Nations Band operated schools currently.

First Nations culture would be an integral part of all curriculum in the school. All academic subjects would be based on Indigenous knowledge and First Nations cultural practices. In Chapters 5 and 6 of the research project are some examples of how learning with instructional leadership formed by Indigenous knowledge might practically be applied in a school setting. After the completion of my research what appeared most to me through the raw data was that curriculum outcomes and objectives need to fit the Indigenous knowledge of the local First Nation community and not the other way around.

The initial purpose of this study was to discover how instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledge would be practiced in a First Nation Band operated school. This etic study promotes the idea of allyship in the sense that First Nations communities will need support from different levels of government in order to make instructional leadership that is informed by Indigenous knowledge a reality in their schools and their community. That is why the critical theorist approach was important to this study and is to future studies that may be undertaken. The

researcher must always question themselves and be able to recognize the insidious hidden influences of colonization and imperialism that are present in our society.

Methodological reflections in this study examined how instructional leadership is done at the classroom level, the impact on the study based on the number of First Nation participants, and how the research site had more teaching participants than instructional leaders who had formal leadership positions. The methodological reflections also noted the difficult balance of weaving Indigenous knowledge with instructional leadership and how these two elements would actually appear in practice in a First Nations school. The most significant of these methodological reflections, which speaks to the disconnect between the instructional leadership model put forth by the literature review and the teacher oriented model put forth by the study, is that often in research what we are trying to find is often unknown and when it does unmask itself it is an unexpected result as is definitely the case with this study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter will outline the findings of the research project. Participants were asked to respond to four questions related to the research question, "What constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective?" The four questions were: "What characteristics or components of First Nation culture could help to benefit teachers in the classroom?"; "How do First Nation youth learn best in your opinion?"; "What characteristics should a teacher have if working with First Nation youth?"; and, "Is it important that First Nation teachings are represented in curriculum across different subject areas in your opinion, why or why not?" The chapter concludes with linking literature to the findings of the chapter. The purpose of this research is to gain insight into what constitutes instructional leadership through a First Nation lens from participants that work within a First Nation community school. The goal of this research is to help improve student outcomes by weaving Indigenous knowledge with instructional leadership.

Interviews were chosen as the data collection method for any participant who was in a supervisory or administrative role. The interviews were conducted at two different sites within the same educational jurisdiction. The elementary school Principal was interviewed at her school and the District Superintendent, the high school Principal, and high school Vice-Principal were interviewed at the same site as the focus groups were (the high school). The interview group consisted of two male and two female participants. The demographic of the interviewees was one First Nations member (from a different community) and three non-First Nations members. Of the four administrators that were interviewed, two of them had been with the school district for 15 years or more, one participant had been there ten years or more, and lastly one participant had

been there for less than five years. The educational background of the four administrators included one of the members having a Master of Education degree, one administrator had two Bachelor degrees, and the other two administrators had Bachelor degrees.

I conducted the focus groups and interviews during the months of May and June 2016. A digital voice recorder was used during the sessions. Before the focus groups began, tobacco was offered and a prayer was said in the First Nation language that is spoken by the First Nation at the research site. As the researcher was knowledgeable of the importance of First Nation cultural practices, I offered tobacco as a sign of appreciation and respect to the participants of the study. (Lickers, 2006, p. 46). The prayer was spoken in the traditional language of this First Nation by a cultural teacher in the school. Both focus group members and those participants who were interviewed were both asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What characteristics or components of First Nation culture could help to benefit teachers in the classroom?
2. How do First Nation youth learn best in your opinion?
3. What characteristics should a teacher have if working with First Nation youth?
4. Is it important that First Nation teachings are represented in curriculum across different subject areas in your opinion, why or why not?

The themes that emerged are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Strong Kinship Relationships/Sense Of Community

Not Judging First Nation People By Western Worldviews

What Characteristics or Components of First Nation Culture could Help to Benefit Teachers in the Classroom?

Learn About Aboriginal Culture

Establish Relational Trust With Students

Relational Trust

Value First Nation Perspectives

How do First Nation Youth Learn Best in Your Opinion?

Experiential Learning

Ethic of Care

Postitivity, Persistance, Patience	Ethic of Care
	What Characteristics Should a Teacher Have if Working with First Nation Youth?	
Resilience	Seven Sacred Teachings

Connect First Nation Teachings To All Curriculum	More First Nation Perspectives in Teacher Education Programs
	Is it Important that First Nation Teachings are Represented in Curriculum Across Different Subject Areas in Yout Opinion, Why or Why Not?	
First Nation Teachings Need To Be Done Properly	Teachings Need To Be First Nation Specific

Although the data analysis took longer than expected with the segmenting and colour

coding of the data, it allowed me the time to reflect more on the dissertation experience and the

relationship between research and pedagogical practice. I was also able to review literature that I initially had not in my research proposal, such as the ethics of care (Noddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 2005) and relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Furthermore, I was able to get a more hands on feel for the data by not using a computer software program and do more self-reflection about what the data produced (Kovach, 2009).

What characteristics or components of First Nation culture could help to benefit teachers in the classroom?

The sense of kinship is quite strong in this First Nation, and so many of the respondents spoke about the relationship and importance that students' families have to their schooling. Examples of this sentiment are evident in one focus group comment, "I think a teacher should be open to the kinship relationships that children have in their families and the roles that each of them have" (Focus Group 1, p. 1). Teachers also expressed the importance of kinship and community relationships. One teacher mentioned, "The whole school is a village and it's a whole community and we see the people from their community coming in on a regular basis, the kids see that; they know they care, and they care about their kids, their grandparents care, it's really nice, the involvement" (Focus Group 2, p. 1). Another teacher spoke of the importance of community and its connection to the Aboriginal worldview being holistic:

> I see things being connected as a whole, a good philosophy, a holistic view it would
> probably be good to tie that into the classroom sometimes. It's a whole big family. Just
> look at bereavement; look at how Native students bereave for two weeks. I'm not saying
> to miss that much of school necessarily, but we learn from that, the importance of family,
> that everyone is in it together. (Focus Group 2, p.1)

Administrators involved in the study also spoke of the importance of community within First Nations culture, but they noted how the Eurocentric worldview of community has different values. One administrator said:

> Knowledge of the social aspect is quite important when you come work at the schools out here because the culture and their social aspect of how they manage things on an everyday basis can be different from how we would perceive it, or maybe how we would do within ourselves or for our own children, just in the way we were raised, which is sometimes hard to understand or grasp. (Interview 4, p. 1)

Echoing this same sentiment, another administrator noted the example of when a student is away for a certain period of time:

> Maybe to someone who doesn't understand that period of time that they are away may say well, "that kid is away just missing school," whereas changing their viewpoint might help them understand, well, they were away, because, well it's Pow Wow season right? And I think a lot of people discount that. "It's Pow Wow season, so what? They should be at school." However, Pow-Wow is very important to our students and their families, so the way that they live is more important than school, right? (Interview 3, p. 1)

Kinship and community was very important to the First Nation students at this school.

A participant in the study voiced the importance for educators to not have preconceived expectations or conditions about First Nation students or about how First Nation schools should operate. He explained:

> I think that the key problem that you have teachers coming from off reserve, which most of our own teachers are, and probably in most cases that's the way it is, they bring their

worldview with them. So they see the world in this certain way; that their educational

experiences is what they bring with them, and they want to apply that right away to this

school, because when they come in it's just a school and so all schools should be this

way. So they just follow the patterns that they experienced when they went through their

own learning and then as they learned to be teachers … [this worldview is reinforced].

(Interview 1, p. 1)

This preconceived idea of how a school should operate was detrimental to educators at this

school because the administrator noted that each school community is unique and there is no

generic concept of what a school should look like that is compatible with all schools.

The idea that teachers need to learn about Aboriginal culture was challenged as being too

generic by some of the participants. They felt that teachers needed to have a deeper

understanding and knowledge of the specific First Nation groups of the pupils in their

classrooms. One administrator stated their belief that:

the community and characteristics of that First Nation culture need to be specific to the

area, otherwise they become very generic. So if we start looking at things we can talk

about this somewhere else, and we can say let's talk about Canadian culture, well you

have to look at the specific groups, much like you would have to look at the specific

nations and tribes to see what actually might be useful because Canada as a whole is a

wide ranging culture that from east to west is vastly different, much like First Nation

culture is vastly different. (Interview 4, p. 1)

One of the First Nation participants felt that it would be extremely beneficial for teachers

at the school to engage in professional development about this specific First Nation. They said,

"The teachers would need to take or be taught through a general professional development day everything from our history, to spiritualism, social structures, and even a short language seminar for our staff" (Focus Group 1, p. 1). Two administrators also mentioned the need for this type of training. One administer emphasized the importance of language:

> Of course language is always important. If you have any kind of component of any kind of Aboriginal language, it is usually helpful even though their characteristics are quite different and translations or pronunciations of words. It is something beneficial to have that, and I find it is helpful how you're perceived, as well to know when they know that you have another language, or another Aboriginal language of any kind that is helpful and that's the biggest thing, I think, just the language and the social aspect from what I deal with on a daily basis. (Interview 4, p.1)

Another administrator moved beyond language and mentioned the importance for teachers to take part or have an understanding of cultural ceremonies and practices. The administrator said:

> I also think it is important to know culturally some of the ceremonies, I think it is really important that teachers take part in a sweat, that they take part in pow-wows to understand where the kids are coming from, as dancers, what their culture's all about. I really think anytime you're going into a place where it may not be your culture, it's important to learn about the people that you are spending time with, the people you're working with. (Interview 3, p. 1)

Language and culture that is specific to the First Nation that is part of the school community was seen as fundamental by some of the administrators in this study.

Besides having an understanding of the First Nation culture and language, it was indicated that teachers need to exhibit certain personal qualities and characteristics when trying to create student engagement with First Nations youth. One participant said:

> Truth, honesty, courage, and wisdom are important characteristics that need to be taught to the students and staff to begin with so that they know and properly speak about it. Another characteristic I thought about, and this I didn't have to learn it, because it just comes naturally, is you have to have a sense of humour with the kids. They well, learn to trust you when you can connect with them, I guess through a sense of humour. (Focus Group 1, p. 1)

Another school staff member echoed this sentiment:

> When working with our students, they are quiet, you need tolerance, trust, respect, and good communication skills with them, showing them compassion. It's just developing those positive relationships, getting to know them, and what their home life is like so that you can have that tolerance and patience. (Focus Group 1, p. 1)

Participants in the study believed that staff should model and demonstrate First Nations values in their daily instruction and pedagogy.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that although teacher-student relations are essential for learning, the growth of trust depends entirely on a teacher's initiatives (p. 31). They said this could be established by: (1) engaging parents in a supportive relationship around their child's learning, and (2) establishing a family-like climate in the classroom that builds on student's affective experiences at home (p. 32). Some of the First Nation focus group's members

mentioned the importance of building trusting relationships with students in the classroom, so how does this affect instructional leadership at the classroom and school level?

Bryk and Schneider (2002) theorized that relational trust across a school community is important for school improvement. They stated that a base level of trust at any given point supports a school's capacity to undertake new reform initiatives (p. 106). Bryk and Schneider (2002) then noted that the impact of trust is especially strong for complex reforms that require coordinated work with parents and school professionals (p. 106). Relational trust and school improvement go hand in hand as they work together towards improving student learning. Relational trust is especially needed for complex reforms in a school. Even small gains in school improvement help build relational trust, thereby creating and enlarging capacity to undertake more complex changes in the future (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 106).

How do First Nation youth learn best in your opinion?

Teachers and administrators who participated in the focus groups and interviews were also asked: "How do First Nation youth learn best in your opinion?" The term "First Nation" was used in this question merely to protect the anonymity of the specific First Nation at the school, and the participants were aware that it related to the First Nation group where the school was. In response to this research question, the concept of trust came up again. One First Nation member reiterated:

> It's all about the trust of an educator, you shouldn't come in with judgements. You should not have any types of judgements on the students and that way the student will feel accepted and will have trust within the educational system and the people that are trying to teach them. (Focus Group 1, pg. 2)

Another First Nation teacher supported this belief:

> If a teacher is to come in here and accept that our students are aware of a two-world
>
> perspective, one in our own culture and what they have to learn according to the
>
> province, if the teacher's well aware of that, then he or she can balance that into the
>
> curriculum somehow and the students' perspectives will feel valued. (Focus Group 1, p.
>
> 2)

Participants discussed how difficult it was for some students to balance the First Nation

perspective because it was not always evident in provincial curriculum.

Besides the idea of trust, another strategy that emerged as helping First Nations students

learn better was "hands-on" learning. Many teaching staff and administrators expressed that they

had experienced success with students when they implemented experiential learning. One teacher

mentioned how she is "a big believer of experiential learning, because physically, I believe

students connect more when they are on the land and when they're outdoors and when they are

with their friends, it often brings out their best" (Focus Group 2, p. 2). A First Nation teacher

who participated in a different focus group stated:

> I think through honest hands-on learning, as they learned in the past, going to these
>
> camps [every year][note: this school district offers a Hunt Camp for their students where
>
> they learn cultural practices and traditions from Elders and community members],
>
> actually learning some of their old traditions and that somebody has compassion and is
>
> able to respect the cultural activities that they do like dancing and drumming. (Focus
>
> Group 1, p. 2)

In his experience working with First Nations youth, one administrator found that "hands-on learning" was over emphasized in school policies and educational frameworks. He expressed this opinion:

> I've experienced from lots of people whether it be at professional development, different conferences or workshops, that there seems to be this immediate go-to response for that question, when it comes to our First Nation kids is that they work best with their hands. (Interview 1, p.2)

He illustrated his point further stating,

> Our students will somehow automatically be better at sports or foods or shop or beading and crafting, all those sort of things and I think that's a bit of a cop out! I don't think that taking that stance is the best, I think that the answer to that question is the same question you would ask about any student anywhere, which is how does any student learn best? (Interview 2, pp. 2-3)

This participant believed that while experiential learning may be an effective for some learners, it's over emphasis could be detrimental to some First Nations youth if they learned more effectively through other methods.

Experiential learning was tied to trust and relationship building in the eyes of another administrator who drew upon his experience:

> The most important factor is relationship and trust and building that relationship with kids. In my experience, a lot of hands-on learning is the best for a lot of our kids, they need to see the concepts and these are better understood by learning though doing for these students. A lot of the students find success in being active and I think that in order

for them to want to learn and for that to happen they need to earn your trust. You need to earn theirs, and I think that is a really big part of getting them to learn. (Interview 3, p. 2)

The theme that trust is important in helping First Nations youth learn best, and also the concepts of consistency and structure in day-to-day learning, was noted by another administrator. She said:

Trust is the first component that you have to build with First Nation youth anywhere, that is really high. What I have learned over the years, and I try to stress to the teachers, is that structure is really important and consistency in their routine. Whatever class or grade level that you're working with, it's huge because some of our students don't get that anywhere else. Yes, as a teacher you want to make things fun for them, but they really need to know what the day is going to bring and what your expectations are, that's really important. (Interview 3, p. 1)

Trust was a key element to teaching First Nation youth at this school.

One member of a focus group felt that students would do better if more First Nation teachers were visible in the school. He said:

Generally, because we are in a First Nation setting, we need to have First Nation teachers that have a strong background and cultural knowledge at least to some level. And it doesn't have to be a push and pull with let's say non-native students coming in with non-native teachers as I find in some cases. And perhaps that might enable some students to come to school and perhaps learn a little bit better. (Focus Group 1, p. 2)

Gunn et al. (2011) found that having the school create stronger connections with Aboriginal history, culture, and language helped benefit the students and the connection they felt to the

school. One of their strategies for a safer and more caring school was to have more Aboriginal

people visible in the school (e.g., more Elders in the school or more Aboriginal staff members).

However, Nielson (2010) felt that non-Aboriginal teachers could be successful in First Nations

schools if they showed that they valued Indigenous culture and took part in the First Nation

community.

According to one administrator caring was the main attribute that a teacher should

possess: "This is one I think you can take out 'First Nations' and put youth down, and we just go

with what they have to know is that their teacher cares" (Interview 4, p. 1). He expanded on his

answer by saying:

> If a teacher really cares about the student, that's where the real learning is going to
>
> happen, because that teacher is really going to do his or her very best to make sure that
>
> the student has what he or she really needs in the classroom. (Interview 4, p. 1)

The idea that caring is an important in supporting student learning is verified by Noddings

(1984) and Gilligan (1982).

The importance of concern or caring in relationships can be further defined as relational

ethics. Noddings (1984) believed that caring "is rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and

responsiveness" (p. 2). Tronto (2005) expanded on Noddings ethics of care by theorizing that

there are four elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness.

Tronto (2005) said that care requires a recognition of other's needs and a response to them. She

referred to this as "attentiveness." In her moral theory, she wondered when ignorance is simply

ignorance and when does it enter into the realm of inattentiveness. The second element of care is

responsibility. Tronto (2005) wanted to differentiate the term "responsibility" from the term of

"obligation"—obligation is tied to societal roles and cultural norms, whereas responsibility is more equivocal. The third element of care, "competence," was an acknowledgement for the need for care and then following through with the action being met by the caregiver. The last element of care is "responsiveness," which is a way to understand inequality, vulnerability, and injustice by the expression of those under care. It is the responsiveness and awareness of the care receiver to the care.

According to one administrator, care was even a way to overcome the cultural and linguistic differences among the many different First Nations groups. He commented:

> It would be great if we included a lot of culture, but some [teachers] might feel uncomfortable doing that because they are not of that background, and even those who are First Nations may have difficulties putting it in because often times the learnings between the Nations are quite different. But having a teacher that really cares, does his or her best, has everything planned out and prepped for these students and tries to differentiate the learning as much as possible is going to have the best success no matter what. (Interview 4, pp. 1-2)

Participants who were both administrators and classroom teachers believed that genuine caring for a student's well-being in the classroom was an important attribute of instructional leadership when working in a First Nations school.

What characteristics should a teacher have if working with First Nation youth?

One administrator felt that if a teacher was going to work with First Nations youth that they had to be persistent, positive, and patient. He explained:

> Positivity is huge, you have to come to work every day looking for the positives no matter what happened the day before … if you get stuck on a negative sort of frame of mind it is so hard to get out of, that you could just reside in that all year long and miss so many things that are good, that are actually happening. (Interview 1, p. 2)

Positivity was not only important for the teachers, it was mentioned that positivity permeated throughout the school and become part of the school culture. Robinson (2011) indicated that there are different types of leadership used by educators, and one of these was influencing colleagues through personal qualities and charisma (pp. 6-7).

The concept of persistence was identified as important for teachers working with First Nations youth. One administrator said:

> You have to be persistent in all your actions so it is the routine that you use every day, you've got to be persistent with that. You have to be persistent with your patience … you have to be persistent with your positivity (Interview 1, p. 2).

This administrator also mentioned the characteristic of patience: "A teacher needs a lot of patience, because some of our students are going to push, and push, and push and seemingly never stop pushing and you've got to be patient with them" (Interview 1, p. 2). This administrator believed that by incorporating the characteristics of positivity, patience, and persistence, a teacher's desire to improve student outcomes would be influenced. He commented:

> You've got to take the mindset that today's the day, you come to work and you say "today's the day where we capture the interest of that student, today's the day I connect with that student that I haven't been able," and if it doesn't happen, you have to come back with that same thought that "today's the day it's going to happen." (Interview 1, p. 2)

Being persistent was an important attribute for instructional leaders in First Nations schools because it demonstrated to the students that the classroom teachers cared about their learning and their well-being.

The concept of caring came up in many of the focus groups and interviews and permeated throughout the study. It emerged often when participants answered the question, "What characteristics should a teacher have when working with First Nation youth?" One administrator tied the concept of patience with the idea of caring:

> A lot of patience, and a lot of caring. I think it's really important … the more the students know that you actually care, the more you're going to get from those students. Patience is key though, you are going to have to be a very patient person with many of the kids that you work with, and that's the biggest word I can think of patience. (Interview 2, p. 1)

One of the reasons that patience is a characteristic that teachers working in this First Nation school, and others, need to have is because of the many disadvantages and barriers that First Nation student's face in their everyday lives. The challenging social, health, and economic indicators mentioned in The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) are still very apparent to those educational practitioners who work with First Nations youth in Band-operated schools. One administrator supported this point when she said:

> You need to be mindful of where our students are coming from. I think that with the First Nation youth that I've worked with over the years, that the characteristic of resilience is very important. There is some heavy stuff that our students are dealing with and it's very tough to put into perspective, it's always, you know, not what you want to hear when you come to school. That's why I think resilience is so very important. Our students have

dealt with this past year especially a lot of grief, a lot of loss, you want to make sure that

you can meet them where they are and figure out how to take them to the next place.

(Interview 3, p. 1)

Instructional leaders need to be consistently positive in First Nations schools in order to combat

the negative effects of colonialism and trauma that some First Nations students may be dealing

with.

This administrator felt that teachers could best help First Nations youth by better

understanding First Nations cultures. She commented that it was important to not only

understand the culture and traditions of the students that educators are teaching, but to set

standards for the students to achieve, as well as to be flexible in the teaching practice. This

administrator stated:

I also think you need to be understanding, you need to be able to adapt to different

situations, things are always changing and I think you need to be very, very patient, but

you also have to push them and you have to have expectations, you need to make sure

that they're clear and that you follow through on what you say, and I think that's about

teaching in general and not just with First Nation students. (Interview 3, p. 1)

When First Nations students begin to see that their culture is embraced in the classroom

and curriculum, they have a stronger sense of self-confidence and are more engaged in learning

(Battiste, 2002; Gunn et al., 2011; Neilson, 2010). An administrator spoke to the importance of

this integration as well as the importance of reciprocity when she said:

I think you have to have willingness to learn from them as well, and not just teaching

them, but to learn from them about their culture, be respectful of where they come from,

understand you know, the culture of the people you are working with. But I would have

to say that the characteristic that I would say works the best with these students is being

respectful, kind, understanding, and caring … all the attributes that a good teacher should

have. (Interview 3, pp. 1-2).

Examples of First Nations cultures was important for instructional leaders in First Nations

schools because it demonstrated to students the important contributions that their culture and

community have made to society.

Patience was identified as being important by a teacher in the First Nation focus group as

well:

I think patience should be one of the characteristics, that the students should see how the

teacher acquires that kind of patience. Here nothing is rushed just like beadwork, there is

a planning behind that when the students can see that the teacher has goals in mind and

it's visible to them, and instead of just seeing what the end result is and that it will benefit

them in the end, with what they want to learn. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

When this participant made the connection between beadwork and patience, I began to see more

clearly the depth of beading, how it expresses Indigenous knowledge, culture, and spirituality. It

takes patience and intricate skill to bead correctly and without error and there is a message of

identity in the colours and pattern. This First Nation staff member felt that, like beading, a

professional educator needed to pay attention to detail in their professional planning, how

everything is related, the instruction, and interaction with their First Nation students.

The First Nation staff member continued the comparison of patience required in teaching

to beading when he said:

So when it comes to beadwork, you plan, you select your colours, you pick your material, you have everything in front of you, and you start trudging away at the project. A teacher should have that same mentality and patience too, and the end result would be the student's education and what they take away from that, for whatever subject area. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

This First Nation teacher felt that the connection between the process of beadwork to pedagogical practice would be beneficial in all curriculum and not just First Nations language classes or other cultural courses (e.g., Aboriginal Studies 30).

Other First Nation teachers in the Focus Group mentioned the characteristic of kindness as an important attribute for a teacher who is instructing First Nations youth. One participant said:

I was raised with the Seven Sacred teachings (Anishinaabe formerly known as Ojibwe) and what I took from that was kindness, a teacher should have kindnesses as a characteristic, you know it just has to be something natural, not worked on, something natural that comes across, that they are kind to the students, and show them that in their actions. They walk the walk and talk the talk of kindness. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

Another First Nation staff member believed that kindness was an extremely important characteristic when working with First Nations students in a secondary school setting:

I would mirror some of [participant one's] response that kindness is always a good one, as kids coming into the class will definitely test the teacher to see the disposition of the teacher, and a kindness and compassion is a good one to have. However, it's good to use some measure of firmness, firmness and fairness, it will allow the students to know that

although there is kindness, compassion, and empathy shown towards them, it creates a

respect shown towards them, and a level of learning rather than talking down to them and

showing condescendence. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

Kindness was not only an important attribute of First Nations culture but was also necessary for

Instructional leaders to demonstrate an ethic of care as well as build relational trust with First

Nations students.

One First Nation teacher went beyond the characteristic of kindness by mentioning the

importance of generosity and humility in the classroom:

Teachers should be generous in all aspects, I guess generous in sharing their life

experiences as well as listening to the student's life experiences, and again showing them

that generosity that they accept who they are, they have the respect, and they want the

trust that students will learn from them by showing generosity. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

In terms of humility, she stated:

Humility, the way I see it, is being humble and not boasting about yourself as an educator

… it should be about being humble and in the way you come across to the students …

they will pick up on that humbleness and know that there will not be a wall between the

teacher and the student. (Focus Group 1, p. 3)

Generosity and humility were important attributes for Instructional leaders to possess when

working in a First Nations school.

An educational administrator mentioned that it is important for teachers to critically

reflect on their personal teaching practice consider how it can be improved. He elaborated,

As a teacher you need to make sure that your programming is good to have. Are you

doing the things that are right? Are you evaluating and reflecting on what you're doing

… once a teacher sits down and reflects on their lessons and what happens, they can

really evaluate honestly, and not just, "Oh, well what's not happening for these

students?" rather than, "What's not happening for me … how are these things actually

happening?" For example, like on a test if all the students fail and the teacher says

"What's wrong with these students?" the teacher should also be saying "hmm, what's

wrong with the test?" So reflecting is huge. (Interview 4, p. 2)

This administrator spoke of reflective practice and the idea that a teacher should iteratively ask

themselves, "Are you doing things right?" (Interview 4, p. 3). The administrator alluded that

education is not just a job but a vocation that has a moral purpose (Fullen, 2004).

This administrator also commented:

Care, that's the biggest one for me. You can always work with a teacher to build them

up, there's no problem there, it is the caring and actually wanting to do, their very best,

his or her very best, to make sure that any youth is motivated" (Interview 4, p. 2).

The ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 2005) and teacher authenticity and

sincerity is important with students so they can see and feel that a teacher wants them to achieve

to the best of their ability. An ethic of care helps develop a relationship between teacher and

student. One administrator posited:

[Try] to make those first steps and [make a] connection with kids, but it comes back to

purely relationships with the students. I would prefer to take somebody that can build a

relationship and who has very little experience, then someone who has a lot of experience but can't build a relationship. (Interview 4, p. 2)

Donaldson (2008) found that cultivating relationships was a form of distributed learning that mobilized interpersonal learning (p. 54). Donaldson put forth five, what he called, "pebbles" that initiate interpersonal learning. They are as follows:

(a) How to form honest, personally affirming relationships with colleagues, both individually and in groups, "up, down, and sideways" in the hierarchy.

(b) How to shape group norms that guide productive personal and professional behaviours and reinforce collaborative culture both inside the school and between the school and its community.

(c) How to "make" another professional change her or his practice with students.

(d) How to "make" another professional change his or her practice and relationship with fellow educators and parents.

(e) How to make "those up the hierarchy" accept information and reasoning they may not be open to. (p. 54).

Donaldson (2008) stated that at the core of interpersonal learning, there lies the dilemma for how the school leader can make a difference with students. He argued, this dilemma comes from the desire for an instructional leader to do what is best for students and staying within the policies and procedures of the school or district (p. 55). Donaldson's first two pebbles of interpersonal learning seemed to be most important for the staff at the school, which included building affirming relationships and building a collaborative culture between the school and its community (p. 54).

One administrator noted the difficulty of building parental relationships: "I think having a willingness to make parental contact is also large, albeit very difficult when numbers and phone numbers change on a regular basis" (Interview 4, p. 2). The difficulty in contacting parents may be a result of barriers in Aboriginal communities such as poverty and lack of reliable transportation (Gunn et al., 2011), as well as a possible reluctance to engage in school due to Indian Residential School experiences. A First Nation staff member remarked that it is important to "understand community and families, touring the community. I know of some teachers that play baseball, attend Pow Wows, go to a feast, or even be seen at flea markets or community stores; it let's them know that you are human" (Focus Group 1, p. 3). Such understanding of family and home life should lead to improving relationships and positively impact student learning.

Is it important that First Nation traditional teachings are represented in curriculum across different subject areas? Why or why not?

"Is it important that First Nation traditional teachings are represented in curriculum across different subject areas? Why or why not?" received an overwhelming response that was very positive, and every participant in the study felt that it was extremely important that First Nations teachings were represented across the curriculum. The answers were an affirmation of First Nations teachings and of their importance to student learning. Teachers (both First Nation and non-First Nation) and administrators agreed that First Nations teachings were extremely important and should be taught across the curriculum. The First Nation staff members gave many practical examples of how to implement First Nations teachings and cultural perspectives across curricula and subject areas. A First Nation teacher stated, "Every core subject can be interpreted and presented in a cultural way, everything from language, social studies, math, science,

astronomy, it can be too different, even fundamental levels, and it can be presented culturally" (Focus Group 1, p. 4). Another First Nation teacher provided concrete examples of cultural curriculum: "I agree … with astronomy, and science and biology. The students could learn the anatomy of butchering of their kill, their hunting, tracking the seasons, measurements for a tipi raising, the math behind that, what sort of materials were used and how to detect seasonal changes. I think that languages and identities should be included" (Focus Group 1, p. 4).

Another First Nation teacher talked about the importance of language and provided examples:

> This can definitely be done, starting with events, having the language right, all over the school and not just in words, but we need to have pronunciations as well … having something interactive similar to what we've done in the past on the computer or the Smart Board. We could do this in all subject areas of course like history, we are a big part of history, we should be a big part of history, we should be in all the social textbooks … art, we can teach about our different art forms that we had, like sculpting or like drama, through dance. Language Arts for students, as well, they can learn their own stories and not about something that is irrelevant to them. Of course there is health and science and learning about the medical herbs and plants, there is a lot that can be done there too. (Focus Group 1, p. 4)

A First Nation teacher mentioned that if teachers in a First Nation school were having difficulties or struggling with how to connect First Nations teachings with core curriculum that certain practices could be implemented to bridge this gap.

> We as teachers need to go to the cultural department and get all the knowledge and wisdom that they have to share with us, we may think that we know a little but there is a lot that can be told to them. Also from the elders that are given down from them to pass on to the next generations. (Focus Group 1, p. 4)

Instructional leaders in First Nations schools need to be open to knowledge that the community has when they are unsure how to instruct or demonstrate First Nations teaching to their students.

This First Nation teacher shared some of her experience of witnessing other First Nation teachers in the past bridging the gap between core curriculum and cultural First Nations teachings:

> It should be in, and you can somehow fit it into the curriculum, like if you're an English teacher, math, science, or social. I saw a First Nations lady on the reserve here talk about science in the way that Aboriginal people saw it. It was really interesting and I could connect because Science and Math are not something that a lot of kids can get … I don't even know how you explain it … I guess you can say a worldview or just a way of explaining it, the world around us and the way science works, so you can fit traditional ways into every subject it doesn't matter what subject it is. (Focus Group 1, p. 4)

Instructional leaders should make a concentrated effort to incorporate First Nations teachings across all subject areas when appropriate to do so.

Another administrator elaborated on the importance of weaving in cultural teachings throughout the curriculum:

> I think it is a huge challenge to find the teachings that will fit into different subject areas … but you can have conversations with elders, people in the community who have the

knowledge of different teachings, different understandings that you could incorporate into your different subjects be it social studies, or math, or science. (Interview 1, p. 2)

This administrator believed that a student's self-esteem and self-confidence increased when teachers identified and taught about the many First Nations contributions to society in current Canadian areas of life during their lesson plans in core curriculum areas. This administrator said:

> It helps to strengthen the students to show that the knowledge that their people, their community has is as important as the knowledge that their getting from other places. The First Nations understanding about a certain scientific concept will probably have that same exact understanding or outcome that you would have got from maybe a western thought on the same concept but maybe in a slightly different way. If you show students these two different viewpoints [e.g., Western or Indigenous] or how different cultures have come to the same conclusions, it just shows them that what their culture has achieved is just as important and as valued. (Interview 1, p. 3)

This administrator said that teachers could try to make historical connections with the current curriculum courses by using the resources from the First Nation community. He explained:

> I think you could do it individually with conversations with local people and try to link those things to whatever it is your working on in your class to strengthen these students. This shows them that what they know is important. It shows them that what the people 5000 years ago figured out, and shows them that is important and part of history and as important as any other people anywhere else. You know, learning, growing, moving

through history you know the things that First Nation people figured out are just as important as anywhere else. (Interview 1, p. 2)

Instructional leaders should value First Nations teachings and perceive them as equal other forms of knowledge, regardless of it's origin.

This administrator explained that the importance of maintaining First Nation cultural teachings also contributes to the betterment of the whole of society. He emphasized the importance of connecting First Nations cultural teachings and core curriculum and connected it to progressive universal knowledge by stating:

And who knows, there may be hidden knowledge that has not yet come to light. This knowledge may be more important and we have just not found a way to get it out. You always hear about people finding a new cure for this, or that figuring out some new scientific thing from different parts of the world. Those things are here and could be right here on this reserve and we just need to find them out. (Interview 1, p. 2)

This administrator's comments echo what many academics have said about Indigenous knowledge, that it encompasses or is an expression of Indigenous values. Indigenous knowledge is transferred to one generation to the next; it is cumulative, resulting from generations of trial and error experiments, careful observations, and lived experiences. Indigenous knowledge is not limited in its applications and may be weaved with other forms of knowledge or to create new innovations (Battiste, 2002; Grenier, 1998).

Many of the interview and focus group participants believed that there should be more cultural First Nations teachings throughout the curriculum. In the focus groups and interviews that were conducted during the study, one of the themes that emerged was that many Canadians

were unaware of First Nation's culture or misinformed (because Indigenous history and perspectives are not being focused on in curriculum in classrooms outside of First Nations Band-run schools). One administrator expressed this sentiment:

> I think First Nation teachings are super important, and there is so much about First Nations that a lot of Canada is unaware of, so I really think it is valuable to be teaching our kids throughout Alberta and Canada all about the history of First Nation people. (Interview 3, p. 2)

More First Nations content is needed in the curriculum to show the positive contributions First Nations people have made to Canada before and after Confederation. This administrator posited the need for teacher training programs and post-secondary education institutions to prepare all future educators with the knowledge and tools required for comfortable and competent teaching of First Nation's history and perspectives. This administrator referenced her own experience with this when she was training to enter the profession: "I took a First Nation history course, two of them actually in university, and I grew up around a lot of reserves" (Interview 3, p. 2). These classes gave her the knowledge to better understand First Nations culture, history, and perspectives that she otherwise would not have had.

This administrator's comments about taking First Nations courses as part of her teacher preparation at university made me reflect on my secondary Social Studies teacher training at a university in Saskatchewan nearly 20 years ago. I also took two First Nations courses in my teacher training but I have often felt this was insufficient (especially for secondary Social Studies education training where a teacher could potentially teach Native Studies or Aboriginal Studies courses depending on the province of your employment). Fortunately, there is more of a push in post-secondary institutions in Alberta (e.g., University of Calgary) to be more inclusive of

Indigenous perspectives, culture, worldviews, and histories, particularly in teacher education programs. This new learning may help new teaching professionals teach Indigenous perspectives across the curricula because background in these critical perspectives is necessary.

Even though newly trained teachers may have some knowledge to bridge the gap between the curricula and Indigenous perspectives, how will they be able to inform previous generations of Canadians who did not have the opportunity to learn about these rich and diverse Indigenous cultures? Until recently, Indigenous perspectives have not been mandated into provincial program of studies. One administrator believed that if we could get more Indigenous curriculum and context into current classrooms, this information would reach its way to other Canadians (either an older generation or new immigrants from various corners of the world) through the children and grandchildren who are learning about Indigenous peoples' perspectives, and history. She stated:

> I think a lot of people are learning a lot through their own kids and through all the stuff that's on the news lately, and I really think this is valuable and they have a lot to offer as far as, you know, teaching in their own right, and you know it's part of our history [Canada's] and the kids really enjoy it. My own children learn a lot about First Nation culture in their schools, and they do like to learn about it, they see the value in it. (Interview 3, p. 2)

More First Nations content in curricula allows for Canadian citizens to learn about the positive contributions First Nations people have made to Canadian society, hopefully leading to understanding that supports reconciliatory relationships.

One participant in the study mentioned that they believed that Canada was progressive in the way that it implemented First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachings into its K-12 education curricula. She expressed the importance of having First Nations teachings represented in the curricula by saying:

> I think it's very important, because here in Canada it's focused on, being that I am from [away] and my education was in [from away] and even though we have [First Nation Communities] all surrounding where I grew up in that area, and in my [area] I was not privy nor was our curriculum in any way tied to any of our traditional teachings at all. You know, I kind of commend Canada and Alberta and the fact that this is pushed to try to get that into there for the students throughout to learn about the First Nation teachings regardless of where they are because that was something that was never done, nor is it still done down there. (Interview 2, p. 2)

This participant felt regret that they did not have the same opportunity that today's students in Alberta have to learn about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history and culture when they reflected on their own educational experience:

> I did not get that opportunity to learn about those things, I wish was given that. I kind of feel like I missed out on a lot of that stuff [First Nation teachings] by not having that opportunity. It's getting better down there, but I found that [First Nation teachings] are huge here in Canada. (Interview 2, p. 2)

Although Canada still has a way to go in incorporating First Nations teachings into their curriculum, some participants believed they were further ahead then some American states based on their personal experience.

This administrator ended their interview with a warning that although it is important for First Nations teachings to be represented across the curriculum in different subject areas: "How it's done of course is always controversial … you want to be careful how it is represented and you want it done correctly" (Interview 2, p. 2).

This same theme of learning about First Nations teachings was mentioned by another administrator when they said:

> My concern with First Nation teachings is that they are done properly. We often talk about this with other boards that want to come out here [the research site which is on an Alberta First Nation], and they want to make these connections and relationships with our own schools. Often a lot of that is an arts and crafts type of approach, or "beading and drumming" as I'm calling it now, with a lot of boards that I deal with. It's like "okay, we [other school boards] want to work with your students, we want to take traditional learnings from them, but hey can we do some beading and drumming too, while we're out there? So we can get great pictures of our kids from all these different places in Canada and the world being seen as being into the FNMI approach' [note: FNMI is the acronym used by Alberta Education which stands for First Nation, Métis, Inuit]. I think a lot of the time it is a very glossed over or very superficial approach to First Nation teachings. (Interview 4, p. 3)

First Nations teachings need to done properly and authentically if Instructional leaders are to use them in the classroom setting. This can be done with the guidance of First Nations people themselves.

This administrator mentioned how they felt that outside organizations (e.g., other school districts, corporations, and government officials) used the school, and why it was important to consult with First Nation members and their community before beginning any type of First Nation cultural instruction. He stated:

> I get worried when we talk about First Nation teachings as First Nation teachings because, it's not simply that we're just too large a group. To be able to encapsulate it in a couple of hours of lessons during the year … As you are looking at our case, we have to look very specifically and we can boil it down even more to three specific nations within one nation as they are grouped. So let's say we try to put it into mathematics, we have to look at, did that work for all the Bands and did they all do the same on that? (Interview 4, p. 3)

One area where this administrator found it difficult to get a community consensus was on incorporating a language program within the school. The administrator explained it this way:

> Within the tribes themselves there's specific subgroups that it breaks into as well … we've seen that in our language, that we've had certain complaints from people (community members) that certain ways of pronouncing words aren't correct and so they don't want their children learning that. But we think that it's good for students to learn language, however, we have to break it down into a number of different dialects. (Interview 4, p. 3)

Although participants in the study noted the importance of First Nations language, it was emphasized that there may be regional or dialectical differences and it was important that instructional leaders made this distinction evident (Edge & McCallum, 2006, p. 100).

A solution was proposed, by this administrator, to overcome the differing opinions about language instruction within the school community:

> As the language is being built back up from the elders that lost it, they're now arguing in a polite sort of way for the most part about how that's actually going to work out. What's important is making sure that the right people are coming into the classrooms to talk about these things if the teachers are uncomfortable with it … and I think we need to get more people in who have the knowledge; however, finding those people who are willing to come into school and present is often difficult because the language skills that they may have is only in their own language. (Interview 4, p. 3)

This administrator expressed why, in his experience, that First Nation elders did not come into the school:

> They feel uncomfortable coming in or their residual scars of residential schooling still play very highly with them, or they are just simply uncomfortable coming into the schools, and then there's many that think their learning or teachings will be stolen. (Interview 4, p. 3)

An administrator identified the lack of trust between the school and community as one of the reasons why more elders and community members were not coming into the school to share their knowledge with the students. Bryk and Schneider (2002) stated that trust is required for a school to develop capacity to undertake new reform initiatives (p. 106). One initiative proposed by an administrator to increase the capacity of language instruction was "building a repository" (Interview 4, p. 3) of teachings and learning resources from Elders. Referencing the importance of an oral cultural tradition of language, this administrator stated:

As our elders pass, and a shocking large number are passing away on a regular basis, we start to lose the stories, and it's not just for the students but it's also the community itself, because these stories are the traditional wisdom of the community and once they are gone, they are gone for good. Because, with an oral culture, if we don't have a recording of it, it hasn't been written down. So I do think it's important to be into the culture but I also think that it needs to be highly specific in certain subject areas. (Interview 4, p. 3)

Two administrators mentioned how the term "First Nation" was too broad a label or term and that First Nation "teachings" needed to be specific to the First Nation where the students reside. One of the administrators said, "Simply calling it First Nation learnings, it's very random, it's like saying 'oh here's the United States learning of Mathematics', we have so many different groupings in there that they have to have their voice" (Interview 4, p. 4). This sentiment was echoed by another administrator who commented:

I don't think it's an easy thing to do, especially on a big scale because you are also talking about, maybe people here might have a different understanding of concepts, or think about concepts in a different way than somebody from the Blood tribe or the Cree or what have you. So you can't have, or it would be hard to write a textbook and incorporate that. (Interview 1, p. 2)

The participants of the study mentioned the large diversity among Canadian First Nations and believed that those differences should be emphasized by instructional leaders when possible.

One of the focus groups mentioned that they all were in agreement about the importance of the representation of First Nations teachings in the curriculum but that the students would, at

times, prefer lessons that do not have a First Nations focus. One teacher provided an example by referring to the Fine Arts curriculum:

> The first question I get when I tell people I work at a First Nation school is, "Do you do a lot of First Nation art?" And I say, "No, they're high school kids, so they want to do their music posters, they want to do what other teenagers do." So my lessons are more inquiry based, but once they've done some things of their choice, we do projects as a collective group, like when we did the community skateboard park mural last weekend. A First Nation image evolved out of the kids and they chose to use that to represent the school art program at the skate park. (Focus group 2, p. 4)

This teacher spoke about how it was important to do more First Nations teachings than it is to do more culturally related activities in the classroom:

> Now they [students] are tired of colouring feathers … they don't need me to teach them beading because they are getting beading lessons from their grandmothers. So I would say if we include the teachings instead of rather always throwing things in with the feather, if we use their cultural teachings such as respect, persistence, so that that those can be tied in, while they are drawing a modern picture or drawing something that maybe at first glance is not a First Nation image. These kids [high school] are at this age where they are not always identifying as strongly at the school level with their culture. They do their culture after school, on the weekends, and at community events. When they're at school and in the city they want to be teenagers, they're being chameleon a little bit and walk in the modern world and so it has to be up to them. I don't force First Nation Art on them. (Focus Group 2, p. 2)

Other teachers in the focus groups mentioned the importance of First Nations content in different curriculum areas, but noted that it was more crucial for them to model First Nations values in their lesson planning. One teacher said, "We have First Nation books for the curriculum and they just aren't into it" (Focus Group 2, p. 2). "It's more for the non-Native population that actually need First Nation education, here [on the reserve] it's opposite" (Focus Group 2, p. 2), remarked another teacher. The need to have teaching strategies that implement the First Nation's cultural values was mentioned by another teacher. When teachers discussed what strategies worked well in their classrooms one teacher stated:

> They want to know about things, and with inquiry they get to … [lead] the students, but it's the style of teaching like round circle talking … circle talk, they love that and I find they respond so much better than having chairs set up in rows…. and group work is effective as well. (Focus Group 2, p. 3)

Another teacher mentioned that they found "that conversation style approach really works well with any students" (Focus Group 2, p. 3).

Link to literature

During my research analysis the strategies for improving instructional leadership at the classroom level were linked to or similar to other scholars when talking about classroom approaches that are effective with First Nations learners. Gilliland (1999) summarized ten methods that worked for First Nations students to improve their learning in the classroom. These include using alternative ways of learning with less lecturing and allowing students to watch, reflect, and imagine. The second method is to learn about the child's early training at home, where they engage in activities and learn through active participation and experience (p. 63).

Gilliland's (1999) third method of teaching Aboriginal students is to use instructional techniques used by the family. These include skills such as imitation, demonstration, and observation. Rather than use verbal instructions, the teachers should model the skills and behaviours that students are familiar with. The fourth method involves allowing children to be children. This means that because First Nations cultures traditionally espouses a collective identity, skills were learned in a group and extended family members were often included in teachings (p. 63).

The fifth method that Gilliland (1999) proposed is for teachers not to over-verbalize their intentions. In general Aboriginal students may not answer a question immediately after being asked because silence is valued and used as a time for reflection, and some children are taught not to interrupt their elders. The sixth method involves teaching listening skills: teachers should provide opportunities for students to carefully listen, and educators need to practice active listening, because this skill is valued by some Indigenous people (p. 63). Advancing holistic intuitive learning is the seventh teaching method put forth by Gilliland. In general, people prefer learning large overtures of subject areas than smaller amounts of content that that are not connected or do not appear to have a relationship. The eighth method of instruction is emphasis on the teaching of knowledge that has application in students' lives. Students are aware of the vital importance of Indigenous knowledge, and so they need to be given an opportunity to see how new knowledge builds upon Indigenous knowledge and previous instruction (p. 63).

The ninth method proposed for Aboriginal children by Gilliland (1999) is for the teacher to employ more active learning steps. Active learning gives students more opportunities to be exposed to content organization and choice as well as how to work within the constraints of time limits. This teaching style is effective because some Aboriginal children gravitate towards multisensory and more active instructional techniques. The last teaching method encourages

teaching Aboriginal children through the use of storytelling; many Aboriginal values are taught

by Elders while the audience listens quietly and carefully to what is being said. The morals of

some stories are not immediately apparent to learners and so they require repetitive listening

followed by reflection, so that the important teachings contained within can become evident (p.

63).

Many of the strategies mentioned by Gilliland (1999) were referenced in one way or

another by the instructional staff (both First Nations and non-First Nations) at the research site.

They spoke about, not only the importance of curriculum content reflecting First Nations

peoples, but also about the ways of integrating First Nations value systems into the curriculum

and classroom. The values expressed by participants in this study are closely related to the

"Seven Sacred" teachings or what are sometimes referred to as the "Good Life" teachings from

the Ojibwe people (Kanu, 2002; Gamlin, 2003; Toulouse, 2008). Toulouse (2008) called these

central teachings the Seven Living Principles. These teachings include respect, love, bravery,

wisdom, humility, honesty, and truth (Table 1). Toulouse (2008) felt that these seven cultural

teachings intertwined with an Aboriginal model of self-esteem. There are four interconnected

aspects of self included in this Aboriginal model of self-esteem. These aspects included the

intellectual aspect, the spiritual aspect, the emotional-mental aspect, and the physical aspect (p.

2). Toulouse (2008) believed that incorporating the Seven Good Life teachings demonstrate a

genuine respect for Aboriginal peoples and ensures that Aboriginal students feel they are a part

of the school – that they belong (p. 2).

The teaching of respect includes honouring Aboriginal languages and worldviews in

Canadian schools and having high expectations for all Aboriginal students. Strategies for

teaching respect in the classroom include celebrating Aboriginal cultures throughout the school

program, and acknowledging Aboriginal students in their language as they enter the school with a welcoming that is consistent with the language of the Aboriginal territory where the school is located in. The learning commons or library should have an extensive range of Aboriginal resources and books. Last, the diversity and uniqueness of Aboriginal cultures should be incorporated in lesson planning and curriculum documents by teachers (Toulouse, 2008, p. 2).

The second Good Life teaching is love. This is demonstrated in pedagogical practice by committing to different learning styles in daily instruction and in the deep rooted belief that all Aboriginal students will and can succeed (Toulouse, 2008, p. 2). Hillberg and Thorp (2002), stated that love could be demonstrated as a teaching within a classroom setting by a reflective mode of learning that allowed students the time to successfully complete the tasks assigned to them. Teachers could also use hands-on manipulatives and visual organizers in their lessons. Incorporating a holistic approach to teaching and using collaborative tasks that encourage group work also demonstrates the love in the classroom.

The third Good Life teaching is bravery, which can be practiced in classrooms by using school curriculum documents to focus on the inventions, contributions, and innovations of Aboriginal peoples throughout millennia. Local elders or community members should lead these classroom discussions if teachers feel uncomfortable doing so. Four approaches to demonstrating the teaching of bravery in the classroom include creating relationships and establishing partnerships with Aboriginal communities, bringing in different Aboriginal leaders and experts (e.g., Elders, Chief, and Council and community members) to share their knowledge with the students. Teachers can highlight the innovations of Aboriginal peoples in their lesson plans as well as use key Aboriginal resources from the school in the classroom (Toulouse, 2008, p. 3).

The fourth Good Life teaching is wisdom. By researching effective practices of Aboriginal education during professional development, the teacher may be able to bridge the gap in equity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives in the curricula of their chosen area of expertise. This demonstrates to students that wisdom is about the activity of lifelong learning. Swanson (2003) provided four strategies that demonstrate wisdom in a classroom setting. This included creating an environment where humour is accepted and encouraged within the classroom. Teachers should celebrate the cultural backgrounds of their students as well as individual successes and achievements. Teachers should do their best to improve Aboriginal student self-esteem by engaging with the students on a spiritual, physical, emotional-mental, and intellectual level. Teachers can also emphasize holism in the classroom by using kinesthetic opportunities, visual organizers, and reflection.

Humility is the fifth Good Life teaching; which educators can practice by acknowledging the need to learn more about the diversity of Aboriginal peoples through familiarizing themselves with authentic First Nations histories, ontologies, epistemologies, and paradigms. Humility can be achieved in the classroom by using strategies such as creating a database or inventory of Aboriginal curriculum resources, then organizing these Aboriginal curriculum resources by grade level or subject areas. These Aboriginal curriculum resources first need to be developed with the help of the Aboriginal organizations or community members. The last strategy of humility encourages sharing gathered information with different schools (Toulouse, 2008 p. 3). Humility is evident in distributed leadership, and it could begin at the classroom or school level through collaborative meetings or professional learning communities.

The sixth Good Life teaching is honesty. Honesty can be demonstrated by acknowledging that change is needed in the education system to overcome some of the barriers that Aboriginal

people face, as well as accepting the fact that there is so much more that Canadian students need to know about the diverse Aboriginal peoples (Toulouse, 2008, p.3). The Office of the Auditor General of Canada Reports on Aboriginal Education (2004) brought to light the education gap between Aboriginal Canadians and non-Aboriginal Canadians. It found that the educational achievement gap between the two groups is increasing and the school aged population of Aboriginal children is growing faster than the population of non-Aboriginal children. According to Toulouse (2008), honesty is intertwined with accountability and takes responsibility for changing these dire statistics. Improving Aboriginal education includes: more Aboriginal engagement in teacher preparation courses, more parental engagement at the school level, and more inclusion of the increasing diversity of Aboriginal communities (Toulouse, 2008, pp. 3-4).

The last Good Life teaching is truth. Toulouse (2008) showed that truth can be demonstrated in Aboriginal education by simply asking the students and their communities the question "How well are we doing as educators?" Aboriginal learners need to have clear goals and measures of success. With this data in hand and feedback from Aboriginal communities, school districts can develop a plan for change and improve Aboriginal education in a sustainable way over the long term. This change may require researching strategies that promote educational success, such as: studying Aboriginal career paths following secondary education, the graduation levels of Aboriginal students, and their retention rates at various levels of education. This type of tracking will help educators develop a clearer picture of the areas that they need to improve on and also indicate areas of success (p. 4).

The participants in this study provided concrete examples and shared stories of instructional leadership in a First Nation community school setting. By incorporating First Nation values and Indigenous knowledge in their classroom and school district (as directed by

administrators), they were able to reflect on and share ways to improve teacher pedagogy, whether that be an inclusive classroom setting, using more First Nation teachings, or by developing relational trust, an ethic of care, or learning more about First Nation traditional learnings.

Chapter 5: Analyzing and Interpreting Findings

Introduction

This chapter will look at the findings of the research project and will analyze and synthesize the data as it relates to the research question: "What constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective?" Hallinger (2005) defined instructional leadership as those in positions of responsibility (e.g. school administrators, district leadership, school counseling team, and teachers) who impact student outcomes and influence student learning (p. 229). The purpose of this research is to gain insight into what constitutes instructional leadership through a First Nation lens. Improving student outcomes by weaving Indigenous knowledges with instructional leadership is the goal of this research.

This study took place in a rural First Nation Band-operated school. The instructional leadership model that was evident throughout the research findings was the distributed instructional leadership model (Anderson, 2012; Lieberman & Miller 2004; Yong-Tan, 2012) This model was most suited to the study as it offers school administrators (e.g., district superintendent, principals, and vice principals) and classroom teachers (e.g., cultural, language, and core subject area teachers) ways to improve instructional leadership in the classroom setting. Instructional leadership is too big of a concept for one individual to accomplish on their own (Yong-Tan, 2012). The principal and school leadership team at this school played important roles in determining how instructional leadership was to be practiced in their school (Anderson, 2012; Mulford, 2008), but teachers are also instructional leaders (Anderson, 2012; Lieberman & Miller 2004; Yong-Tan, 2012). It was important to have the voices of teachers heard in the study because they have the most day-to-day interaction with the students and are essential to "the guidance and direction of instructional improvement" (Elmore, 2004, p. 13). The findings from

this study indicated that student-teacher relations were paramount (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Focus Group 1, p. 1; Focus Group 2, p. 1), especially when working with First Nations youth. The relationships built between the teachers and students were based on relational trust and developed over time, and the teachers had intentionally worked at establishing such trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 3).

Relational Trust

Teachers were able to establish and maintain trust by demonstrating to students an understanding of First Nation culture (Interview 3, p. 1), being visible in the First Nation community and at cultural events (Focus Group 2, p. 1), and incorporating some of the First Nation sacred teachings into lessons and curriculum. Some of the participants mentioned teachings on courage, honesty, truth, and wisdom (Focus Group 1, p. 1). These teachings, as well as humour, was seen as crucial to developing initial relationships with students in the classroom setting (Focus Group 1, p. 1).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) believed that trust was an important factor for school improvement and better school learning. Additionally, in order to establish trust, teachers should be aware of the barriers (e.g., poverty, lack of transportation, socio-economic status) to First Nations student success (Statistics Canada, 2012). This study found that the teacher needed to critically reflect on and challenge any judgments and preconceived ideas of First Nation people if trust was to be established between the teacher and their students (Focus Group 1, p. 2). It was also important for educators to accept First Nation cultures and not to be judgemental based on their own worldview or preconceived notions of Canadian education (Interview 1, p. 1).

Demonstrating an understanding of First Nations cultures and traditions helped educators build positive relationships with students, which resulted in the students being more successful (Nielson, 2010). It would have been beneficial, however, for this school to have more First Nations teachers —to act as role models and to promote positive reinforcement of First Nations culture — as the Gunn et.al. (2011) study recommended. Employing more First Nations teachers should develop stronger connections to Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories. According to Nielson (2010), non-Aboriginal teachers can be successful in a First Nations school if they showed that they valued First Nations cultures. So, although it would be positive to have a First Nation school entirely staffed with First Nation personnel, it is not essential (Focus Group 1, p. 1).

First Nations Professional Development

One of the ways that teachers can increase their knowledge of First Nation languages and cultural practices is through professional development opportunities provided by the school district. First Nation teachers within the study mentioned that professional development opportunities can help new non-First Nation staff feel less intimidated when they first begin teaching within the school (Focus Group 1, p. 2). Leithwood (2012) described administrators' practice of instructional leadership as instructional actions (p. 65). Meeting the need for teacher professional development is an instructional action that district administrators could implement with the goal of positively impacting student achievement and teacher collaboration. Of course it is vital that any professional development for a First Nations school community involve Elders, community members, and evidenced-based research (Cajete, 1994; Young Leon, 2012).

First Nation cultural learning is something that school leadership could incorporate into district-wide professional development days as it will also support learning for new and

experienced teachers. Learning that focuses on the community is something that would be valued by non-First Nation instructional staff (Focus Group 2, p. 2), as well as by staff that are First Nation but not from the community (Focus Group 1, p. 2). What would First Nation professional development look like? The First Nation teachers that participated in one of this study's focus groups believed that professional development should teach the school community about the local First Nation history, social structures, language, and spiritual beliefs (Focus Group 1, p. 2).

School administration (i.e., principals and vice-principals) and district leadership (i.e., superintendents) should make professional development relevant for teachers. Robinson (2011) noted the importance of having worthwhile professional development content for instructional staff. Mulford (2008) encourages school leadership to create a community of professional learners. Whalstroms's (2012) instructional ethos entails the influence of instructional leadership action. Instructional ethos is about influencing the context in which instruction takes place (p. 76). This ethos should be backed by evidence-based research and strategies. Implementing a First Nations professional development program could help teachers feel more comfortable coming into a new environment, enhance their ability to build relationships and trust with students, and provide another avenue for district and school administration to promote instructional leadership within First Nations schools.

Specific First Nation Culture

As some of the research participants pointed out in the study, "First Nation" is a very generic term that encompasses many different cultural and linguistic groups. It is important that teaching content and language learning are specific to the First Nation culture where the school is located (Interview 4, p. 1). First Nation cultural immersion is possible for teachers in a rural or

remote setting, but it may not be possible for teachers in large urban schools due to the diversity of their First Nation population.

In a rural or remote setting, it would be possible to focus on in-depth learning of the local First Nation students. In these schools, students may have stronger attachments or a deeper understanding of their First Nation. In these contexts, it would be possible to develop a more intensive and culturally-specific First Nation curriculum. Course content could include: a) a language course with Elders or community members who are recognized as linguistic specialists; b) a detailed history course of the First Nation; c) Elder teaching and storytelling; d) First Nation traditional cultural activities; e) and, fine arts (e.g. cultural dances, music or artwork). The creation of a localized First Nation course and/or curriculum may take time to develop; however, the effort would be worthwhile as the seeds of reconciliation and decolonization could have their origins in such a contextualized First Nation course and curriculum.

Instructional Leadership

A transformational leader (Burns, 1978) strives to build a relationship and partnership with the local community. Relationship and partnership building between a school and the local First Nations is an example of transformational and distributed leadership (Anderson, 2012; Yong-Ton, 2012). This can also be initiated by the classroom teacher. Building these relationships and partnerships would involve leaving the school premises such as going to a First Nation reserve to participate in cultural events.

A partnership between a First Nation and a provincial school could help non-First Nations teachers gain confidence in the teaching of First Nation content (Neilson, 2010). By incorporating more First Nations teachings and Indigenous knowledges into classrooms, self-

determination is promoted. Students would be able to see First Nations teachings and cultural practices represented in authentic and meaningful ways, which could also help them become more engaged in their learning as well as improve their confidence (Battiste, 2002; Neilson, 2010).

Meriam (1928) believed a standard First Nations curriculum would be largely unsuccessful due to the diversity of First Nations groups; therefore, he promoted a contextual and local curriculum. Meriam's (1928) study paralleled what two administrators in this study stated: the term "First Nation" was just too broad and encompassed too many people and groups under one term (Interview 1, p. 4). If the term "First Nation" is too broad in scope, then, how might schools and instructional leaders go about teaching about a specific First Nation?

A Repository for First Nation Teachings

One interesting idea that would contribute to both improved student learning and cultural preservation, as offered by a participant in the study, was to build a repository of First Nation teachings for future use (Interview 4, p. 3). This participant spoke about the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledge. Within an oral culture if teachings are not recorded, documented, or written down, there is a chance that important teachings and cultural knowledge may disappear forever with the passing of an Elder. Creating a repository specifically in relationship to the cultural tradition of language could be accomplished by having local community members and Elders in the school setting so that they may share their experiences and wisdom in relation to linguistic education. This process could be started by writing down all words in their language with digital recordings on how to pronounce these words correctly as well as how to incorporate linguistic changes that happen over time. New experiences and

technologies need to be considered as they add new words and phrases to First Nation language that would not have existed traditionally (e.g. global positioning system, ipad, 3D printer). This curriculum could be built over time and continually modified by local community members and Elders to ensure that this First Nation language program continues to evolve with new words, history, teachings and innovations. This repository should also contain records of those community members and Elders who had differing opinions or beliefs about language from those who made up the final consensus of the curriculum. In such a way, a record of community knowledge, can be passed onto future generations. Digital cartography currently taking place in Canada's North, with the cooperation of Inuit peoples and the Geomatics and Cartographic Research Centre, focusing on traditional land use and Indigenous knowledge is one example of such a repository. Inuit Indigenous knowledge, language and culture is being recorded and preserved through the creation of digital atlas repositories (Engler, Scassa, & Taylor, 2013).

The recording of a First Nation language repository could be a starting point for instruction courses in cultural language. Additionally, such Indigenous knowledge could be weaved into multiple subject areas through this approach. Examples include: a Culinary Arts program where students could learn the ingredients and preparation processes for traditional First Nation foods from community members and Elders; a course for Fine Arts that brings local artists and community members to instruct and video tape classes on First Nation sculpting, woodworking, and beadwork. A First Nation repository for Social Studies or History that uses both the historical records and documents of local museums and archives within the surrounding region, as well as the stories, experiences, and history of First Nation people so that the curriculum could be created in the most unbiased and decolonized way possible (Smith, 2012).

These repositories of Indigenous knowledge in different subject areas might not only be shared with students but also be used for professional development opportunities for teaching staff as well. This could provide new staff a basic understanding of the languages and traditions of the First Nation that employs them. Such a practice was mentioned in a Focus Group of First Nation teachers who felt it would be beneficial for the school staff, students and community if new school teachers to the First Nation community school were able to take professional development courses or seminars on specific First Nation language, history, and social structures (Focus Group 1, p.1).

The First Nation Focus Group in this study felt that it was possible to weave Indigenous knowledge into local curriculum in a repository format in almost every subject area, in some shape or form, that is taught in current secondary schools (Focus Group 1, p. 2). Non-First Nation teachers who participated in the study also felt that this idea was important and they provided their own examples by sharing experiences of going to traditional ceremonies (e.g., attending a sweat lodge or smudge) or being present at non-cultural events (e.g., attending the local flea market or a school sporting event). This demonstrates caring of the community and First Nation students on the part of the instructional leaders. An administrator in the study also believed that teachers working in a First Nation school should take these actions in order to demonstrate caring and understanding (Interview 2, p. 2).

In order for a repository of Indigenous knowledge to be built so that instructional leaders are able to access and share it with their First Nation and non-First Nation students, there needs to be a level of relational trust established. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that the growth of trust in student teacher relations depended entirely on the teacher's own initiative (p. 31). Creating a repository of Indigenous knowledge would require a base level of trust in order for the

school to undertake any new reform initiatives in school improvement and student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 106). Relational trust could begin in the classroom setting between a teacher and student. Once this initial trust was created, it could set the foundation for increasing instructional leadership throughout the school, allowing it to permeate to other learning environments (e.g., Provincial school boards). Once community members within the First Nation are aware of the level of trust that students and teachers share as well as the teachers' ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984) towards their students, the process of weaving Indigenous knowledge within the school curriculum could begin to take place and continue to grow exponentially.

The Seven Sacred Teachings

Teachers and instructional leaders could start to build relational trust in the school setting and the community by implementing the Seven Sacred teachings of respect, love, bravery, wisdom, humility, honesty, and truth into their daily lesson plans and curriculum (Toulouse, 2008). If a teacher was to instruct students in their classroom with these cultural teachings as a pedagogical guide, it would be possible to demonstrate to First Nation students and their community that their cultural traditions are fundamentally important and valued by non-First Nations Canadians. As one First Nation participant in the study said, if a teacher is respectful and truthful with students, the students may begin to have trust with the educational system in general (Focus Group 1, p. 2). A teacher or instructional leader who uses First Nation teachings regularly in their classroom can help First Nation students be aware of their "two worlds" perspective, where they not only recognize the mandated provincial curriculum, but they also begin to see that their own culture has important teachings as well. This approach will allow First Nation students to have their own perspectives heard, and they will begin to understand that both

the Provincial standard curriculum as well as their own cultural teachings have value and important educational significance (Bartlett & Hogue, 2014; Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 1).

A teacher or instructional leader who uses cultural teachings, such as honesty and humility from the Seven Sacred teachings, can build relational trust within their classroom or school setting. This can be done through transparency with the instructional program as well as being open to First Nations culture by not bringing into the community any biases or preconceived judgements originating from the teacher or instructional leader's western worldview (Focus Group 1; Interview 1). This approach could help the teacher or instructional leader to decolonize themselves by critiquing the ways that teachers themselves have been oppressed by society (Little John, 1992; Smith, 2012).

Using the Sacred teachings of honesty, truth, and bravery, may also help teachers and instructional leaders bring to light some of the negative experiences that First Nations people have had with the Canadian government (e.g., legacy of residential schools, disenfranchisement until 1960) in the past. Once such barriers and oppressions are addressed, an honest dialogue can begin between First Nations peoples and non-First Nations peoples about the lasting legacy that colonization has left on us all (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Smith, 2012). This is one of the reasons that I chose critical theory as a basis for my conceptual framework; it provided a foundation to help me decolonize from some of the structural and institutional biases that contributes to the oppression of First Nations people.

Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into Curriculum

The incorporation of more First Nations content in mainstream curricula could become a tool to combat some of the structural and institutionalized biases against First Nations people. More First Nations centered curriculum could provide the historical knowledge Canadians need to be aware of the struggles and injustices that First Nations peoples have faced because of colonization. One administrator mentioned how she was learning about First Nations history from her own children's experiences and learnings at school. She stated, "I think a lot of people are learning a lot through their own kids" (Interview 3, p. 2). If First Nations cultures, languages, and histories are incorporated into the curricula, then an opportunity exists not only for current students to learn about the important and positive contributions that First Nations people have made to Canada, but also provide opportunities for that knowledge to be passed onto people who may not have experienced it in their own schooling. One example could be the child of a recent Canadian immigrant or a Canadian citizen from a previous generation when Canadian secondary school was more Eurocentric and not inclusive. Their schooling experience may have come at a time when the history and experiences of First Nations people were not valued, emphasized or embraced in school curriculum.

First Nations culture is represented in Alberta curriculum though the optional secondary courses of Aboriginal Studies 10, 20, and 30 and locally developed language courses (e.g., Blackfoot, Cree, and Stoney language courses) that are available as course offerings for students to take as electives if they so choose (Alberta Education, Program of Studies). The Alberta Social Studies curriculum also incorporates First Nations history and experiences at various grade levels from grades one through twelve. This is a positive step forward because when First

Nations students see themselves represented in the curriculum in a positive way, it promotes a positive self-concept and more engaged learning (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

One interviewee compared her educational experience [in a different region] with what the Alberta curriculum teaches about First Nations culture:

for me, the reason I think it is important is because here in Canada [First Nation culture] is focused on. You know I kind of commend Canada and Alberta and the fact that, it is pushed [First Nation culture] to try to get that into there [curriculum] for all the students throughout to learn about the First Nation teachings regardless of where they are because that was something that was never done, nor is it still done [there]" (Interview 3, p. 2).

This interviewee even felt regret because she missed out on an opportunity to learn about the First Nation culture in her [region] while growing up: "I did not get the opportunity to learn about those things, I wish I was given that. I kind of feel like I missed out on a lot of that [First Nation culture], by not having that opportunity" (Interview 3, p. 2). Although Alberta has a long way to go to incorporate more Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, according to this administrator, it is further ahead than some other educational jurisdictions.

Integrating First Nations Perspectives into Teacher Preparation Programs

As First Nations teachings and cultures make their way into the K-12 mainstream provincial curricula, all students who go through the Alberta school system will learn about Indigenous perspectives and the positive contributions that First Nations people have made in this province and country. Only one member in the whole study (of 12 participants), an

administrator, mentioned that they had received limited First Nations courses in their undergraduate training to become a professional educator: "I took a First Nation history course, two of them actually, in University" (Interview 3, p. 2). If teachers are going to work in First Nations communities and schools, they should have relevant professional training or learning in post-secondary schools about First Nations histories, cultures, methodologies and pedagogies. I took two First Nations courses during my training as a secondary Social Studies teacher in Saskatchewan in the late 1990s. Considering the growing demographic of First Nations people (Statistics Canada, 2011), and the fact that they are the original inhabitants of the country of Canada, all future teachers trained at Canadian universities should have knowledge and understanding regarding First Nations histories, cultures and peoples.

The University of Calgary teacher preparation program has made a First Nations, Métis and Inuit course mandatory for all pre-service teachers. This will help future educators develop a basic understanding of the histories and cultures of First Nations people, so that they can better connect with this teaching and with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Aboriginal Studies and language courses should also be valued equally in high school programming. Then, if a student submitted the courses Aboriginal Studies 30 to a potential post-secondary institution instead of Social Studies 30, or Blackfoot Culture and Language instead of an European or Asian Language, these courses would have equal value for post-secondary admission. Changes like these could lead to more First Nations students attending post-secondary institutions.

Barriers to First Nations Perspectives in Curriculum

Offering more First Nations courses to students in secondary schools provides an opportunity for provincial school districts to partner with local First Nations communities —their

local community members, linguists, and elders—to enhance and augment the provincial curriculum with First Nations histories and cultures. This partnership would strengthen relationships between the provincial school jurisdictions and First Nations communities. Using local First Nation to enhance curriculum can start with distributed instructional leadership (Yong-Tan, 2012), by having a classroom teacher invite local First Nation elders and community members to share knowledge with the students. As one administrator in the study said, "So one of the biggest things [local knowledge] is making sure that we have the information available for teachers to access and that's going to come at the nation level as well as the school level" (Interview 4, p. 1). This administrator also said, "I think getting to know our local culture or specific culture to the region that we are in, and being very specific to the actual tribe or nation that we represent within the school, would be helpful" (Interview 4, p. 1).

All participants in the study believed it was important that traditional First Nations teachings be represented in curricula across different subject areas. First Nation participants of the study provided diverse examples for First Nations teachings in different curricula. One participant said that students could learn biology and science by "the anatomy of butchering their kill, their hunting, tracking the seasons, measurements for a tipi raising, the math behind that, what sort of materials were used and how to detect seasonal changes, and language" (Focus Group 1, p. 4). Another First Nation participant said, "every core subject can be interpreted and presented everything from the language, social studies, math, science, astronomy, it can be two different levels, even fundamental levels, they can be presented culturally (Focus Group 1, p. 4). Another First Nation participant added:

> You can do it [First Nation teachings] in all subject areas, of course history, we are a big part of history, that should be in all the social textbooks a part of what we teach, art we

can teach about our art, our different art forms that we had, sculpturing, or like drama, through dance. Of course health and science and learning about the medicinal herbs and plants, there is a lot that can be done there too. (Focus Group 1, p. 4)

One administrator mentioned the importance of the First Nations worldview and how it should be presented in curricula as equal to the Euro-centric worldview or any other worldview (Interview 1). A participant believed that instructional leadership could be done at the classroom level to emphasize this important point:

But I think you could do [instructional leadership] individually through conversations with local people and try to link those things [First Nation cultural teachings] to whatever it is that you are working on in your class again, to strengthen students, show them what they know as important, what their Grandma and Grandpa know is important, show them what the people 5000 years ago figured out and show them that is important and part of human history and just as important as any other people anywhere else (Interview 1, p. 3).

This administrator also said:

Before you can have conversations with Elders, people in the community, who have the knowledge of different teachings, different understandings that you could incorporate it into your different subjects be it social studies, or math, or science. I think what it does is it helps strengthen the students to show that the knowledge that their community has is as important as the knowledge that comes from other places. (Interview 1, p.3)

This same administrator was careful to highlight the difficulties that often present themselves to teachers or school leaders who try to incorporate more First Nations cultures and teachings into the curriculum. They observed, "I also think that it's a huge challenge to find the teachings that will fit into the different curriculum areas" (Interview 1, p. 3). The difficulty of getting First Nation community members and Elders into the school setting to share First Nation Knowledges and connect it to the curriculum was voiced by another administrator:

> However, finding those people who are willing to come into the school and present is often difficult because the language skills they may have may only be in their own language. They feel uncomfortable coming into the schools. Then there's many [Elders] that think their learnings or their teachings will be stolen. They feel uncomfortable coming [into the school] or their residual scars of residential school still play very highly with them. (Interview 4, p. 3)

The difficulty with finding cultural presenters could be addressed by having the school become more welcoming for Elders and First Nation community members.

Instructional Leaders and Community Involvement

If instructional leaders and educational administrators are having difficulty getting individuals with the teachings, local knowledge, and language proficiency to come into schools and share with the students, what can be done? One First Nation participant mentioned that teachers need to build trust and rapport with the community outside of normal school hours. Teachers need to make an effort to be engaged in the community so that trust develops, otherwise it will be difficult for community members to enter the school setting and share their Indigenous knowledge. One First Nation participant voiced the need for teachers to be more

involved and seen in the community outside of school hours (Focus Group 1, p. 3). A teacher in another focus group agreed with that assessment and described her own personal experiences with community involvement and connecting with students:

> Well, for me, from my experience … you have to relate to these students and be willing to connect to these students. They feel they will connect more with the learning if they connect with the teacher, I personally find. So when I go to sweat lodges with the students and I take the students climbing and all these things, they have established that she is interested or the teacher is interested in our culture, so let's connect with this [the subject area she is instructing in] because she cares. (Focus Group 2, p. 2)

Other teachers in this focus group agreed with this assessment and added:

> So if they [the students] know you are rooting for them it helps, you have to build relationships with them [the students], that's why doing things like coaching is important, once you do that it makes a huge difference, they respect you once you do that, they trust you, they show up to your classes and they listen to what you have to say. (Focus Group 2, p. 3)

Many of the teachers and administrators confirmed that they had established trust with the students because they were involved in the First Nation community, which demonstrated a genuine interest and honest commitment to participation in First Nations cultural activities. Encouraging teachers and instructional leaders to be more involved in the First Nations community outside of the school setting can be a way to further deepen the practice of decolonization (O' Sullivan, 2007).

When educators and instructional leaders are more open to community involvement and decolonization processes, culturally responsive educational practices can be explored. Pewewardy and Hammer's (2003) culturally responsive education framework had many of the attributes and characteristics important in this study, including: trust, care, cultural literacy, and inclusion.

One Size Fits All Curriculum

One of the administrators mentioned that because of the diversity in First Nations cultures within Canada, it would be difficult to create an Indigenous curriculum that would cover all the First Nations cultures correctly and accurately. This administrator said:

> Let's talk about Canadian culture, you may have to look at the specific groups, much like you would have to look at the specific nations or tribes to see what actually might be useful because Canada as a whole is a wide culture that from west to east is vastly different, much like First Nation culture is vastly different. (Interview 4, p. 1)

This finding echoes the 1928 Meriam report in the United States, and such advocated for education that focused on individual abilities, and needs.

One administrator in the study illustrated the difficulty of a nationalized generic First Nations curriculum by using the following example: "so, if we look at a Chinese Canadian or someone from China, second or third generation, talking about Chinese culture in Canada is going to be vastly different depending on where they were [in China]" (Interview 4, p. 1). This administrator then echoed what some of the other participants in the study felt about community involvement by teachers and instructional leaders:

So how does this benefit individual teachers in the classroom? I think to know their local

culture or specific cultures of the region that they are in and being very specific into the

actual tribe or nation that they represent within the school would be helpful to them.

(Interview 4, p. 1)

Once a teacher or instructional leader has developed good rapport with the people in a First

Nation community, he/she may be able to make the curriculum more relevant and meaningful to

the First Nation students. Classroom teachers could create a sense of belonging within their

classroom by increasing their involvement and communication with parents, and enhancing their

cultural awareness through professional development, as well as practice within the classroom

and school. If these initiatives are taken, the potential of improving the academic outcomes of

First Nations students are increased (Gunn, et al., 2011). These strategies, in conjunction, the

affirmative representation of the local First Nation's cultural beliefs, practices, and philosophies

will encourage First Nations learners to be more engaged in their learning and help them to

develop positive self-image (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010). Respectful instructional leadership

strategies combined with more Indigenous knowledges within the curriculum may speed up

closing the achievement gap between First Nations students and non-First Nations students, but

there are external factors that inhibit First Nations success outside of the local school system

(Richards, 2008). The Gunn et al. study (2011) linked school attendance to academic

achievement, but found that the barriers to attendance were much larger societal issues that were

a result of the historical injustices of colonialism and were too broad for a school to completely

neutralize. The Gunn et al. study (2011) found that specific barriers to attendance included

poverty, poor housing, personal trauma related to addictions and suicide, and lastly, no regular

transportation to school (p. 339). The Gunn et al. study (2011) concluded that these barriers need to be removed in order for learning to take place.

The Effect of Post Generational Trauma

During the study, several teachers and instructional leaders mentioned that the trauma that some students experienced in their daily lives was visible in the school setting. They emphasized how a caring relationship and showing concern about their overall wellbeing was paramount, even over pedagogical curriculum objectives. One teacher in a focus group recalled a personal experience:

> I remember getting really mad at a student at one time and then hearing later what was going on in that student's home and that changed everything; knowing what *that student's* going through at home. It helped me keep in mind that for some students this [school]is the best part of their day. (Focus Group 2, pp. 2-3)

Another staff member, who participated in the focus group, added to this observation:

> We do not often know how much work it takes for them [the students] to even get here [the school]. We do have truancy issues here and when you think about all the things they had to go through to get on the bus, then you go, "Wow! You have already made your day!" (Focus Group 2, p. 3)

Some of the participants talked about the persistence of First Nations youth and their ability to overcome the many barriers to achieve their academic success and individual well-being.

One administrator tied the trauma that is present in the community with instructional leadership. He felt that it was important for teachers to reflect on their own pedagogical practice and how it may be improved, and he also communicated the importance of self-care:

> So the reflection is huge in that [professional practice] and wondering if they (teachers) are able to deal with many of the issues that we have here as you will see anywhere, but whether or not they have come to grips with the social issues that face us here. How are they going to deal with that? Whether that's with the social worker, whether that's with colleagues, whether that's with the administration and finding out what's actually happening". (Interview 4, p. 2)

Trauma not only affects the student's ability to learn, but it also impacts teachers and instructional leaders and the way in which they interact with their students.

Dr. Martin Brokenleg spoke about the resiliency and cultural healing of First Nations youth, and about the challenges that youth and their community still face:

> In this materialist, fast-paced culture, many children have broken circles, and the fault line usually starts with damaged relationships. Having no bonds to significant adults, they chase counterfeit belongings through gangs, cults, and promiscuous relationships. Some are so alienated that they have abandoned the pursuit of human attachment. Guarded, lonely, and distrustful, they live in despair or strike out in rage. Families, schools, and youth organizations are being challenged to form new "tribes" for all of our children so there will be no psychological orphans. (2012)

Heart and De Bruyn (1998) spoke about the post-generational trauma effects that plague First Nations communities. Some of the examples of trauma that the authors presented included family violence, suicide, and alcoholism. They mentioned that deaths occurred so frequently within First Nations communities that people become numb from one loss as they soon face another. Heart and De Bruyn (1998) state that the major historical traumas of the past and the consequent grief directly contributes to the present day social problems in some First Nations communities; as individuals live with psychological numbing, numbing anguish, and destructive coping mechanisms (pp. 68-69). Participants in the focus groups were aware of some of the difficulties in student's lives and the importance of initiating relational trust between the student and the instructional leader so a positive connection is fostered so learning can begin to take place.

Brokenleg created a model called The Circle of Courage to help develop resiliency in First Nations youth. Brokenleg believes resiliency is about having a courageous spirit and being strong on the inside. Resiliency can only be taught by transformative experiences and not just posters or words alone (2012, p. 12). The four dimensions of the Circle of Courage are belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. They have their origins in Coppersmith's (1967) research on self-esteem. Belonging is the enormous strength inside of a person, which is created when they realize that they matter – that they are important. Mastery is the learning, development of talents and abilities, and problem solving. Independence is described as the setting of the course of one's destiny by demonstrating the ability to control emotions and not wielding power over others. The last variable of the Circle of Courage is generosity, which as, Brokenleg explains, one cannot have, unless an individual knows that they have value to others

(2012, p. 12). If the four dimensions of the Circle of Courage are implemented by instructional

leaders, then students will feel they are valued and relational trust will be built.

Discrepant Findings

One area of the study where participants contradicted one another was when it came to

the concept of "hands on learning" or experiential learning, and determining which is the best

approach for First Nations students in the classroom. One focus group member mentioned their

preference for hands on learning:

I'm a big fan of experiential learning. I know there are things that I do at the school …

taking kids off site that gives them an opportunity to explore different cultures, different

communities, different events they may have here … they're concrete learners. I believe

students are hands on and that may be lots of watching while things happen and then

participating before engaging right away. It depends of the student's personality. They

physically, I believe connect more when they are on the land and when they're outdoors

with their friends". (Focus Group 2, p. 2)

This statement links to the literature of Gruenwald (2008) who refers to this as ecological place

based education that provides an opportunity to experience connection with others and nature (p.

314). One First Nation participant agreed with this assessment:

I think through honest hands on learning as they learned in the past, going to camps [the

research site annually runs hunt camps for First Nation youth], actually learning some of

their old traditions and that somebody [a teacher] has compassion and is able to respect

the different cultural activities they do, dancing, drumming. (Focus Group 1, p. 2)

By combining traditional First Nations cultural activities with hands-on learning, an instructional leader may be able to connect with students who are kinetic learners. Iten (1999), a theorist of experiential learning, states that experiential education is a holistic philosophy where experiences are carefully chosen and learners are engaged. Interactions evolve between learners, between learners and their environment, and between the teacher and learner (p. 93).

Wurdinger and Rudolf (2009) found that effective experiential learning approaches included project-based learning, service learning, place-based education, and lastly, active learning. Project-based learning was an instructional method where teachers presented a problem to the students, who after identifying the problem, developed a plan, executed the plan against the problem and then reflected on its outcome, while being guided by the teacher (p. 4). In problem-based learning, students work in small groups to find solutions (p. 5).

Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009) explained service learning as community service that happens concurrently as learning is taking place (p. 6). Place-based education involves using an interdisciplinary approach to education, with the student understanding and focusing on improving their immediate environment. Place-based education has its origins in the discipline of environmental education (p. 7). The last experiential education approach according to Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009) is active learning. Examples of active learning would be meeting curriculum objectives through small groups, simulation, role playing or debate. It is any instructional technique that gets students reflecting on their learning, allowing them the freedom to express their ideas or opinions, and does not include lecturing (pp. 7-8).

According to Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009), the role of the educator in experiential learning is three-fold: first, the teacher allows students to make mistakes as well as learn from

them while guiding them through the process; Second, students discover solutions to the

problems that they encounter while the educator gives them the licence and freedom to

experiment; and the third role of the educator is to provide additional resources, information, and

expertise so that students can continue their learning once they get stuck or come up against a

barrier (p. 9).

The students have three roles as well, if they are to engage in experiential learning

according to Wurdinger and Rudolph (2009). These roles include being allowed more freedom in

the classroom setting as long as they continue with the learning process. Secondly, students need

to understand that while completing an assignment, they will go through a series of trials and

errors. The last role of the student in experiential learning is recognizing that the content learned

and the problem solving process are equally important (Wurdinger and Rudolf, 2009, p. 9).

The Association for Experiential Education (2017) has identified some principles of what

the practice of experiential education entails. It occurs when experiences are supported by critical

analysis, synthesis, and reflection. Kolb's (2015) theory of experiential education encompasses

these four components as well, but refers to them as concrete experience, reflective observation,

abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (p. 51). The learner takes initiative during

structured experiences, makes decisions, and is accountable for the results. The learner is

actively engaged in the learning process, and this is demonstrated by posing problems, solving

problems, and constructing meaning. The learner perceives that the learning task is authentic

because they are engaged socially, soulfully, physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

Experiential learning forms the basis for future learning and experiences because the learning

taking place is of a personal nature. Many relationships are nurtured by experiential learning

such as learner to others, learner to self, and learner to the world at large. The outcomes of the

experience cannot be predicted so the learner may experience adventure, uncertainty, risk-taking, success or failure. Experiential learning provides opportunities that nurture and allows for the examination and exploration of values for both educators and students. The primary roles for educators during experiential learning are: facilitating the learning process, insuring emotional and physical safety, posing problems, setting boundaries, and setting up suitable experiences. During experiential learning the educator encourages and recognizes spontaneous opportunities for learning. Educators need to be cognisant of their preconceptions, biases, and judgments, and how they can influence the learner during experiential education. Lastly, the design of the learning experience allows for the possibility to learn from natural successes, mistakes, and consequences.

Lowen-Trudeau (2012) provides a Métis perspective on experiential education in which he uses a lens of cultural revitalization and decolonization to blend Western and Indigenous knowledge into the research methodology of metissage. Metissage has its origins in the research methodology of bricolage which involves taking research strategies from a variety of scholarly traditions and disciplines as they are required in the changing context of the research situation (Steinberg, 2006). Metissage then is a way of blending identities, texts, and genres as a strategy to weave together race, language, gender, and place into autobiographical texts (Chambers, Donald, Hasebe-Ludt, 2002). Simpson (2002) advocates for more Indigenous knowledge in experiential education by utilizing Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, connecting to the land, supporting decolonization, including Elders as experts, and promoting Aboriginal language.

One administrator did not disagree with the benefits of experiential learning as a method of pedagogical delivery, but felt that First Nations students were overly exposed to this method of instruction. While experiential learning may work for some students, it is not the best method

for all: "There seems to be this immediate go to response … First Nation students do best by doing better with their hands … I think it's a bit of a copout and I don't think taking that stance is best" (Interview 1, p. 2). This participant believed that by automatically labelling all First Nations students as experiential learners, First Nations students who are not kinesthetic learners are disadvantaged. The danger of proposing that First Nations youth learn best by experiential learning runs the risk of excluding those students that have different learning styles. This administrator believed that each teacher needs to find the best learning style of each student, so that all students can engage in classroom instruction in the style that they learn best, whether that is experiential learning or otherwise.

Vince (1998) came up with five points that challenged one of the theorists of experiential learning in Kolb (one of the early theorists of hands on learning). His critique was that experience needed to be seen as contained, constructed, and shaped by social power relations. An integral part of the learning process is in the unequal and complex relations around knowledge that is constructed by people. There is a need to focus on the here and now experience, and the process that takes place between the organizations represented by the people working within the education environment. Vince notes that it is important to find ways to work with dense mechanisms and unconscious and underlying processes. Lastly, that meta processes relating to the learning cycle are included (Vince, 1998, p. 309). Experiential learning is influenced by the social power dynamic and is not always value neutral. The issues include a review of the political processes within experiential learning as well as the role that social power relationships play in them. Reflection is an important step because it allows time to identify the unconscious and psychological processes that are part of experiential learning. Meta processes

related to experiential learning allows instructional leaders to gain insight into the nature of thought and, the lived experiences of these actions (Vince, 1998, p. 309).

While many participants in the study advocated for the strengths of experiential learning as an instructional method when working with First Nations students, a few of the participants felt that this approach was over used (Interview 1; Interview 2). The main critique was not of experiential learning itself, but that there was an overemphasis of this approach by instructional leaders when working with First Nations students. While experiential learning may be the best method for some students, some of the participants argued that it was not the best learning method for all students.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the analysis and synthesis of the findings of the research project. Participants believed that relational trust and care were essential characteristics for instructional leaders to possess when working with First Nations students. The participants expressed the importance of an understanding of First Nations cultures, and a demonstrated relationship outside of the school setting. Some participants expressed the challenge of getting Elders and community members to facilitate Indigenous knowledge within the school setting. Instructional leaders, should help maintain present Indigenous knowledge for current students, as well as those in the future. This chapter also highlighted the additional characteristics of instructional leaders as well as the importance of First Nations culture in the school setting and the curricula. It is important that educators remember the role of post generational trauma and its effect on the staff and students in the school setting, and that instructional leaders should be

aware of the discrepant findings of the over use of experiential learning in First Nations school settings.

Instructional leadership in a First Nation community school setting would have many of the same characteristics as in other school settings, but the main difference is the inclusion and celebration of that First Nation's cultures within the school setting or in the school district. Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership can be woven and beaded together in the classroom though a partnership between instructional leaders, Elders and First Nation community members.

Chapter 6: Summary of Discussion of Research Findings and Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the research findings and conclusions of the study. Key recommendations from the study will be shared with the community so they can learn the findings of this study, and what constitutes instructional leadership from a First Nation community school perspective. The purpose of this research was to understand what constitutes instructional leadership through a First Nation lens and with the goal of improving student outcomes by weaving Indigenous knowledge with instructional leadership.

Key Findings/Summary Discussion

The key finding of this study is instructional leaders need to establish relational trust when instructing First Nations students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, 2011). The relevance of this finding gives an understanding of the "other" (e.g. minority groups who do not see themselves represented in the classroom) to the school system and thus relational trust can be applied beyond First Nations students. The study found that relational trust could be facilitated by instructional leaders being involved in the community (e.g., being present at community events, participating in extra-curricular activities with students, and by partaking in cultural ceremonies). Relational trust was a key component of instructional leadership (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, 2011), but the study found that this was difficult to establish due to the post-generational trauma (Brokenleg, 2012; Heart-DeBruyn, 1998) evident in some of the First Nations students, which is influenced by the harmful effects of colonialism and imperialism.

The study provided specific examples of how instructional leaders can build relational trust with First Nations students, which included taking part in community events (e.g., local

Pow Wows, the community flea market) when invited by the First Nation community.

Instructional leaders should demonstrate the importance of First Nations cultures to students in

their day-to-day interaction. This is very important as this empowers students and increases their

self-concept (Battiste, 2002; Neilson, 2010). Actions that an instructional leader could take in

this regard include smudging with students at the beginning of classroom instruction with the

help and permission of a community member (e.g., an educational assistant) who works in the

school. Instructional leaders could also attend extra-curricular events outside of normal school

hours, such as musical concerts and welcome back barbeques, or in First Nations ceremonies

(e.g., a sweat lodge ceremony or a Pow Wow) in the community if they feel comfortable doing

so (as it may be outside of the instructional leader's religion or cultural norms). Active

participation or attendance at First Nations cultural events within the community help educators

experience First Nations culture and experience it in deeper ways (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

At the school studied here, there is an annual welcome back Pow Wow at the beginning of the

school year where teachers can actually participate in the Pow Wow. There is even a "Best

Dancer" award in the teachers' category that any staff member can enter.

Another conclusion of the study was the importance of demonstrating the attribute of

caring in the practice of instructional leadership. The attribute of caring is an important

component to supporting overall well-being for students (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984;

Tronto, 2005). This study found that care was demonstrated in the classroom as a tool for

instructional leaders through the time and effort they took with their lesson planning, how they

made efforts for self-care, and how they interacted with the students in and outside of the

classroom (Interviews 3 & 4). Teachers at this school demonstrated an ethic of care woven with

instructional leadership principles and First Nations perspectives in the way with which they interacted with their students while in the classroom.

Using the Seven Sacred teachings as a way to deliver curricula and interact with students during instructional time is one way that Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership could be intricately woven together in a First Nations community school. The Seven Sacred teachings of respect, love, bravery, wisdom, humility, honesty, and truth can be demonstrated in multiple ways in the classroom (Toulouse, 2008). Respect can be demonstrated by not having the instructional leader's worldview superimposed over First Nations students' ways of being and doing, but rather by embracing diversity (Interview 1; Interview 3). Love can be exhibited by having the instructional leader commit to the success of First Nations students by changing their instructional techniques to better suit the needs of the students in their classroom (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2).

In the classroom, instructional leaders could exhibit bravery by showing students at every opportunity the many positive contributions of First Nation cultures and weaving these into the curriculum whenever possible (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 1). If an instructional leader is uninformed or uncomfortable about doing that properly, they can ask local community members (e.g., First Nation staff at the school or Elders from the community) to help with guidance so that the proper First Nation teachings are delivered to the students. This would allow curriculum objectives to align with the Indigenous knowledge that is present in the community (Focus Group 1; Interview 4).

Wisdom can be demonstrated by instructional leaders by professional development around best and wise practice (Interview 4), and by combining that with local First Nation culture and history. For example, all staff can attend an in-service or professional development

session about the local First Nation language, history, or cultural practices (Focus Group 1). The school district superintendent or school principal could arrange for community members or Elders to share various aspects of the local cultures and traditions that may enable instructional leaders to be more comfortable with weaving Indigenous knowledges into the curriculum, and with building relational trust with their students in the classroom (Focus Group 1).

Humility as a sacred teaching could be demonstrated by instructional leaders with an acknowledgement that, even though they may have professional educational training and pedagogical expertise, they continue to demonstrate lifelong learning by being open to learning the local First Nation language. This links to the sacred teaching of bravery as well, First Nation students who learn to communicate in their traditional language demonstrate courage, conviction, and the ability to make positive choices. The teacher can learn about First Nation culture from their students (e.g. language), showing the value and importance of language and cultural learning reciprocity (Battiste, 2002; Focus Group 1, Interview 1; Nielson, 2010). This practice may also provide the instructional leader with the opportunity to engage and interact with the parents or guardians of the students, and other community members, in a more positive way (Focus Group 1).

The sacred teaching of honesty can be demonstrated by directly addressing the educational system's lack of empathy for the challenges of First Nation people. This can be achieved through increased parental engagement and more First Nation content in teacher education programs (Focus Group 1, Interview 4; Toulouse, 2008). This will provide First Nations students a larger footprint in the provincial curricula and will help improve their self-esteem through the learning about their own culture in addition to what is mandated in government curriculum (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

Truth, as the last of the sacred teachings, can be demonstrated by developing measureable outcomes such as tracking quantitative and qualitative indicators of First Nations student success. These indicators could relate to increased parental engagement by instructional leaders, improved student attendance, and increased academic achievement by students (Gunn et al., 2011; Interview 4). The analysis of this data can show areas of strength, and show areas where instruction can improve. Instructional leaders can weave western knowledge and skills along with First Nations cultural values and principles to make the curriculum more relevant to First Nations students (Calliou & Wesley-Esquimaux, 2015; Kawagley, 2006).

The Seven Sacred teachings are values that instructional leaders can demonstrate in the classroom when instructing First Nations students (Toulouse, 2008), and all students. These attributes can help instructional leaders decolonize from the harmful effects of colonialism. By incorporating Indigenous knowledge teachings, instructional leaders can develop a resistance to the methodologies of colonialism and imperialism (Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Chilsia, 2012; Focus Group 1; Smith, 1999).

An important finding of this study was that the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge teachings into curricula can help instructional leaders create partnerships within the First Nation scommunity that support academic outcomes for First Nations students. Indigenous knowledge learning includes language learning instruction within the school setting, as well as connecting First Nations cultural learning to the Alberta curriculum, so Indigenous students can relate to the learning (Alfred, 2005; Focus Group 1; Kawagley, 2006). By connecting Indigenous knowledge teachings to instructional leadership, instructional leaders can make education more relevant for First Nations students (Harrington & Chi Xapkaid, 2013; Pewewardy & Hammer, 2003).

Instructional Leadership in Practice; Distributive and Transformational

Instructional leadership could be both distributed or transformational based on its origins when weaving it with Indigenous knowledges. Transformational leadership is the understanding that change within an organization involves system and individual transformations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Lynch, 2012). This is an important aspect of instructional leadership within a First Nations community, where change happens at multiple levels. A transformational leadership action implemented by superintendents may be to increase Indigenous knowledges learning within a school district by putting forward a policy that made Aboriginal Studies courses and First Nations language courses a prerequisite for High School graduation. Another example of transformational leadership that combines Indigenous knowledges with instructional leadership principles would be to create a First Nations language curriculum in consultation with Elders and local community members. It would also be important to allow students and learners from outside the First Nation local area to be exposed to Indigenous knowledges, thus increasing knowledge and understanding about First Nations cultures.

Leadership at the district level could have a role in creating a repository of First Nations cultures and Indigenous knowledges (with First Nation consent and OCAP® in practice) by financing the recording of stories that Elders tell to students; thus, creating a digital recording of pronunciation and phrases for the Indigenous language. This repository could include First Nation sstories and legends, recipes of First Nations cultural dishes, protocol teachings, a compilation of drumming songs, and teachings about traditional cultural dress. This repository could include any type of Indigenous knowledge learning that the local First Nation wished to share inside or outside their community.

Indigenous knowledges and instructional leadership principles can be weaved together through distributed leadership as well. Distributed leadership does not originate from the district office or the principal, but is a shared responsibility among the teaching staff of the school (Robinson, 2011; Yong Tan, 2012). Examples of how classroom teachers could expose their students to Indigenous knowledge learning include land and place-based educational experiences (e.g., field trips to historical places of First Nations significance or on First Nations land if invited), so they can gain a broader and deeper understanding of the concept of 'land as teacher'. The distributed leadership aspect is the reciprocal learning that occurs between the teachers and students – each is in learning mode in this environment.

For this distributed leadership approach to be effective, principals and the school district would need to be inclusive of teacher decision-making and the weaving of Indigenous knowledge learning with instructional leadership principles. It is also important for instructional leaders to engage First Nations students in their classroom to the First Nations communities in their region. With parental and community support, contemporary First Nations issues could be presented to students by First Nations members (e.g., Band Councillor or Elder). This would provide students with a current understanding of First Nations cultural leadership practices and governance frameworks, challenges and successes. Indigenous knowledge learning does not have to be solely only historical and traditional, but could be blended with current issues such as conservationism, global affairs, (e.g., current international Indigenous realities and events) and sustainability.

This study found the overlapping theme of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, 2011) and caring (Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 2005). Trust needs to be established in order for instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledge to be respectfully woven together in

a First Nation community school. The students need to know that the instructional leader cares

about their well-being before they are willing to share their culture with them (Focus Group 2;

Interview 3; Interview 4). Once care has been established, the groundwork can be laid for trust.

According to some of the participants of this study, once students begin to trust the teacher, they

will be more willing to achieve the academic tasks expected by the instructional leaders (Focus

Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 4).

Gunn et al. (2011) observed that the creation of a more inclusive sense of belonging

potentially increases cultural awareness, which then permeates throughout the school. This

inclusive sense of belonging can increase attendance and academic achievement in the

classroom. This study also found that increased cultural awareness overlapped with a sense of

belonging. Relational trust improved students' achievement and also was one of the initiatives

implemented by an instructional leader (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson 2011). Teachers can

build relational trust with First Nation students by including the characteristic of patience when

instructing in the classroom (Focus Group 1; Interview 1) as well as implementing

decolonization practices (Focus Group 2; Interview 1; Smith, 2012). Participants also advised

that instructional leaders should treat the students in a respectful manner in order to create an

atmosphere of trust in their classrooms (Focus Group 2; Interview 2; Interview 3).

Instructional leaders are encouraged to treat students in a respectful manner, be more

open to a First Nations worldviews and perspectives, and have patience, demonstrate care, and

continuously work at building relationships and trust. Once relationships are built and trust is

established, instructional leaders can begin the task of weaving instructional leadership with

Indigenous knowledge teachings. According to the study, teacher growth could be improved by

professional development focused on Indigenous histories and perspectives, an introduction to

language learning, and the learning of cultural practices and traditions (Focus Group 1). This professional development could provide pragmatic examples of how and where to integrate First Nations cultural teachings into the mainstream curricula. This would allow for an opportunity for instructional leaders to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes (Kawagley, 2006; Smith, 2012). Battiste (2002) as well as Barnhart and Kawagley (2005) found that there are many similarities between these two knowledge systems. Students will benefit from instructional leadership learning of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. This, in turn, will be an example for students, perhaps leading to more student engagement, positive self-concept and self-esteem (Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

This research found that both administrators and classroom teachers believed that they could have more Indigenous cultural learning prevalent throughout the classroom and the school (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 1; Interview 4). Instructional, distributed and transformational leadership would have a place for systemic change of this kind. Distributed leadership could be effective in a classroom setting when teachers implement the Seven Sacred teachings in their lesson planning (Focus Group 1). Using the talking circle for group discussions in social studies or language arts could engage distributed leadership in a First Nation community school (Focus Group 2). Participants stated that distributed leadership was demonstrated by the following practices: incorporating First Nation histories in social science courses (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2); using First Nation art (Focus Group 2); teaching the First Nation drumming and singing (Focus Group 1); First Nation language could be taught (Focus Group 1); and, First Nation languages could be incorporated in English language arts courses (Focus Group 2).

Transformational leadership is demonstrated when a superintendent or district leadership staff creates a repository of Indigenous knowledges that the school district could share with the entire organization (Interview 4). This repository could include artifacts such as examples of beadwork, drums, blankets, and sculpture. This repository does not only have to contain actual physical artifacts, but could include theoretical and abstract Indigenous knowledge teachings as well. Examples of Indigenous knowledge teachings could include First Nation stories and legends, mathematical knowledge (e.g., the exact measurements behind a tee pee structure), and the understanding of visible and not-so-visible seasonal changes according of the First Nation people (Focus Group 1).

The main component of a repository of Indigenous knowledge, according to this study, was the recording of the oral language of the First Nation at this community school (Focus Group 1; Interview 4). Incorporating First Nation language in a repository would be sanctioned by the First Nation community and the highest level of the school district. Instructional leaders in classrooms could invite community members to teach students language, but a large repository of the First Nation language would need to be created by the school district with the blessing and permission of the local First Nation community (Interview 4). Teachers could practice instructional leadership (Robinson, 2011, Yong Tan, 2012) by making First Nation language visible in their classroom (e.g., posters with Indigenous words and their pronunciations), and demonstrating it in their everyday interactions with students (Focus Group 1). For language and Indigenous knowledge to be prevalent in more than one school, transformational leadership would need to be demonstrated by the district Superintendent or school board by making it a district priority, only moving forward with community support (Interview 3; Interview 4).

While Hallinger (2005) found that teachers need to practice instructional leadership to impact student achievement. Mulford (2008) found that instructional leadership will not occur unless it is supported by the principal. This study found that teachers were willing to incorporate more Indigenous knowledges into their lesson planning (Focus Group 2). For teachers to be more effective in incorporating Indigenous knowledges into their classrooms, they need professional development on instructional leadership strategies that support Indigenous ways of being and doing (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2). It is recommended that instructional leaders be provided with more professional development opportunities specific to Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership weaving, so this can be evidenced in the daily life of the school community.

The study also found that it was essential for Indigenous knowledge learning be specific to the school's First Nation community, and that these teachings be done properly (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 2; Interview 3; Interview 4). There are many different First Nations groups across Canada and while there are some shared First Nations experiences, such as implications from residential schooling or the myriad of negative individual and community impacts of the 1876 Indian Act, it is recommended that local First Nation cultural and traditional teachings be taught (Focus Group 2; Interview 3; Interview 3). A generic curricula would be effective in looking at the historical experience of colonialism and its negative effects on Indigenous peoples, not only in Canada but also worldwide (Battiste, 2000; Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 1999). A generic First Nations curricula would be ineffective, however, in regards to language teaching (as even in the Treaty 7 geographical area, there are up to five different First Nations groups all with their own culture and language) and Indigenous knowledges learning (First

Nation groups use different herbs and medicines, and have different diets based on their geographical location in this vast and diverse nation) (Focus Group 1).

According to the study and existing literature, some of the barriers that prevent instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledges from being woven together in a First Nation community school perspective include the impact of poverty, low attendance, and personal trauma (Brokenleg, 2012; Focus Group 2; Gunn et al., 2011; Interview 3). Only once these barriers are challenged can significant learning begin to take place for First Nations youth (Gunn et al., 2011). Participants in the study felt that by establishing trust with students, demonstrating an ethic of care, and including more learning about Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives in lesson plans and pedagogical practice, some of the barriers that First Nations students face may be overcome (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 3; Interview 4). This finding was evident in literature; it was suggested that more First Nations cultures, perspectives, and histories be included in the classroom (Augustine, 2008; Battiste, 2002; Nielson, 2010).

The concept of establishing relational trust between the instructional leader and the student to improve and enhance learning was supported by literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, 2011) as well as demonstrating the ethic of care with students (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 2005). Instructional leaders can create relational trust, demonstrate an ethic of care, and use First Nations perspectives in their practice in a distributed or transformational way in their positions within the educational structure (Focus Group 1; Focus Group 2; Interview 4).

Sharing the Results with the Community

The results of this study will be shared with the community school upon permission of the district superintendent and the education council of the school authority. This could take place as a presentation at a professional development day, once permissions are granted and approved. The presentation could be through a PowerPoint followed by a question and answer session with staff and educational administrators. Another way that the results of the study could be shared with the participants and other employees of the school authority is through a pamphlet sent as a paradox data file (pdf) to school authority staff by electronic mail identifying the main findings and conclusions of the study. The findings of the study could be shared in a less formal way by sharing the results through small group discussions (during a professional development day or at a staff meeting after the school day). It is my hope that these research findings are shared with other First Nations schools so that what was learned could be adapted. By weaving Indigenous knowledge with instructional leadership together, it is my hope that First Nations student outcomes will improve in this community.

Conclusion

This study is relevant to the practice of instructional leadership in First Nations schools because some of the findings originate at the most important indicator of student achievement, which is the classroom teacher (Robinson, 2011; Elmore, 2004). Many of the participants in the Focus Group sessions (50%) were First Nation classroom teachers and their responses and feed back contributed to the findings to promote instructional leadership in First Nations schools.

As a result of this study, I hope that instructional leaders will work with First Nation communities and other stakeholders to encourage the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and perspectives in their pedagogy. If instructional leaders can implement the Seven Sacred teachings, as well as demonstrate an ethic of care, and establish relational trust with their students and communities, the weaving of Indigenous knowledges with instructional leadership across all curricula will happen. This process may be in the early stages of development, but it must continue if we are to close the achievement gap for First Nations students by demonstrating to them the value and beauty of their culture. This process will take time, if appreciated in respectful and honouring ways, all Canadian students can all benefit from the wisdom embedded within Indigenous knowledges.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Ryan Kraushaar. I hope to learn how Indigenous knowledge can be combined with instructional leadership to improve the academic outcomes of First Nation youth. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are either a First Nation member or are an educator that exhibit characteristics close to the competencies of instructional leadership.

If you decide to participate, I will be inviting you to participate in a focus group interview session taking place on the following date_____. The benefits of this interview session is that it will be a good professional development opportunity to converse with colleagues about how to improve the learning experience of students of First Nation background.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. If you give me your permission by signing this document, I plan to disclose this information only for the purpose of my dissertation research at the University of Calgary and at the request of the First Nation being studied.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with the University of Calgary or the First Nation. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. The Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary has reviewed and approved the present research.

If you have any questions, please ask me, you can contact me at email address _____or phone number _____ and I will be happy to answer them.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR

SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING

READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

_____   _____

Date   Signature

_____   _____

Signature of Witness   Signature of Investigator

Adapted from Check & Schutt (2012, p. 53)

Appendix B: Consent Form for Participation

Werklund School of Education
2750 University Way NW
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB
T2N 1N4

Principal Investigator: Ryan Kraushaar

Introduction and Contact Information

You are asked to take part in a dissertation research project that is investigating how the theory of instructional leadership and Indigenous knowledge can combined to improve learning outcomes for First Nation youth. My name is Ryan Kraushaar and I am a doctoral candidate in the secondary educational leadership program at the University of Calgary. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions, I will discuss them with you. I can be reached as ph#xxx-xxxx or by email at ryan.kraushaar@_____. As a doctoral candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) My research is conducted under the supervision of Dr. J. Ottmann, Associate Professor, University of Calgary Werklund College of Education via telephone at xxx-xxxx or email at_____.

Description of the Project

This study, which will be conducted at Morley Community School during the winter of 2016, attempts to understand the complex phenomena of Indigenous knowledge and instructional leadership with the hope of improving student outcomes. If you are a faculty member of the school or a First Nation member and you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a consent form for participation and a Tape Consent Form as well and participate in a

separate one hour focus group interview. Food will be provided at the session as well as tobacco and a horouraium of $_____will be provided to every community member as compensation for your participation.

Risks or Discomforts

This is considered to be a minimal risk study meaning the research risk to you is no greater than that ordinarily encountered in daily life activities. The primary risk that may be associated with this study is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the research. You may speak with me at any time to discuss any issues related to study participation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Your participation in this research is confidential. That is, the information gathered for this study will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym, which will be used in place of your name. To the best of my ability I will omit or alter any details that might identify a specific person. All research gathered at the site will be securely stored at my house in a locked filing cabinet that only I will have access to. A participant of the study can request data that they provided at any time at their request. At the end of my study and the dissertation has been accepted, all research materials including audio-tapes, diagrams, and field notes, reflections, and transcriptions will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation

The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in the study you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. Withdrawal from the study or electing to omit or skip questions in the focus group interview is a right that you have as a participant and you will not face any repercussions or penalties for doing

so. You may terminate your participation in the study by emailing me

at_____@hotmail.com or phoning me at (403)xxx-xxxx anytime during the study.

Rights

You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time

during the study. You can reach my research supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann or me at any

time if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant. You can also

contact a representative at the University of Calgary Ethics Review Board at (403) xxx-xxxx or

by email at_____@ucalgary.ca.

Signatures

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY

SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM INDICATES THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS

STUDY.

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

Adapted from Mostano (2010, p. 459)

Appendix C: Tape Consent Form

Werklund School of Education
2750 University Way NW
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary AB
T2N 1N4

TAPE CONSENT FORM

Oral Interview and Transcription

Instructional leadership and Indigenous Knowledge

Principal Researcher: Ryan Kraushaar

This portion of my study involves the audio taping of your interview with me. **Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript.** I am the only individual who will be able to listen to the tapes or read the transcriptions following the interview.

After the interview, I will transcribe the audiotapes. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for my dissertation. **However, neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study**.

Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased if you wish to withdraw your consent to taping or participation in this study. I would like to remind you that only I have access to your tapes and transcriptions and all of these materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

By signing this form you are consenting to

_____ having your interview taped

_____ to having the tape transcribed

_____ use of portions of the written transcript in my dissertation

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

This consent form is effective until the following date: December 31, 2018. On or before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Printed Name_____

Participant's Signature_____

Adapted from Mostano (n.d., p. 469)

Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What characteristics or components of First Nation Culture could help to benefit teachers in the classroom?

2. How do First Nation youth learn best in your opinion?

3. What characteristics should a teacher have if working with First Nation youth?

4. Is it important that traditional First Nation teachings are represented in curriculum across different subject areas in your opinion, why or why not?

Appendix E: Conceptual Framework Diagram

Critical Theory

Indigenous Knowledge and Instructional Leadership

Qualitative Research

Exploratory Case Study