

Non - Indigenous Teacher Induction in the Northwest Territories

The Survey Findings of a Pre-Service Orientation

by

Marnie Villeneuve

Bachelor of Education. University of Saskatchewan, 1994

**A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of**

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

**Dr. Helen Raptis, Associate Professor, Historical Foundations
Supervisor**

**Dr. Sarah Wright-Cardinal, Assistant Professor, School of Child and Youth Care
(Adjunct) Department Member**

**D. Nick Claxton, Assistant Professor, School of Child and Youth Care
Outside Member**

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Helen Raptis Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Supervisor

Dr. Sarah Wright Cardinal School of Child and Youth Care

(Adjunct) Department Member

Dr. Nick Claxton School of Child and Youth Care

Outside Member

This project illustrates why some teachers move to the north and stay for many years, and why many do not. I have experienced many new colleagues over the years. Some choose to stay and build their careers and families in northern communities, while others do not last longer than their first year. This project revolves around a “Six Month In” survey that reflects upon a highly successful initiative, the New to the Northwest Territories (NWT) Educators’ Conference (N2NEC) hosted by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the NWT. The conference is meant to induct new/new to the NWT teachers in a manner that aids teachers positive transitions into northern classrooms. The N2NEC provides an introduction to the people of the NWT, their history and experiences in the Euro-Canadian classroom. The purpose of my study was to help create and analyze the data from the post-conference, “Six Months In” survey. Participants reflected upon whether or not they found the sessions valuable, and applicable, to their new classrooms and communities. The survey required new/new to the north teachers to indicate what sessions were impactful. Participants were to make reflections regarding what they found most valid and valuable, after actually experiencing their new northern classrooms and residing in their new NWT community. After examining the data, I concluded that the value of the conference is evident in the responses of the participants. I determine relationship-building with students and the community is imperative to a successful teaching career in the north, as elsewhere. I support induction programs, such as the N2NEC, and make recommendations for other jurisdictions to implement a similar support for new teachers, especially in Indigenous communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this journey to my husband, Randy and our daughters, Mackenzie and Hunter Paige. For a year, you gave up your grandparents, friends and life in Fort Smith to come with me to live a totally different experience. It was an amazing journey where we learned a lot about living in an urban environment, far different from the bush life we know and love. More importantly we learned how strong we are as a family and that together we can do anything. To Randy, thanks for getting through hunting seasons, leaving your garage and friends behind, and for putting your life on hold so that I could pursue my academic dream. My beautiful family, thanks for choosing me. I am forever grateful for my life.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the concept of teacher induction and retention in the Northwest Territories (NWT). After decades of teaching in the NWT and watching teachers come and go, I wondered what prompted some of them to leave. When I became involved in the NWT's government-sponsored "New to the NWT Education Conference" (N2NEC) – an innovative orientation approach for new teachers – I got the opportunity to probe retention further. I was given the chance to analyze data from a six-month, post-conference survey examining what the participants learned that helped them transition to teaching in the NWT. This project tells the story of what I learned – including but not restricted to – the importance of learning about a community's history and culture in order to strengthen relationship building.

Background

I was 13 months old when my parents brought me to the Northwest Territories (NWT). First we went to Yellowknife where I resided until I was about three and then to Fort Smith, NWT where I have spent the past 46 years of my life. I am currently beginning my 24th year of teaching, 22 of which have been here at home in Fort Smith.

Fort Smith is known as a "government town" where there is minimum private business and most people work for either the territorial government or the municipal government. It was also the destination community of northern government employees, also known as "where people go to finish their last few years prior to retirement." My parents fit this description. They both worked for the government for over 35 years and have retired here in Fort Smith as well.

Fort Smith is a small, predominantly Aboriginal¹ community, population 2000, home of the Salt River First Nation #195, Smith Landing First Nation and many Metis people, situated right on the Alberta border. I spent all of my formative years in Fort Smith, NWT, Treaty 8 Territory, and I was educated at both local schools, Joseph Burr Tyrell Elementary and Paul William Kaeser High School. While I was in school, there was very little turnover with the teachers at either school. Some of the teachers that taught my older “aunts and uncles” taught me, my older brother, and my younger sister. The idea that teachers “paid their dues in the Arctic” and stuck around long enough to transfer “south” to Fort Smith was very true. When I was growing up most of my teachers had experienced places such as Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik, Hall Beach and Grise Fiord, NWT (at the time, now Nunavut). There was always a wide range of stories from our teachers of their experiences out on the ice hunting, kayaking by the icebergs, polar bear hunting, and barging grocery orders. All of this was foreign to us as we lived in the southern parts of the NWT on the road system. It all seemed very surreal and exciting.

Because of my community and its location, what I did not experience much of was teacher turnover. There were very few new teachers yearly, and if they were new, we just expected them to stay: we were the “destination region.” This was not so for many of the smaller communities in other parts of my southern region and throughout the NWT.

As a student growing up in Fort Smith, NWT, I was situated in a community with two residential schools, however, I had no idea that my friends and fellow students were living in the residential school experience. I didn’t understand the reasons behind why sometimes we were separated and grouped for activities. There were signs of colonialism but as a student I had no idea. This attributed to my slow shift in consciousness from being completely unaware of the

¹ Aboriginal and Indigenous is synonymous as per Northwest Territories conventions

practices in the education system, to becoming curious about educational practices in my community, and then later on becoming an ally.

When I graduated I went south to university to pursue my education degree. It was the late 1980's and because I was a "northern girl" my course load always included a Native Studies course. I was a non-Aboriginal student, but I was raised in a small, forested community by a hunting family and I identified with the values of the Aboriginal people I grew up with far more than those of my family and friends in more southern parts of Canada. My experience in the B.Ed. programs at both the institutions I attended was disappointing as the portrayal of Aboriginal people, in and out of my classes, was very archaic and predominantly negative. These images were contradictory to my experience from my extended family and my community. Where I came from Aboriginal people ran the government, were strong decision makers and educated, proud people. These were not the ideas and comments being shared in my southern environment. While I was successful in my courses, I did not last in the southern institutions and transferred to the Arctic College Teacher Education Program (ACTEP), now known as Aurora College, which was located in my home community. My experience at ACTEP was incredible. I was home in my environment, my focus was on Aboriginal education and I was in a place where I felt I belonged.

While attending ACTEP I met many students from all over the Northwest Territories. During class discussions I very quickly realized the experiences and relationships my fellow classmates had in school, and with their teachers, did not echo my own. I became very interested in the education system in the north and with northern students as I began to be privy to the stories these classmates brought to our training tables. Residential school? Students being forced to leave home to attend school? No high school in their communities? Teachers staying for only

a year at a time - if that? What? So many of the experiences relayed were so very foreign to me and this contributed to the shift in my consciousness. My own teachers' Arctic stories floated in my memory; they had spent at least a few years in the high Arctic communities and they relayed messages of their old students still contacting them and sharing their life moments. The idea of not building positive relationships with teachers was so foreign to me.

I finished my Bachelor of Education Degree at the University of Saskatchewan in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP). As an ACTEP student, this was where we transferred to, even as a non-Aboriginal student. Again, I was in the minority, immersed in a predominantly Aboriginal environment and culture, one I was most comfortable with. However, the reality of Saskatchewan in the early 1990's, in my experience, was very divided between the Euro Canadians and Indigenous peoples. While many of my fellow classmates were inviting and comfortable with me being in the program, there were some very vocal students who made it clear that in their opinion, I did not belong. While I was not comfortable with some of the comments thrown in my face, I was beginning to understand the history of their mistrust of non-Aboriginal teachers and managed to get through my program very successfully.

My first teaching post was in Inuvik, NWT. I was there from the fall of 1994 until the spring of 1996. Although I left after only two years, it was because at that time, the Government of the Northwest Territories was pushing for Indigenous educators to teach Indigenous students and I was not rehired at my school. I was, however, hired back at home in Fort Smith and returned to my community to teach at my high school, with some of my former teachers. It was an exciting position to be in and I was very honoured to teach children of my friends.

Throughout my many years as an educator in Fort Smith, NWT, I have been lucky enough to experience many opportunities to advance Aboriginal education in the North. I have

participated in numerous panels regarding Indigenizing education, such as Dene Kede workshops, the teacher's panel on creation of the Northern Studies 10 curriculum and creating the Indigenous handbook. I have also been active on the team that has implemented the New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC) over the last two years. This year I also presented a session. The purpose of the N2NEC conference is to bring awareness of northern issues and prepare teachers, who are either new to the north and new to teaching OR new to the north and their new northern experience in the communities, school system, history of education in the NWT and so on. The N2NEC also attempts to slow high teacher turnover. The reasons for such an important introduction to teaching for teachers in the NWT will be explained more in detail in the following chapters.

Throughout my years of being educated and educating in the North, I have discovered that students have different experiences in developing relationships with their teachers. The opportunity to build strong relationships with their teachers has varied and was often dependent upon the community the student was educated in. The relationship created seemed to also impact the level of education and success students experienced.

Interestingly enough, the relationship building extended from teacher to teacher as well. I distinctly remember my first teaching assignment in Inuvik, NWT. I was young, fresh to my career and nervous to live so far away from my home. I have a very outgoing personality so making friends was not usually a difficult thing for me. I was very blessed to make lifelong friends while in Inuvik however, it was the first time as an adult, I had ever experienced rejection. There was another teacher in my pod who looked very friendly, and her classroom was so inviting. I assumed we would be friends and possibly work together. Yet, every attempt I made to be social, friendly, conversational only proved to be rebuffed, politely, but still I was not

“making a new friend” as I had expected. When I finally built up enough gumption to inquire about why we weren’t becoming friends I was told, “Oh, I don’t bother investing in people who aren’t going to stick around long. I am tired of building friendships only to have people leave, I don’t enjoy the feelings of being left time and again. It’s nothing personal.” While this colleague was always friendly and professional over the two years we worked together, we never did develop into anything more than distant coworkers. I tried to understand her perspective and be respectful of her self-imposed boundaries. I never forgot her sharing those feelings of abandonment with me, and the wall that surrounded her. I often reflect on that time in my life, that teacher, and think that if as an adult I felt that way, then I could only imagine how the children must have felt as the teachers came and went through their communities.

These vast experiences and realizations are what encouraged my passion for understanding the importance of relationship building with students. It also drove my need to understand and investigate the importance of keeping teachers in the north for more than a short length of time. In the last decade I have observed beloved teachers moving from our communities “back home” to be around family, especially after the teachers had started their own families. I have also had experiences with teachers who were not invested in community or school, and while I knew the best thing was for the teachers to complete the year, I also knew it was probably better for the students if they were spending their time with a teacher that had their education and best interests at heart. It became evident to the students and teachers very quickly that the person wasn’t invested and was just fulfilling a contract. Our school was a step on their climbing ladder to transition to an administrative position or to the Department of Education, or they were there to “make big money in order to pay off their student loan or buy a house somewhere south.” This was very disheartening for all involved and needless to say the

experience was not as successful as it could have been. Because of these above-mentioned observations and experiences, the following master's project is focused on teacher retention and induction in order to benefit all NWT students, families, and communities.

Teacher retention issues are not exclusive to the Northwest Territories however, as expanded on in Chapter 2, the history of education for northern people has been very tumultuous with long-lasting impact of colonialism that continues to influence student success today. The idea of teachers moving to the north and setting up their lives to stay for generations - as they do in other parts of the country - is not the "norm." The north still suffers from incredibly high teacher turnover and if one was to read the ads in many major newspapers or on educator websites, one would be quick to see that in September, 2018, the Government of the Northwest Territories was actively still trying to recruit 60-80 teachers, principals and superintendents. Not all of the need is in the high Arctic; many vacancies are on the road system as well. It's a real issue for the hiring bodies and the students that are directly impacted! We often discuss student success as an important issue, but how can students be successful graduates, on their way to post secondary education, or a career, when the basic needs of a competent, dedicated teacher in the classroom is not a reality for them!

In 2003, Muriel Tolley, a long-time northern educator, presented a masters degree thesis on teacher induction in the NWT (Tolley, 2003). At that time, approximately 15 percent of teachers in the NWT were retiring and being replaced by, most often, teachers new to the profession and without any experience in isolated, Indigenous communities. Many of the new teachers did not stay past their first year. Therefore, continuity, relationship-building, meeting mandates to achieve school board goals, and most importantly, success of students were difficult to achieve, then and still today, 15 years later. High teacher turnover has been an issue that has

plagued the north - always. With the diamond and gold mining industry fluctuating, and instability of the oil industry, a stable, educated workforce is greatly desired, but has not yet been achieved. The ability to trust in a secure education system can bind a community together and meet the academic needs of northerners and their children; however, this continues to be a challenge in many areas.

Turnover was of grave concern at the turn of the millennium and continues today; however, many steps have been taken to support teacher continuity in the NWT by the Government of the NWT (GNWT). While the expectations of new teachers have evolved over time, so have the recruiting practices of the GNWT. With the introduction of technology, the January to June practice of travelling the country in search of teachers has been lessened and more so now, recruiting websites such as Education Canada are far more economical and effective. Recruiting websites rely on teachers who are new to the north to share their positive experiences on social media regarding their level of professional development, support from their school divisions and of course, salary. However, as previously stated, many teachers are not willing to brave the lack of amenities, isolation and in some cases, extremely high cost of living in order to invest for very long in a northern community. Again, after the commencement of the 2018-2019 school year, NWT school boards were still trying to recruit an incredibly high number of teachers to fulfill the students' needs in their school divisions.

A northern mentorship program was established in 2003 that was intended to address new teachers' needs by guiding and supporting them. By building a relationship between the inexperienced teacher and an experienced teacher in their school or division, the new teacher would better settle into the school, community and the north. While this was definitely a step toward preparing new hires/new to the north educators, it was felt that with the revelation of

survivors' experiences in residential school and the schools' intergenerational impact, re-evaluation of the education system in the NWT was needed. The realization that teacher retention and induction were so imperative to student academic achievement became even more of a focus. With the introduction of the Education Renewal Initiative in 2012, a review and later a commitment to improving education for all northern students by the Department of Education and the Government of the NWT over a 10 year period, the GNWT felt that a more in-depth preparation of new/new to the north teachers was paramount in order to be effective and impactful to their new students and communities. The implementation of New to the Northwest Territories Educators' Conference (N2NEC) was one way of meeting these needs.

The N2NEC was first offered in 2014. It has been successfully running for the last four years and continues to be of benefit to new teachers and those who are experienced, but new to the north. It is not a mandatory conference; however, it is highly recommended that new teachers attend it in August. The N2NEC intention is to better prepare teachers for their new communities, lifestyle and required programs. The conference also introduces the supports offered by the Northwest Territories Teachers Association (NWTTA) and most importantly enlightens newcomers about the impact of residential school and the legacy that still has deep impact on the people and students of the NWT.

Through a session known as "The Blanket Exercise," attendees to the conference are expected to participate in role playing the Aboriginal people as they are forced away from their families and way of life into government-imposed residential schools around the NWT and beyond. A very succinct history of colonization is outlined while key parts of the NWT's history are presented, from the arrival of explorers to the beginning of trade for goods such as pelts for beads, skills for tea, shells for medicines and so on. One example is when the traders allegedly

brought blankets laden with smallpox, resulting in the death of many Aboriginal people. The most influential event for N2NEC participants who partake in The Blanket Exercise, is the removal of the children from the communities, and the often new understanding that many did not return home. This activity is extremely powerful and due to its presentation, many people discuss in the debriefing afterwards, their lack of knowledge or deep understanding of what was the federal government's practice of the day. Even more disturbing to participants was the knowledge that the church and the education system were the main vehicles used to rip apart families and decimate a whole culture. The understanding of loss of language, culture, skills and spirituality becomes more deeply comprehended after such an intense session, as indicated by the participants during the debriefing afterwards.

Another session participants take part in is a Talking Circle where residential school survivors share their stories about what their life was like prior to, during and after attending residential school. New teachers are exposed to multiple survivors who share common themes but also relay very personal experiences regarding being taken from their homes, parents, culture and community. This exercise is also powerful as it allows the participants to ask questions and have conversations with people who often share similar stories to many residents of their new communities. The survivors are the parents, grandparents, aunt and uncles of the students the new/new to the north teachers will be working with on a daily basis. The intent of the conference is to build understanding and empathy for the communities: that is, for the people who will be the new teachers' neighbours, friends, students and parents of students. It is intended for the new teachers to have the knowledge behind the "why" of poor attendance, what appears to be parents' apathetic approach to education in the communities, resistance to parental involvement in the school, low graduation rates and so on. Hopefully, with better understanding of the history of

education in the NWT, comes the desire to approach the new community with realistic and compassionate ideas, empathy and less judgement of the people and their approach to the school and its imposed system.

Upon arriving at the N2NEC each attendee is required to complete a pre-conference survey. It is necessary to understand the amount of preparation each new teacher has when it comes to the history of the people and their relationship with education in the NWT. Many new teachers reflect on their lack of education about residential schools and Indigenous history in general. After completion of the second day, again new teachers reflect on what they know, and what they've learned from the day's sessions. At the closing session, the new teachers are required to complete a post-conference survey regarding what they felt was helpful and what aspects of the conference have better prepared them for their entry into their new school and community in the NWT.

In February 2018, for the first time since the N2NEC began, I helped create a "Six Month In" follow-up survey that was administered by the conference organizers. The intent of it was to allow the new teachers to reflect on their experiences in their new schools and communities. One section required the new/new to the north teachers to reflect on the amount of preparedness they felt after attending the N2NEC, if the sessions offered were effective, what sessions were really helpful/not helpful and if there was anything else they would like to learn about during the orientation conference. Another section addressed the importance of building student and community relationships. Teachers had the opportunity to assess their own engagement and if they felt they were becoming a part of their community. Also, if they did not feel part of their school and community, the survey asked what the new teacher thought they were missing and why.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to present the findings of the “Six Month In” survey and to contextualize it in the larger historical discussion of education in the NWT. The following document presents a brief summary of the history of education in the NWT, the experiences of new to the north teachers and their experiences influencing retention in chapter two. Chapter three discusses the results of the “Six Month In” survey of the 2013 N2NEC participants in which they reflect on their knowledge of education in the NWT prior to participating in the conference, their impressions immediately post conference, and how, six months into their community and new school, they felt the N2NEC prepared them (or not) for their new experience. It also reflects on how the new teacher has integrated themselves into their new community. That is, are they experiencing new adventures, getting out into the community and participating in social events? The survey also allowed the new teacher the opportunity to review the conference sessions offered in August and make recommendations toward anything else they felt may or may not be of value. Chapter four presents reflections on my involvement with the survey in partnership with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. It discusses how the data was collected and analyzed and then my final conclusion based on those results as well as any recommendations for the Department conference committee toward upcoming conferences. I also reflect on how this journey has affected my professional experience as I continue to work in a “destination” community, which has for the first time in a long time, experienced a rise in teacher turnover. As I enter the final few years of my career, I have had the experience of working with people who are not a good fit for the north and those who very quickly establish that their purpose was to be hired in order to pay student loan bills, feed southern housing markets and “make big money.” Most of these teachers have not lasted and

after a short stint have found employment elsewhere, hopefully more to their liking. More importantly, I have had the pleasure of working with many young “southern hires” who have invested in our community, dedicated their careers to working toward the betterment of our children (including my own) and their successes. They are now homeowners and very active community members. Many of these new teachers were also privy to the N2NEC experience and participated in the survey.

The purpose of this document is to provide feedback the New to the Northwest Territories Education Conference and reflect on the saying “if we know better, we do better.” If new teachers are better prepared for the rhythm and the lifestyle of the north, have a truthful understanding of the history of education in the north (shared by actual survivors of the imposed system), then the likelihood of mismatched, romanticized views and ideas of the north and its amazing people will be less likely. If people are better prepared to come to the North, while giving up amenities of the South, embrace the culture and uniqueness of the north and its beautiful, resilient people, then I believe that the experience of the teacher will be far more positive. The students will be given the opportunity to trust their new teachers, build strong relationships and both parties will be better invested in their experiences, therefore, creating a far more successful outcome for all.

Chapter 2

Education of Indigenous Students: Post-Confederation

Education, under the British North America Act of 1867, became the responsibility of the provinces. Indian Affairs, however, remained under the jurisdiction of the federal government. This jurisdiction included Indigenous Education as it had been promised to the people upon the signing of many treaties across Canada. The federal government recognized the lack of success and progress on-reserve, church-run day schools were making with regards to Indigenous assimilation. In 1879, following the implementation of the Indian Act of 1876, a member of parliament, Nicholas Flood Davin, who had been investigating the practices of the United States' education of American Indians, introduced his report recommending that the Canadian government adopt the American boarding school model to transform the Indigenous people through education (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986; Raptis et al., 2016; White & Peters, 2009). The Canadian government decided to capitalize on the already-established mission schools and turned over the administration of the education system to the already-implemented methods of various churches (Oskineegish & Berger 2013). Residential schools were not a new concept as New France had already adapted the boarding school model and as with the French, the government soon found that boarding and educating the Indian children was a costly endeavour. Indigenous families were reluctant to send their children to schools that were so poorly run, and attendance declined. In attempts to improve funding and attendance rates, missionary groups urged the Canadian government to make school attendance mandatory and in 1920 the Indian Act was amended to fulfill this request. It was now mandatory that all Indigenous children attend school, either on-reserve day schools or residential school (Indigenous Foundations, 2009; Raptis, 2016) Soon after residential schools were implemented,

it became alarmingly apparent that the health and well-being of the students was of grave concern. In 1907, a report submitted by Canada's chief medical officer stated "the death rate due to tuberculosis among Indigenous students was 24%" (White & Peters, 2009, p. 17). It was also reported that students who did survive residential school were not reaping the benefits of the intended education. The schools focus was religious teachings and manual labour. Students were not gaining skills to be contributing members of the "white society" upon finishing school. Sadly it became the experience that upon leaving these institutions, the students were not recognized as able, civilized citizens and yet due to lack of culture and language immersion in their own society, they no longer identified there either (White & Peters, 2009).

Poor delivery of the education system continued into the 20th century. Chiefs and parents continued to complain about the lack of education the students were receiving in these institutions. According to Gray (1995) day schools were no more successful. In the spring and fall months, parents would take the children to the hunting and fishing grounds leading to a decline in attendance. A continued problem was recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Given the unfamiliar cultural norms of reserves, day schools tended to attract teachers who were poorly qualified and lacked experience (Raptis et al, 2016). However, contemporary researchers have found that when the teacher is dedicated to the students and community, when the people appreciate the teacher, attendance is high and students more successful (Gray, 1995; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Taylor, 1995).

Upon entering the colonial school system, the children succumbed to teachings that ripped apart their culture, traditional skills, ways of living and ways of being. Children were forced into a belief that who they were fundamentally was inferior and severely lacking in

applicability to the modern world. Harsh, corporal punishment, which was foreign to Indigenous culture at the time, was administered and their first language was deeply forbidden at any cost.

Post World War II

The Indian Act was revised in 1951 to include a federal government agreement with provincial governments and territorial bodies of authority to fund the education of Aboriginal students in provincial schools. This encouraged the process to eliminate residential and day schools however, it was met with resistance by the churches and some Aboriginal communities. By 1967, the Hawthorn Report openly criticized the federal government for the residential school system and supported the integrated school system, suggesting the government convert the residential schools to hostels where students would be able to be housed while attending public school (Raptis, 2016 et al., White & Peters, 2009).

By 1969, the federal government formally ended its relationship with the churches and assumed operation of most of the residential schools in the south, closing most of the schools over the next decade. Throughout the 1970's, at the request of the National Indian Brotherhood, the federal government saw to the transfer of power over education to many Aboriginal band councils. In Canada, the last federally-run residential school, Gordon Indian Residential School, officially closed in Saskatchewan, in 1996 (Government of the Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut & The Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2013).

Education of Indigenous Students in the Northwest Territories (NWT) pre-1999

In Canada's North, educating the Aboriginal population was not originally a high priority. One main reason was the high cost of any sort of activity in such a remote area. "As

long as there was no demand for Aboriginal land, the federal policy was to delay taking on the financial obligations that came with treaties” (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2013, p. 18).

In the North, the residential school campaign was implemented in two phases, the first one being the Missionary period, which saw implementation in the Mackenzie Valley area of the NWT and ended in the 1950’s. As in Canada’s south, the churches competed for enrolment and the curriculum was left to the church, focussing on the church’s doctrine. “The government was not convinced, however, that education in the North was necessary or desirable and remained generally disinterested in Northern educational activities” (White & Peters, 2009, p.19).

One grave misunderstanding that often gets overlooked by settler society is the Aboriginal people in the North, and across Canada, had a very viable, effective system of “education” that had been established by the Indigenous people, long before contact; that is long before the imposed notion of “schooling.” In such a harsh climate and unforgiving land, the Inuit and Dene of the Northwest Territories depended daily on the teachings of their people. Survival depended on the contribution of every member of the group to ensure a successful existence and members had a responsibility to recognize each person’s strengths and teach them skills that would aid in a successful life.

Adults knew each child’s unique strengths, interests and learning needs intimately, caring deeply for all aspects of their development. Family members taught children everything they needed to know within the context of purposeful, daily activities; adults expected the very best from each child, because group survival depended on each person fulfilling his/her roles and responsibilities to the best of their ability (C. McGregor, 2015, p. 58).

The skills developed varied in regard to stage of life as well. Expectations of a young child versus a pubescent youth, were different and responsibilities increased as children grew toward adulthood. Another factor that was taken into consideration as children grew and developed was

gender. The expectations varied for the boys and the girls as they developed and various groups had specific skills needed (Raptis et al, 2016).

Initially the North was left alone to the rhythm of its traditional people. The Hudson Bay Company established posts and operated there for nearly 200 years, from 1670-1870, under a royal charter granted to them from King Charles II. The Hudson's Bay Company was not welcoming to Missionaries as they were quite content with the relationships they had built with the Indigenous peoples and the success of the fur trade. They frowned upon the traditional peoples being assimilated and educated as they saw no need for the interference (White & Peters, 2009). The Canadian government also felt educating the Aboriginal people was futile and felt that education for people living in isolation was a waste of time and money. However, "this changed when the respective governments recognized the economic and strategic significance of the areas inhabited by these peoples" (Van Meenan, 1994, p. 1).

Although the Canadian government initially stayed out of the Canada's north, the Missionaries were determined to convert the heathens and "save souls." Fierce competition ensued specifically between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church as they were the most dominant in the north. While the Canadian government played no role in the education in the north, in 1867, the Grey Nuns of Montreal opened the first school in Fort Providence, Northwest Territories and the Anglicans followed shortly after. By 1887, 44 day schools were established and five residential schools to provide education to the Dene (Indian) and the few Inuit children of the western Arctic (Cameron, 1996; Van Meenan, 1994).

The initial intent of the Mission schools was to convert the children to people of God and to rescue their souls, recognizing nothing of the presence of Aboriginal spirituality or systems already in place to raise decent people. Once the federal government became involved over the

quest for land and resources, the focus of “formal education” changed. Due to the switch to a per-capita funding plan by Ottawa in 1892, the churches then became funded a set amount per student. The church and school administrators were then responsible for paying the salaries, maintenance and other expenses the schools incurred. This increased competition of the churches and a “body” in a seat no matter what state, was the focus (Government of the Northwest Territories et al. 2013). In order to cut costs the students became responsible for the maintenance and general running of the schools, attending classes half days and working the other half. The boys were responsible for chopping wood, hauling water and fishing or hunting to provide for the residents. Girls were responsible for laundry, cleaning and tending to the gardens if they were present. Robert Burke, Residential School Survivor, artist and presenter vehemently stated, “Anyone who thinks I had a free education has no idea. I worked like a man all my years at school. I chopped wood and hauled water daily. It was no picnic I worked for my education; I got nothing for free!” (Personal communication, May, 2014).

Residential schools and day schools took hold in the Northwest Territories during the Missionary Era as early as the 1860’s and “the NWT ultimately had more residential schools per capita than any other jurisdiction in Canada” (Grolier Hall Healing Circle, 2000, as cited in Stewart, 2004, p. 41). Generally the Roman Catholic Church was predominant in the western Arctic. Eventually, as time progressed, the Anglican Church became established in the eastern Arctic (present day Nunavut).

After 1883, the partnerships between the churches and the government became an effective system that eventually almost succeeded in fully wiping out Aboriginal culture. The government mandated the intent and purpose of the school curriculum; that is, to assimilate the Aboriginal people, and the church did the work. They both agreed on the purpose of education:

to eventually transform the unrefined children to civilized, Christian people. This translated into a direct attack on the language, skills, and spiritual beliefs of the traditional peoples of Canada and the north. The separation of child from parent through residential schooling, was a highly effective strategy of assimilation imposed by the federal government through the churches.

Upon returning to their homes and families the children no longer connected to their culture or families and after years of being humiliated and abused, were often ashamed of who they were and where they came from. "It was a means of making Aboriginal culture impure in the eyes of Aboriginal children themselves in an effort to strip their identities bare and ensure that any attempt at reintegration with kin and community would fail" (Di Mascio & Hortop-Di Mascio, 2011, p. 36). This created generations of people who had no idea who they were, who did not fit into either the traditional culture they came from or the southern, settler culture they were poorly prepared for at these schools. These negative emotions, lived first hand, stayed with these students. The emotions and beliefs around formalized settler educational systems then passed down to these former students' children creating intergenerational mistrust. Aboriginal students whose parents (one or both) had attended residential schools were less likely to do "very well" or "well" at school in comparison to children whose parents had not attended residential schools. Parental residential school attendance seems to have a contributing factor in Aboriginal children's experiences at school (Bougie & Senecal, 2010). Whereas students had trouble adapting to residential schools, teachers found it difficult to adapt to the communities where they did not know the language or culture. Teacher induction, that is the transition to and the adoption of the teaching role - continues to be problematic (Raptis, 2016).

Teacher Induction

Teacher recruitment and retention become more of a struggle as fewer people remain in the field and more are reluctant to entertain the idea of leaving their “comfort zones” to venture off on new adventures in an unknown land. “North American school districts have established that an approximate 40-50% of teachers exit the profession within their first five years (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p.814).

It must be stated that Indigenous people and Euro-Canadians have different lenses through which they see the world when it comes to education. As established previously, the experiences of Indigenous people with formalized education in this country is long and tumultuous. What is being stated commonly throughout the research of new teachers is the lack of preparation for this often overlooked history and that it still has incredible impact today; the generations impacted from imposed education of residential or day schools continue to permeate the system. Wimmer et al (2009) reveals that the number of Indigenous students attending school has increased significantly and that the professionals in the system need to be better informed of the culture and the learning perspectives of students with Aboriginal ancestry. However, common issues impede the learning in Aboriginal community schools, according to Rass (2012). “The major problems in Native Canadian schools are lack of access to a literate environment, low attendance, lack of consistency and lack of motivation” (p. 144). Add this to beginning teachers feeling a lack of preparedness and it is no wonder that there continues to be a lack of success in Aboriginal education.

Today, sadly, not much has changed over the last 150 years when it comes to success of Aboriginal students on and off reserve. While off-reserve students fare better, they are still not performing up to the same standards as non-Aboriginal students. There are 515 schools on First

Nation reserves in Canada that the federal government is fiscally responsible for (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). In 2003, statistics showed that “more than 12% of Aboriginal Canadians between the ages of 15 and 29 drop out before Grade 9 (vs. 1.9% of non-Aboriginal); almost 50% between the ages of 18 and 24 lack a secondary school diploma (vs. 20% of non-Aboriginal); and 37.5% of 15 to 24 year olds are neither in formal schooling nor employed in the workforce (Cherubini, 2008, p. 36). Perhaps this has to do with the fact that so little is revealed about Aboriginal history and the impact Aboriginal Canadians made on the creation of this country. Curricula do not reflect the true history of these children.

While much research has examined the poor experiences and outcomes of Indigenous children in Eurocentric schools, the experiences of new teachers placed into these Aboriginal communities also needs to be discussed. In particular, when teachers are in their induction years, essentially learning to teach and manage students, the situation is much more difficult when they are not from the community or culture they now find themselves immersed in. New teachers are often unprepared for the situation as new graduates from university or teacher’s college. The first year for a new teacher in any situation requires great adjustments and the expectations placed on the teaching profession are very high. More adjustments need to be made when a new teacher is placed in an unfamiliar community, culture and environment (Taylor, 1995). Research shows that there are commonalities that these new teachers experience. The support these teachers receive to become a part of the school and community, how welcome they feel and how embraced by the community often determine whether the new teacher will stay in the community for any length of time or not. “The difficulty of isolation can be overcome when teachers become active community members as best they can” (Oskineegish, 2015, p 15).

Common Experiences of First Year Teachers

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) state that the first year of teaching is generally the most difficult in a teacher's career as the new teacher instantly inherits the same amount of responsibility as a teacher with many years of experience. When a new teacher finds themselves in a new community, especially a community of a different culture such as on reserve or in one of Canada's northern Aboriginal communities, the understanding of the importance to connect to the people and the community is often understated. The focus initially is on teachers situating themselves in the classroom, understanding the rhythm of the school and the rules and regulations as handed down by the administrative team. Classroom schedules are set up, curricula are to be read, plans are to be drawn up and new students are anticipated.

What often is missing is the expectation and deep understanding of the influence of culture shock, cultural norms, rhythms of the community and an understanding, especially in Aboriginal communities, with differing worldviews. Often experienced by new teachers, as they relocate from a more urban area, is the dynamic of their once taken-for-granted social existence as well. As new teachers leave the hustle and bustle of a busy social life, they then realize life on reserve or life in a smaller, isolated community changes dramatically as the level of activity of what is familiar, may drastically differ. The responsibility then is often placed in the hands of the reserve or small community to entertain or socialize the new teacher. This may build resentment and pose a negative light on the whole adventure, spilling into the classroom (Taylor, 1995).

The experience of a non-Native teacher in a Native community can be exacerbated by the lack of preparation the new teacher received prior to arriving in the community. Commonly stated concerns by new teachers according to Fantilli and McDougall (2009) are "managing the behaviour and diverse needs of students, time constraints and workload, and conflict with parents

and other adults” (p. 815). This, compounded by Taylor’s (1995) theory on the impact of “culture shock which occurs when a person is faced with an unfamiliar environment” (p. 227), indicates that new teachers in unfamiliar environments experience a degree of disorientation, as they encounter situations they are unfamiliar with around education, community dynamics, differing social rules or expectations and so on. Oskineegish (2015) states that:

The effort to transform their school into a more relevant and meaningful environment for students becomes more difficult when Non-Native teachers arrive with absolutely no understanding of culturally relevant teaching or willingness to connect their teaching practices with the knowledge and way of life of the community. (p. 18)

Studies indicate that acknowledging the differing world views and recognizing the expectation that surround this new way of considering the world, can often make the transition easier. This will occur more authentically if non-Native teachers understand the circumstances of their community. Showing respect for their new students and incorporating lessons and instructional programming that are culturally relevant and meaningful to the students they are teaching will indicate the new teacher is invested in their new community (Oskineegish, 2015).

I have encountered many new teachers who have wished for greater cultural preparedness. Many first year teachers enter into contracts where they are removed from what they know as their educational experiences, extending from their own education to where they completed practicum requirements as part of their teacher education programming. It is imperative to ensure that new teachers are prepared for cultural diversity in their new communities and new learning environment, especially considering the growing number of minorities in Canada in general, let alone the historical and continuous experiences of Aboriginal Canadians (Harper, 2000).

In order for success to be achieved, for both the new teacher and the students involved, it is paramount that understanding of community, the history of the people, their relationship with education, historically and currently, be researched (Oskineegish, 2015). There are many opportunities for new teachers to become actively engaged in the community once there as well. Feasts, sports, dances, festivals and so on are all examples of ways that new teachers can successfully engage in the community and therefore begin to build positive relationships.

The engagement in community can help to build positive relationships between teacher and community which then supports a trust between student and teacher. Being visible in a community and being supportive and willing to learn is aided through the right kind of attitude (Oskineegish, 2015, p. 15-16).

A common experience reported by new teachers is the lack of communication and support they feel from the community; however, when the community is unsure of the level of investment new teachers have, they are less likely to invest in the new teacher as well. This is a prevalent issue as it deeply affects the experience of both the community and the new teacher. New teachers who isolate themselves due to lack of understanding or research into their new community cast a negative light upon who they are and their own abilities in the classroom. How the new teacher interacts with the community will directly impact and define the future relationship he or she will have. As anywhere else and in any situation, it is important that students feel that their new teacher respects their school and community. By isolating themselves, new teachers are sending the message that they are rejecting the community and, indirectly, the students whether they intend to or not (Taylor, 1995).

Students are negatively affected when teachers treat their first teaching position as a stop on a long path, or the means to an end such as, getting experience to move on up a ladder, pay off student loans, make a high salary, rather than as a place to invest and set up a life. Due to historical experiences Aboriginal parents are reluctant to become involved in the school. New

teachers who actively participate in their community, and are seen to devote their time and energy inside and outside of a classroom, are more likely to expand their worldview, gain valuable experiences and obtain parental support, benefitting all involved in the school system.

New Teachers' Experiences in the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories is a diverse and unique part of Canada. It consists of 33 communities, eight regional education councils, includes two French boards, 26 schools that offer Junior Kindergarten to grade 12 and nine communities that provide a Junior Kindergarten to grade 9/10 program. Nevertheless, students must leave their community to attend high school. Four communities offer French Immersion education. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is the governing body and is located in the capital city, Yellowknife, NWT (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2013). Thirty-five percent of NWT children will enter the school system significantly behind their classmates to the south; 25 percent will not sustain academic level compared to the rest of Canada and according to 2012 NWT Statistics, 40 percent of Aboriginal students will graduate compared to 80 percent of non-Aboriginal students (Government of the Northwest Territories, 2013). Contributing to the issues with graduation are lack of access to literacy at an early age, high special needs demands, significant attendance issues and relationships between parents and schools. Above all of this, the Territories have the high turnover rate of 67 percent of new teachers. (Kitchenham, & Chasteauneuf, 2010). All of these roadblocks contribute to a first year teacher's experience. Often new teachers to the north are not previously exposed to the culturally diverse population, their history with the imposition of education, the intergenerational impact of residential school and differing worldview that the majority of Aboriginal students possess, often in contrast to their own.

Consistent with other Canadian first year teachers' experiences, new NWT teachers reiterated the need for cultural awareness prior to entering their new community. New teachers are often not prepared for the perceived lack of involvement by parents in the school. They often feel the parents are reluctant to be directly involved in their child's education yet the teachers have not been educated, nor prepared, for the historical reasons around the poor relationships gained through the residential school experience. The teachers expected full cooperation from parents and full attendance from the students, yet they were politically ignorant of the reasons for parental resistance (Rass, 2012).

According to Rass (2012), due to the homogeneous nature of northern, NWT communities, new teachers experience more of a culture shock as they are often unaccustomed to a lack of cultural diversity. The adjustment to local culture takes much longer and requires more effort as many of the new teachers are exposed to communities that are culturally very different from them. In Canada students bring a very rich culture of their own to the classroom. Understanding the diverse perspectives builds trust and foundations for relationships that improve the experiences for both the new teacher and their students. Fostering positive relationships through incorporating cultural knowledge, language and activities in classroom teachings, opened up more possibilities for learning to take place (Murray-Orr, & Mitton-Kukner, 2017).

Conclusion

Throughout the research discussed, common threads are revealed whether the new teacher is in an urban, rural, or northern community in Canada. New teachers need to understand and adjust to the unique nuances, adapt to the diversities and overcome a sense of loneliness or

isolation of an unfamiliar place. In predominantly Aboriginal communities, new teachers must be able to recognize their sentiments regarding education may be in direct contrast to the new community they are now living and working in. The history of education within Canada's Aboriginal population is a very tumultuous one, and one to this day, that still carries a lot of pain and frustration for many Aboriginal people. Aboriginal communities, parents, and students do not necessarily yet see themselves reflected in most curricula and therefore may be resistant to the new teacher and their practices, strategies and material presented. Consistent throughout the research is the need for new teachers' visible investment in the students and their communities as well. Relationship building is imperative for trust to develop and for students to be in classrooms, with support from their parents and communities for the new teacher and the material being taught.

New teachers need to be prepared to enter the communities in which they are hired, especially in an Aboriginal context. Education in university regarding assimilation, residential school history, and the overall treatment of Aboriginal people is a recommendation throughout the research. However, according to Heather McGregor (2015), it is not enough to be

limited to an exposure of academic literature. Local histories, histories that are informed by multiple perspectives, or histories that offer insight into Indigenous worldview must be made more accessible to the educator. Teachers need to explore the local history of education as a vehicle and starting point to provide information about what has happened in their community. Articles cannot provide insight as valuable as listening closely to Northerners (p. 35).

Many new teachers are being immersed into a culture where they are grossly unaware of the historical circumstances surrounding colonization and the education of Canada's Indigenous peoples. This sets teachers up for failure, as they are unaware of the underlying implications of education in the new community, especially if the new teacher is non-Aboriginal. Also very clear

in the research is that if the experiences of the new teacher are not positive and fulfilling, if relationships are not built, the new teacher is more likely to leave after the first year, if not sooner. This cycle contributes to lack of success for Aboriginal students as they feel their teachers' apparent lack of commitment. Lack of preparedness may also be a contributing factor in why 40 to 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Cherubini, 2008; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009).

Rass (2012) quotes Tolley (2003) when stating that "cultural awareness should be a priority when preparing teachers for multicultural schools or for schools whose students belong to a different culture than the teacher" (pg. 145). The induction program was first introduced in 2001 (Tolley 2003), encouraging teachers new to the NWT to expand their knowledge on local culture. The initial program recommended the new teachers to the local community and regional culture that they were about to become immersed in. It also provided regional, community and school orientation. However, cultural preparation seemed to still be a necessity and a focus 14 years later when the first New to the NWT Educators' Conference was held in Yellowknife, NT.

As a new teacher, raised my entire life in an Indigenous community, I was still grossly unaware of the presence and impact of residential school, and I had sat daily in classes with residential school students. I spent time in and out of the classroom with those students who had been made to leave their parents, home, culture and community to pursue the westernized system of education. It astounds me that if I was someone immersed in the culture, yet deeply ignorant of what was going on around me, I cannot imagine the level of misunderstanding and/or unawareness a teacher, completely new to the Indigenous culture, would have.

Chapter 3

New to the North Educators' Conference

Chapter three discusses the survey completed by the new/new to the north teachers that attended the New to the NWT Teachers Conference (N2NEC) in Yellowknife, NWT in August of 2017. While there were other surveys to assess knowledge of the new/new to the north teachers when they attended the conference in August 2017, there was no follow up to find out if the conference and its sessions were of any value to the attendees after they had taught for a few months. The survey that was administered by, the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), was undertaken six months into the new/new to the north teachers' experiences in an NWT community and classrooms. Chapter three describes the N2NEC itself and the results of the 'Six Month In' survey. It illustrates how the information presented at the conference affected the new/new to the NWT teacher's experiences in their northern classrooms and communities.

Conference Background

The New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC) was introduced in 2014 by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Department of Education, Culture and Employment, as a response to the Action Plan for Education Renewal; a ten-year framework intended to improve education in the Northwest Territories. The conference is extended to all teachers new to the profession and/or new teachers to the Northwest Territories. While attendance is highly encouraged by the Education Councils in the NWT, it is not mandatory as the conference takes place the third week of August in order to best prepare newly employed teachers for their new experience in the north.

The conference has a specific and valuable purpose as its mandate is to:

- Fulfil the mandated training for all new educators regarding the history and legacy of residential school and residential school impact
- Initiate new teachers to the purpose and intent of the Education Renewal and Innovation Framework as set out by ECE
- Connect new teachers personally and professionally on a territory-wide basis; and
- Allow for the opportunity for new teachers to be introduced to the NWT Teacher Induction and Mentorship Program

The N2NEC is a very valuable initiative and ECE works very hard at coordinating new teachers' moving and travel schedules in order to maximize attendance at the conference. Designated employees of ECE spend months meeting the travel and accommodation needs of new teachers from all over the world in order to gather everyone in Yellowknife, NWT over the designated three days. Many new teachers are able to stop in Yellowknife on the way to their new northern community as Yellowknife is the central community to any stopover for almost every northern community. Time and effort are extended to accommodate families if applicable (and pets and their possessions as needed), to ensure that as many people benefit from the N2NEC as possible. The GNWT absorbs the cost of the travel and the accommodations for their new employees.

In some regions, the new/new to the north teachers' Education Council may also incur costs as they too support this valuable conference. Some recommend that regional program coordinators, who have been assigned responsibility for supporting the implementation of the ECE Teacher Induction/Mentorship program, attend the conference as well. The South Slave

Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) believes in aligning their efforts with new/new to the north teachers with the territorial directives rather than duplicating the efforts. SSDEC Superintendent, Dr. Curtis Brown, believes the conference is an excellent orientation to prepare new teachers for the communities, students and classrooms they are expected to teach in thus creating the best learning environment for NWT students. Since the inception of the N2NEC, attendance has steadily increased from 28 participants in 2015 to 52 participants in 2018.

New to the NWT Educators' Conference Introduction

Upon arriving in Yellowknife, NWT the participants of the N2NEC are greeted and need to register. The conference facilitators meet them at the designated hotel and the new/new to the north teachers collect their welcome package. Along with that, the teachers complete a pre-conference survey. The pre-conference survey also explains the rights of the participant and gives a detailed description of the involvement expected while at the conference. It clarifies that the new teacher's participation is completely anonymous, voluntary and that the information gathered will not be shared with colleagues and/or supervisors. The information collected is for assessment purposes and is used in compliance with the NWT Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The data gathered from participants is used to assess what future sessions will be delivered and how. The surveys taken are used by the conference staff for delivery and preparation during the conference and also for future preparation of sessions.

New to the NWT Educators' Conference Entrance Survey

The N2NEC Entrance Survey collects information regarding the new teacher's location of employment, age range (eg. 20-29, 30-39) and years of educational experience at various levels ranging from working as an education assistant to being a principal. Participants are then

asked to share their experiences with learning about residential schools. They are asked how comfortable they are talking about residential schools in the classroom, what their expectations are of being an educator in the NWT, and the preparation they have done for working and living in the NWT. Participants also answer questions about what they hope to learn at the conference and how they will incorporate what they learn at the conference about the history and legacy of residential schools into their work and lives in the NWT.

New to the NWT Educators' Conference Day One

Day One brings the participants together to engage in many sessions including those that deal with the NWT Curriculum and Inclusive Learning in the NWT. After lunch the new/new to the north teachers have a series of mini-workshops to choose from including but not limited to: media awareness, Indigenizing education, and the NWT curriculum. Once the day is finished, participants then complete a Day One Survey answering questions on the sessions they identify they have taken and any feedback the participant would like to share. There is also an opportunity to make recommendations on what needs to be developed further or if there is a topic the new/new to the north teacher would like more information on.

New to the NWT Educators' Conference Day Two

Day Two is often the most emotional day for the N2NEC participants as it is spent learning about the history and legacy of residential schools in the NWT. Participants have the opportunity to actively participate in The Blanket Exercise, an interactive session exposing participants to the history of treaties and land claims. After a debriefing session the new/new to the north teachers spend the rest of their time rotating among sharing circles with former residential school students, listening to their stories and asking questions. Once these sessions are

completed, participants regroup to hear the impact that has followed down through generations of residential school survivors while a child of a survivor shares her story. Participants are encouraged to consider their future teaching and supports in light of what they learned on this difficult day. It is also important to note that the N2NEC coordinators ensure there are trained counsellors at these sessions and that anyone needing to seek out comfort from trauma or continue the discussion has the opportunity during the session and/or in the evening at the designated hotel where the participants are staying.

As was the case at the end of Day One, after Day Two there is a short survey to complete, in which participants reflect on the lessons of the day. Questions asked reflect on the impact of listening to the survivors and their stories as well as the choice of venue (a small Yellowknives Dene First Nation village of Dettah, on the shore of Great Slave Lake, 25 minutes outside of Yellowknife). Participants again have the opportunity to make suggestions and request more information on the topics presented.

New to the NWT Educators' Conference Day Three

Day three of the N2NEC gathers all of the N2NEC participants at the K'alemi Dene School in the small Dene community of N'dilo, on the outskirts of Yellowknife, home of the Yellowknife's Dene First Nation. Following the format of Day One, participants have the opportunity to listen to Sabrina Dragon, Director of Aboriginal Health and Wellness for the Health and Social Services Department of the GNWT as she discusses wellness of NWT Students, teachers and community. New/new to the north teachers attend a session on teacher induction and mentorship. They are also presented with an overview of PowerSchool, Gradebook and Tienet, which are reporting tools in schools for the NWT. Teachers rotate between sessions on safe and caring schools, exploring key academic competencies and foundational statements.

The Northwest Territories Teachers Association (NWTTA) Central Executive also presents on the contract and benefits for NWTTA members, as well as professional development and governance, and communication structures and protocols in the NWT.

Following the day's completion, teachers are again required to complete a third survey reflecting on the connections they have made during the week. New/new to the north teachers' expectations of an educator in the NWT are explored as well as whether or not they feel supported in their new role. Participants have the opportunity again to share any ideas for upcoming N2NEC, and anything else they would like to add.

It is important to note the information gathered in this master's project focuses solely on the experiences of the participants of the N2NEC, August 2017, Yellowknife, NWT. This was the third year of the project and there were 38 participants. The new/new to the north teachers were hired from all over Canada and around the world and their experiences varied greatly. This will be explored later on when reflecting on the data collected.

Purpose of Survey

While the N2NEC has been ideal in exposing new/new to the north teachers to the history of the NWT, to ECE expectations for procedures followed, to networking and to some preparation for the new communities the teachers were about to settle into, there was no follow up to the surveys administered at the N2NEC. There had always been intent for the conference coordinators to follow up; however, time had not yet been allotted for the follow up by the time I became involved with the event. It was known that my master's degree was to focus on the history of Indigenous education in the NWT - more specifically the intergenerational trauma due to residential schools. Because of this and my past education in this field, I was invited to become a part of the conference team to support new teachers, especially in my region.

Experiencing the N2NEC for the first time in 2017 was a whirlwind of activity, education, excitement and the eagerness of new teachers. It was a very invigorating time for me. I supported facilitators in sessions, transported presenters from venue to venue, helped the Elders when needed and while doing so, observed the process in order to hone my skills so that I would be able to join the following year as a presenter.

During the conference debriefing, the coordinators and I realized that there was no concrete follow up to the conference. The conference organizers were diligent about the pre-, during, and post-workshop surveys and the results; however, there was no long-term follow up to assess the value of the conference once the new/new to the north teachers actually situated themselves in their new northern communities. My master's project, through that discussion, was born. As stated in the introduction to this project in chapter one, I expressed how interested I was with what made teachers stay in our northern communities, and what made them decide to leave. I wanted to follow up six months later by asking teachers what the impact was of the N2NEC. This follow up to the N2NEC was an invaluable opportunity to again survey the new teachers and reflect on the goals of the conference in order to determine if they were being met, and if the conference itself was making a difference in the lives of teachers of the north. I set about creating the survey.

Survey Creation

Working within the parameters of any government agency adds confines and limitations not expected elsewhere. The amount of approval needed to develop and present the survey to the 2017 participants while first very daunting, was eventually doable. It was time consuming, however. Upon returning in August 2017 from the N2NEC I contacted my University of Victoria graduate supervisor, Dr. Helen Raptis, and explained my ideas for my final requirement. Dr.

Raptis was interested and very supportive so I began developing my ideas. Initially, the most important part of beginning the process was to access permission for the project from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and partner with Colleen Eckert, Professional Development Coordinator for ECE. One of the major responsibilities of her job is to coordinate the N2NEC. I needed to understand the expectations for the process when gathering information from GNWT employees for research purposes.

The survey was created in consultation with Ms. Eckert. I reviewed the three surveys that participants had completed before, during and after the N2NEC held in Yellowknife, August 2017. As I reflected on the results and recommendations the attendees had suggested, I began to build a series of questions that focussed on the conference sessions, such as the Blanket Exercise and the day spent in sharing circles with the residential school survivors and intergenerational survivors. Also very pertinent to teacher retention is the need to ensure that new/new to the north teachers build relationships with their new community, the new school and their students. As shown in the research literature reviewed in Chapter 2, relationship building is paramount for anyone hoping to successfully integrate into a northern community, and I wanted to also focus on that aspect as well. Because the conference and the Department are in Yellowknife, NWT, the reflection of the data, creation and compilation of the survey and conversations around the ethics of collecting this data required many trips to Yellowknife, NWT.

Planning the survey questions was a long process in the Fall of 2017. Meetings were set up in Yellowknife, creating valuable questions took hours, approval from the appropriate channels gathered and then finally, formatting the survey into the most effective manner possible was finally accomplished. The Supporting Northern Professionals Committee, of which I am a member, reviewed and approved the questions I created in consultation with Colleen Eckert.

Nushreen Ukkhoy, the intern for the Educational Operations and Development Division of the GNWT, formatted the survey into Survey Monkey, an online survey software that was determined to be the most efficient way to reach the conference participants.

The “rolling out” of the survey became a much simpler process once it was realized that the Government of the Northwest Territories, in partnership with the Northwest Territories Teachers’ Association, was hosting a three-day NWT Teachers’ Conference for northern teachers in Yellowknife, NWT in February 2018. The venue was established as the N2NEC participants were then going to be all in one center for a minimum of three days. Organization quickly took place determining a time and venue best suited for implementing the survey. An ECE-approved letter was sent to all of the 2017 N2NEC participants inviting them to lunch to reconnect with fellow 2017 N2NEC teachers. It also stated that while at the lunch, they would be invited to complete a survey I had created in consultation with Ms. Eckert and ECE, completely voluntary and completely anonymous, if they chose. It was made very clear they were welcome to gather and have lunch even if they did not complete the survey.

In the late fall of 2017, I submitted the survey for approval to the University of Victoria’s Human Research Ethics Board and made alterations and corrections as required. I also kept in contact with Dr. Raptis and the University of Victoria. Once the survey was completed and approved, in January 2018, I submitted the whole package to the University of Victoria Ethics Board. I waited. The NWT Teachers Conference fast approached.... And I waited.

On February 20, 2018, in a classroom at a high school in Yellowknife, NWT, 20 out of 38 participants from the August 2017 New to the NWT Educators’ Conference attended the lunch and completed the survey. It was a very exciting time and it was wonderful to watch the participants reconnect with each other and hear about their experiences in their new

communities. The luncheon lasted approximately one hour and everyone who chose to, completed the survey. I was not involved in administering the survey as I would be collating the results.

N2NEC: February 2017 “Six Months In” Survey Results

There were 15 questions in total in the “Six Months In” survey (available in Appendix) and the results of the survey were as follows:

Q1: How old are you?

Fifteen percent were 56 years of age or older, 10% were between 51-55 years old, 25% of the participants were between the ages of 46 and 50 years old, 15% were between 41-45 years old, five percent were between 36-40 years old, 10% were between 31-35 years old and 20% were between the age of 26 and 30.

Q2: How do you identify?

Seven percent of the survey participants identified as southern Aboriginal and 93% identified as non-Aboriginal people.

Q3: How many years of total experience do you have in each of the following positions, teacher and/or principal?

Forty-five percent of all participants had 11 or more years of experience as a teacher, 10% had six to ten years of experience teaching, 35% had between one and five years of teaching experience and 10% had no teaching experience at all. Of the 20 participants, 10% had six to ten years of experience as a principal, 30% had one to five years experience and 60% had no experience in a principalship position.

Q4: Overall Impression of the conference

Sixty-five percent strongly agreed that the 2017 N2NEC deepened their understanding of the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in the NWT and Canada, 30% were in agreement and five percent strongly disagreed with the statement.

Forty-five percent strongly agreed and 45% agreed that the N2NEC had had a positive impact on their approaches to living and working in their new community while five percent held no opinion and five percent strongly disagreed. 47.37% strongly agreed and 47.37% agreed that the N2NEC experiences deepened their understanding of the importance of relationship building with staff, students, parents and community. 5.26% strongly disagreed with this statement.

Q5: Day One Sessions**Self and Orientation to Place** (group mapping activity- full group session)

Fifty percent of participants felt this was highly impactful. Forty percent felt the session had some impact, five percent felt it had no impact and five percent felt it was not applicable.

NWT Curriculum (full group session)

Thirty percent felt this session was highly impactful, 55% felt that it had some impact and 15% felt this session had no impact.

Inclusive Learning in the NWT (full group session)

31.58% felt this session was highly impactful, 52.36% felt this session had some impact and 15.79% felt this session had no impact.

Q6: During the remainder of Day One, there were five choice sessions of which you selected and attended only two, please indicate “Not Applicable” to those you did not attend.

School Handbook Overview

Five percent found this choice session to be highly impactful, five percent felt it had some impact, five percent felt it had no impact and 85% felt it was not applicable.

Indigenizing Education

Fifty-five percent found this choice session to be highly impactful. Thirty percent found that it had some impact, and 15% felt that it was not applicable.

Student Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting -SAER

Twenty percent found this session to be highly impactful, 45% found it to have some impact, and 35% found it was not applicable.

Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten

21.05% found this choice session to be highly impactful, 5.26% found it to have some impact, 73.68 found it to be not applicable.

Q7: Day Two Sessions

History and Legacy of Residential School

78.95% of participants found this full group session to be highly impactful and 21.05% found it to have some impact.

Living Together, the History of Treaties and Land Claims - Blanket Exercise

Seventy percent found this full group session to be highly impactful, 15% felt it had some impact, 10% felt it had no impact and five percent felt it was not applicable.

Former Residential School Experiences - each participant listened to two former attenders of residential school. Seventy percent found this full group session to be highly impactful, 25% found it to have some impact and five percent felt it had no impact.

Intergenerational Impact and Healing Journey

63.16% of participants felt this full group session was highly impactful, 31.58% felt it had some impact and 5.26% felt it was not applicable.

Journey of Reconciliation Eighty percent felt this full group session was highly impactful, 20% felt it had some impact.

Q8: Day Three Sessions

Teacher Induction and Mentorship Program (two groups alternating)

Fifty-five percent found this session to be highly impactful, 45% felt this session to have some impact.

Overview of PowerSchool, GradeBook, and Tienet in the NWT (two groups alternating)

Twenty percent found this session to be highly impactful, 45% found it to have some impact, 25% found that this session had no impact and 10% thought it was not applicable.

Safe and Caring Schools

Thirty-five percent felt this full group session was highly impactful, 50% felt it had some impact, and 15% felt it had no impact.

Foundational Statements and Key Competencies

Ten percent found this full group session to be highly impactful, 80% found that it had some impact, five percent felt it had no impact and five percent felt this session was not applicable.

Your NWTTA: Understanding Your Contract and Benefits (two groups alternating)

Thirty-five percent found this session to be highly impactful, 60% found it had some impact and five percent felt it was not applicable.

Governance and Communications

Twenty percent found this full group session to be highly impactful, 65% felt it had some impact, 10% felt it had no impact and five percent felt this session was not applicable.

Q9: Looking back, what was the most valuable N2NEC experience that assisted in preparing you for your transition to your new school and community?

Thirty-five percent of the respondents felt that the connections made by meeting other new/new to the North teachers was the most valuable outcome that assisted in preparing them for their new school and community. Twenty-five percent of the respondents felt that the sessions on residential school with the survivors was the most valuable experience that assisted in preparing them for their new school and community, 20% felt the Blanket Exercise specifically, was the most valuable experience that assisted in preparing them for their new school and community, 10% felt learning about the way the programs are structured in the NWT was most valuable and 10% of the respondents had no response.

Q10: Looking back on this training (N2NEC), do you feel that you are better prepared to extend your teaching career in the north and why?

Ninety percent of respondents felt that attending the N2NEC was a benefit to them. The August 2017 conference helped them to be aware of community expectations, to understand the importance of the land and building community relations, and to be “mindful that s/he is an outsider coming into the new community.” Ten percent did not comment.

Q11: As a follow up, and in addition to the N2NEC, what further supports would you like to see for future hires during their first year in the NWT?

- Further supports mentioned included 30% of the respondents feeling there should be more information on the individual communities including any unique situations such as

alcohol restrictions, housing problems, and the consequences of not having a permanent doctor.

- Other respondents felt that there should be more information about the relationship between the parents and the school, attendance concerns and dealing with the trauma community members and students experience.
- Those in administrative positions felt the need for more specific training in administrative responsibilities such as the computer programs used in the NWT
- Fifteen percent of the respondents felt that there are issues with being lonely in their new community and suggested there be a system to reach out to the new teacher two to three months in to see if they needed support.
- Connecting the new/new to the north teachers with another former “new teacher” in order to hear their first year experiences and ask questions.
- Fifteen percent of the respondents did not have any recommendations.

Q12: In what ways have you attempted to or been able to build relationships within your school and community?

Fifty-five percent of respondents participate in community events. Thirty percent have built relationships by hosting activities in the school. These include food programs, school newsletters, hosting classroom events such as books and bannock, and assembly performances. Ten percent have gotten involved in coaching and other sporting activities and five percent felt that building relationships takes time and are earned.

Q13: Have these attempts made a difference in your experience transitioning to your community?

Ninety-five percent of the respondents felt that making attempts to building community relationships has made a difference or a significant difference in their integration into the new community. Respondents felt they have a better understanding of their community and in one instance felt it impacted travelling with the students in a positive manner. Five percent felt that they were comfortable letting people take their time to get to know them.

Q14: Has the “New to the NWT” Educators’ Conference impacted your new teaching experience in the NWT?

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents felt the N2NEC impacted their teaching experience in the north citing reasons such as “it eased the transition to a new place and culture”, “helped me with my expectations”, and “it allowed me to go in with open eyes and heart.” One respondent stated that they wished all teachers could have experienced the conference. Ten percent felt that it helped them somewhat and five percent had no comment.

Q15: If so, how?

Eighteen respondents completed this final question while two chose to not answer this question. Thirty-nine percent chose to state N/A to this question or answered with “see previous question.” Sixty-one percent of respondents answered in a positive manner citing the conference as a “good overview of NWT education process, felt better prepared - more knowledgeable early on, bridging gap to enter community - making it personal, friendly-human.” One attendee responded with, “It allowed for the transition from my hometown in the south to the north a lot easier and appreciated being able to take part in this conference at the start of the school year”. Another respondent felt, “it helped me to start building a support system” while someone else

said, “it deepened my teaching experience” and also “to understand the cultural context of my community.”

The final chapter of this project will reflect on whether or not the N2NEC is an effective tool for helping new/new to the north teachers transition to northern communities and schools. Does the Conference prepare the new/new to the north teachers for the experience of entering a new teaching position in a new community surrounded by northern culture and history? Chapter four will provide some insight for future new/new to the north teachers on how to prepare prior to coming to teach in the NWT.

Chapter 4:

Reflection

The topic of this project was teacher retention. The question of why some teachers stay in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and some leave, I discovered as I went through the experience, has been on my mind for many years. As a working educator in the NWT for 24 years, this topic is very relevant to my experience. I have been a new teacher and I have also mentored new teachers over the course of my career. Why do we encounter some teachers in northern schools that move to the north and stay, becoming “lifers” buying homes, building permanent relationships, raising families in our schools, while others are here for maybe a year or two and then move on? Why do some teachers invest in our communities, while others are not interested and leave the day the school year ends?

After spending much time reflecting on those questions, it became very apparent to me that the concept of building relationships is essential to anyone making a school and/or community theirs. Throughout this educational journey in pursuit of my master’s, I have learned, after hours of research, that choosing to make the effort to invest in the people, the culture and the community is essential. No matter what demographic of people and community I researched the theme was the same building relationships determined the amount of time a new teacher will remain in their new community and in my case the north. Investment in and understanding of the culture, people and history of the community is imperative if a new teacher is going to make the north theirs. This can mean the teacher will move to one community and stay for a length of time or enjoy the benefits of the north and its people and then move to other communities.

As shown in chapter 2 of this project, many scholars reflect on the fact that building relationships is essential. Becoming a part of the school community and community as a whole is

essential if the teacher wishes to build trust amongst his/her students and through them, trust with the parents. If a teacher is seen as trusted within the classroom then he/she will be more likely to have a positive experience and stay in their new community (Gray, 2015, Oskineegish & Berger, 2013, Taylor, 1995).

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) state that the first year of teaching is generally the most difficult in a teacher's career as the new teacher instantly inherits the same amount of responsibility as a teacher with many years of experience. When a new teacher finds themselves in a new community, especially a community of a different culture such as in one of Canada's northern Aboriginal communities, the understanding of the importance to connect to the people and the community is often underappreciated. This can be to the detriment of the new teacher as the changes can be so overwhelming. Once a new teacher realizes the key to success and building positive relationships within the school is through cultivating relationships with the students, school personnel and new community, they discover their experience and learning curve becomes more manageable.

Throughout my journey I learned from the research that besides being able to build relationships with the people of the community, the new teacher must often understand the history of the community and its people. Even more important in the north, is to understand the history and the relationship that northern people have had with education (Rass, 2012). Being aware that the Indigenous people have had a very tumultuous relationship with the colonial education system will inform the new teacher and prepare them to understand the difference in the approaches and perspectives toward education between the cultures. Indigenous people and Euro-Canadians have very different worldviews which have traditionally shaped education and lifestyles. Understanding the need to be educated in the history of education in the new teacher's

new community as well as the history of residential school and its legacy on the school and community members, will allow the new teacher an insight into their new students and families that is invaluable. Understanding the “why’s” of Indigenous peoples’ approach to mainstream education practices will alleviate many roadblocks for new teachers, eliminate frustrations and allow the new teacher to see the value of multiple approaches to “educating” youth in the north.

It is my experience that when new teachers are not aware of the legacy of residential school and its impact on Indigenous people in the north, they are very confused and often negative about the lack of parental involvement in the school. That is, when parents don’t attend parent-teacher conferences, students don’t complete homework on time or attend consistently, teachers can misperceive these behaviours as meaning that they don’t care about education. I have witnessed teachers who have interpreted this behaviour as simply meaning that some Indigenous parents are not invested in the success of their child’s education. These perceptions are indicative of the new teacher’s lack of preparation and education about the north. Often, once the history of education is explained to the new teacher, attitudes change, and empathy and understanding are gained. Teachers must understand that western education was aggressively forced upon Aboriginal people and through those experiences, trust for the school system and the teachers themselves is not automatic such as expected in the Euro-Canadian way of thinking especially when one considers that residential school was a direct experience for many northern students parents and grandparents. Oskineegish (2015) states that:

The effort to transform their school into a more relevant and meaningful environment for students, becomes more difficult when Non-Native teachers arrive with absolutely no understanding of culturally relevant teaching or willingness to connect their teaching practices with the knowledge and way of life of the community (p. 18).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings were held in the NWT in 2011. This brought awareness and set in motion the need to ensure new teachers understanding of the

curriculum and training around the residential school experience and intergenerational trauma. In 2014, as a response to the Action Plan for Education Renewal presented by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the Government of the NWT implemented the N2NEC to improve education in the NWT. The goal of the N2NEC is to educate new/new to the NWT teachers specifically on the history of the NWT in regard to residential schools and the historical relationship Indigenous people have with imposed colonial education and the effects it is still having today. What I learned in researching for my project and participating in this conference, initially as an assistant but then as a presenter, is that many southern Canadians are still unaware of the historical treatment of Indigenous people in this country especially in the context of education and the historical Indigenous experience in this country. Due to this lack of understanding and awareness, new/new to the NWT teachers are at a grave disadvantage as they have little to no idea what situations and attitudes they may be encountering in their new classroom and communities and more importantly, why. The lack of understanding of educational history, cultural values and/or worldviews has the potential to derail a new teacher no matter what the original intentions of that new teacher are.

As indicated in the February 2018 “Six Months In” survey of the August 2017 N2NEC participants, the conference overwhelmingly impacted the participants’ understanding of their new students, schools and the situations and/or attitudes the new teachers would be facing in their northern communities. The sessions offered were identified as ones that had a great impact on the participants, especially the sessions regarding the blanket exercise, history of treaties and land claims, and the rotating sessions by the residential school survivors. The conference helped the participants understand Indigenous communities and expanded their understanding that their students face a very different experience around education than their southern counterparts,

historically and today. The sessions prepared the new teachers for the need for compassion and understanding that goes beyond what is expected in a classroom.

The conference also supported the importance of relationship building in a new community and the impact that would have on new/new to the NWT teachers' experiences as they left their comfort zone for their new position. While the N2NEC had a primary focus on historical relationships of Indigenous people and education, the conference offered technical sessions as well such as an overview of technical systems NWT teachers need to be able to operate for recording student progress, accessing teacher benefits, media awareness, online safety and digital literacy. Other relevant sessions offered - such as information on program formats, NWT curriculum, assessment, and the Northwest Territories Teachers Association contract and benefits program - were very informative to new/new to the NWT teachers as well. Because contracts and curriculums vary from province to province and from territory to territory, these sessions are also very valuable and serve to alleviate stress from new/new to the NWT teachers as well. Entering a new teaching assignment in a remote community has its challenges when the technology may or may not be as readily available as the new teacher's previous community. Also, it is to teachers' own benefit to understand the contract in the NWT as it may not be the same as their prior contract, if they have taught before. Programs for recording students information varies from province to province as do benefit packages and so on. It is to the benefit of the new/new to the north teacher to understand what is offered in their contract, what the expectations are with regard to teacher accountability, and how to access assistance if and when needed. The N2NEC is an invaluable experience as it spends three days exposing new/new to the NWT educators to information not necessarily shared with them prior to being employed in the NWT.

The evidence supporting the effectiveness of the N2NEC is indicated in multiple ways. From its beginning in 2014 to current time, N2NEC's attendance continues to increase. The positive feedback from the new/new to the north teachers' initially was word of mouth. However, the feedback from the "Six Months In" survey completed by the 2017 attendees validates the impact the conference has made in a more formal manner. Ninety-five percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that, "the N2NEC deepened their understanding of the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in the NWT and Canada." Ninety percent strongly agreed or agreed that, "the N2NEC has had a positive impact on my approaches to living and working in my community." Ninety percent also felt they are better prepared to extend their teaching in the north due to the training they received at the N2NEC.

Throughout this master's journey I learned the importance of preparing new/new to the NWT teachers for their communities. Prior research, as discussed in Chapter 2, was consistent in showing the lack of understanding of new teachers on the topic of the experiences of Indigenous Canadians in regard to historical education and current day. Most Canadians are unaware of the residential school experience, intergenerational impact, historical mistreatment of Indigenous people and the fact that many of those inequities in education continue today. I was never more aware of this as when I sat in my University of Victoria classes in 2016-2017 and listened to other students, many of them pursuing a teaching career. It became very apparent that these young people were unaware of the history and legacy of education in Canada in regard to the Indigenous people. Many of my fellow students had never heard of residential school and therefore had no idea of the impact of it or of intergenerational trauma that Aboriginal students are dealing with today. Some of my classmates were aware of the 2008 apology made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the atrocities imposed upon Indigenous people through the

imposition of residential schools. Some students were aware that Native Studies classes were offered in their high schools, but very few had enrolled in them. Sadly, most of my fellow students, many up and coming teachers, did not know about the relationship with education that Aboriginal people have throughout history and continuing today.

As discussed in previous chapters, and as I have observed throughout my own experiences during my career, education is key to success of any new/new to the NWT teacher. Understanding the history of the people, their historical experiences with education and the teaching retention issue, building trust and commitment, becoming part of the community by participating in cultural activities, inviting cultural activities into the classroom, building relationships with elders and so on proved to increase the amount of investment a new teacher made. This also builds trust and acceptance of the new teacher within the community. Furthermore, 95% of the 2017 N2NEC attendees felt that their attempts to build community relationships had made a difference or significant difference in their integration into the new community.

Throughout this process it became very evident to me that new/new to the NWT teachers that struggle with their students and/or life in their communities are lacking understanding of where they are and the people that they teach. It also became evident that common themes are very present when dealing with Indigenous communities and education. I believe the N2NEC addresses many of these themes and is a venue for empowering new/new to the NWT teachers prior to entering the new school. I discovered that this is an invaluable experience that every new/new to the NWT teacher should participate in, in order to be best prepared for a successful experience in their classroom and community. I also believe that attendance at the N2NEC needs to be expected, if not mandatory.

The information gathered from the “Six Months In” survey by the August 2017 participants was overwhelmingly in favour of the difference the conference made to the new/new to the NWT teachers. The conference prepared them in ways they would not likely have been prepared had they not attended. It encouraged the new teachers to explore their communities, build lasting, important relationships with the people of their communities, to invite the culture into their classroom, and to VALUE the knowledge already present in the community. In some areas, the N2NEC eliminated fears of the unknown, stresses over differing practices in education such as home visits to review student progress or out of school participation in activities in the community. The importance of being actively visible in the community, in order to build trust and show value in the community events outside of the classroom, is also essential for relationship building.

This project has shown me that contextual/historical understanding is imperative for a new/new to the north teacher to have a positive and successful experience in northern classrooms. In order to build effective relationships, understanding and compassion for a culture and its people is imperative. I have learned two very important things from my experience in attaining my master’s in this field. I will continue to build upon the relationships I have with my students in my classroom and school, even though I am a veteran educator. The pursuit of this project has solidified things that I may have neglected over time such as understanding culture from different perspectives. I need to reinforce being cognisant that as a non-Aboriginal teacher, even as one that has grown up my whole life in the NWT, working with predominantly Aboriginal students, my lens and their lens are not always the same, even though I too was raised here and remain connected to this land. My worldview, while shaped through many influences, such as those of my non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal family members, is not always in sync with

those of my students. This difference in perspective is often formed by the influences of my students' families and ancestors' experiences that are ingrained due to historical trauma. Intergenerational impact continues to have a place in my classroom every day and I must acknowledge that students' learning is impacted. I also have had reinforced through this process that trust is earned and what is valued as important in one culture is not necessarily in other cultures.

This process has solidified my actions as well and I am very cognisant of the new teachers in my school. I purposely engage them and seek them out to see if they are aware of the context of our community. I invite them to events and encourage them to go beyond the classroom with their students. I introduce the new teachers to many different people in our community, the Chiefs, the other professionals, elders, the people they encounter at our local grocery store and so on. I feel that if the new teacher feels a part of our wonderful community then they will make more of an investment in the students and community. This may make the new teacher more likely to stay.

This brings me to the realization that the New to the NWT Educators' Conference is a very valuable tool that has the potential to improve so many people's experiences when it comes to education in the NWT. I discovered that when teachers participate in the N2NEC prior to entering their classroom they are better prepared for their new curriculum, their new community and especially better prepared to impact the learning of their new students. I believe they will be more likely to understand the importance of historical impact on their students and families, and on the community itself. The survey administered "Six Months In" reveals the importance of understanding culture and community and the value of stepping out of a comfort zone. By teachers taking the time to engage in community activities, it drastically improves the benefits

inside the classroom. Trust between educators and Indigenous people historically is not always there as shown through many of the readings I completed (Di Mascio & Hortop-Di Mascio, 2011, Oskineegish, 2015; Taylor, 1995).

I also highly recommend that this model of teacher induction, the N2NEC, be seriously explored by other jurisdictions with high Aboriginal populations. While universities now have mandatory Indigenous education courses for their pre-service teachers, comparable to IED 373 in which I was enrolled at the University of Victoria, I believe that the course alone is not able to prepare students for the various experiences of the Indigenous people they will encounter. I think conferences such as N2NEC are invaluable as they contextualize the experience of the residential school survivors. They shed light on what intergenerational trauma is and how it is still impacting students in the specific, local classrooms where teachers will encounter students today. It is also my experience that the expectations of teachers vary regarding in and out of the school duties depending on the provinces and territories in which the new teachers will find themselves. What is expected of a teacher in a larger center compared to a small, isolated northern community will be different based on community history, values and so on. To listen to the experience of a residential school survivor, or child of a residential school survivor tends to be much more impactful than to read it in a book, or have it explained by someone else who does not share that experience. I have experienced both and know that having the ability to look the person in the eye, see the pain and the discomfort as they relive their experience, talk about their parents, be that student in that classroom again, deal with that system that deeply undervalued the child and their culture are incredibly influential. Having the benefit of meeting people and asking questions to be able to comprehend their experience, makes a far more lasting impression than reading words on a page. Humanizing the experience will carry more weight into the new

classroom and go a long way toward dispelling the negativity when it comes to understanding the reasons why Indigenous classrooms may not operate the same way as the Euro-Canadian lens expects them to.

Sadly, most Canadians are not aware of the historical relationship between Indigenous people and education. Without being explicitly informed through exposure to activities such as the Blanket Exercise, an experience shared in other areas of Canada that face similar issues with the need for teacher awareness and understanding toward reconciliation, or sitting with survivors of residential school, people will continue to undervalue Aboriginal cultures. Without hearing the experiences of children who have lived through intergenerational trauma people will misunderstand the nuances of the community and do a great disservice to Indigenous students and communities, while misunderstanding the reasons why students are not staying in school or excelling. Teacher retention will continue to be an issue in remote Aboriginal communities and students will continue to lose. Education is key and when “we know better, we do better.” This New to the NWT Educators Conference encourages new/new to the north teachers to learn about what they are going into and who they are going to be spending their time with. Therefore teachers will build awareness and “do better” for their students as well as provide a far more positive experience for themselves as well, maybe becoming “lifers.”



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
250-472-4545 | 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

April 24, 2018

Marnie Villeneuve
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria

Dear Marnie Villeneuve,

Re: *Assessing New Teachers' Experiences and Learning from the New to the NWT Educators' Conference*; HREB protocol number: 18-063

As you and your supervisor, Dr. Helen Raptis, are aware, an audit was conducted by Dr. Alexandra D'Arcy, Chair of the Human Research Ethics Board, to determine if the survey data that was collected, without UVic research ethics approval, at the February 20, 2018 'New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC)', could be used by you, for research purposes, for your MA thesis.

As part of this audit it was determined that the data has not been accessed by you. You were therefore asked to provide evidence to the HREB that the New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC) participants would not object to the use of their data for your research purposes. To this end, a letter was sent by Colleen Eckert, Professional Development and Instructional Improvement Coordinator (Education Operations and Development, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories), to participants on March 8, 2018, asking them to contact you, your supervisor, or UVic research ethics staff if they had any objections to the use of their responses for UVic research purposes. Teachers were asked to respond by April 9, 2018. Two teachers had questions for Colleen Eckert but no objections were raised to the use of the data.

Given this evidence, you are permitted to use the survey data that was collected at the February 20, 2018 'New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC)' for your MA thesis. Given that research ethics approval cannot be granted retroactively, the UVic HREB cannot issue you a Certificate of Ethical Approval for the use of this data. Any future publications and presentations must not reference research ethics approval from UVic since this cannot be provided.

Should you and your supervisor wish to alter your research protocol (i.e., to include new or additional data from the teachers, or collection new information from other participants, etc.) you are required to contact the Research Ethics Office to determine how to proceed. **Changes to this study are subject to review.**

Please retain this letter for your records. The Research Ethics Office will also retain a copy.

Should you have questions about the above information, please contact Kenna Miskelly at hre@uvic.ca or 250-472-5555.

Thank you for your cooperation with this process. Please contact me at ethics@uvic.ca if you have any outstanding concerns.



Sincerely,

Dr. Alexandra D'Arcy
Chair, Human Research Ethics Board

c.c.: Dr. Helen Raptis, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Deborah Begoray, Acting Chair, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Dr. Michelle Wiebe, Graduate Advisor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Appendix

New to the NWT Educators' Conference (N2NEC)

February Survey

Thank you for helping us to improve the N2NEC experience for future NWT educators.

You are being asked to complete this brief survey for the following reasons:

- To assess the quality, impact and effectiveness of the N2NEC and to understand if the outcomes of this conference are being achieved
- To gain knowledge that will help to inform the further development and implementation of in-servicing for new teachers to the NWT
- To understand the impact of the N2NEC on educator transitioning to teaching and educator retention in the NWT

How old are you?

<input type="checkbox"/> 21-25	<input type="checkbox"/> 41-45
<input type="checkbox"/> 26-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-50
<input type="checkbox"/> 31-35	<input type="checkbox"/> 51-55
<input type="checkbox"/> 36-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 56+

How do you identify?

<input type="checkbox"/> Dene	<input type="checkbox"/> Metis
<input type="checkbox"/> Inuit	<input type="checkbox"/> Inuvialuit/ Inuinait
<input type="checkbox"/> Cree	<input type="checkbox"/> Southern Aboriginal
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Aboriginal Indigenous	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

How many years of total experience do you have in each of the following positions?

Position	Years of total experience			
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 +
Principal	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 +

At this time, how many years do you intend to remain teaching in the north?

1 year 2-5 years 6-10 years 10+ years

1. Please rate the following statements based on your experience with the overall N2NEC:

Overall Conference	Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the learning experiences I participated in at the N2NEC deepened my understanding of the historical experiences of Indigenous Peoples in the NWT and Canada.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information gathered at the N2NEC has had a positive impact on my approaches to living and working in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My N2NEC experiences deepened my understanding of the importance of relationship building with staff, students, parents and community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. After six months living and working in your new community, please rate the following N2NEC sessions based on how they impacted your transition to community and your new teaching experience?

Day One	Highly Impactful	Some Impact	No Impact	Not Applicable
Introduction to Self and Orientation to Place (group mapping activity) <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NWT Curriculum <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusive Learning in the NWT <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>During the remainder of Day One, there were five choice sessions of which you selected and attended only two, please indicate "Not Applicable" for those you did not attend.</i>				
School Handbook Overview <i>(choice session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indigenizing Education <i>(choice session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting (SAER) <i>(choice session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten <i>(choice session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Day Two	Highly Impactful	Some Impact	No Impact	Not Applicable
History and Legacy of Residential School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(full group session)</i>				
Living Together, the History of Treaties and Land Claims (blanket exercise)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(full group session)</i>				
Former Residential School Experiences (each participant listened to two former attenders of residential schools)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(full group session)</i>				
Intergenerational Impact and Healing Journey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(full group session)</i>				
Journey of Reconciliation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>(full group session)</i>				

Day Three	Highly Impactful	Some Impact	No Impact	Not Applicable
Teacher Induction and Mentorship Program <i>(two groups, alternating)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overview of PowerSchool, GradeBook and Tienet in the NWT <i>(two groups, alternating)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe and Caring Schools <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundational Statements and Key Competencies <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your NWTTA: Understanding Your Contract and Benefits <i>(two groups, alternating)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Development and the NWTTA <i>(two groups, alternating)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governance and Communication <i>(full group session)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Looking back, what was the most valuable N2NEC experience that assisted in preparing you for your transition to your new school and community?

4. Looking back on this training (N2NEC), do you feel that you are better prepared to extend your teaching career in the North and why?

5. As a follow up, and in addition to the N2NEC, what further supports would you like to see for future new hires during their first year in the NWT?

6. In what ways have you attempted to or been able to build relationships within your school and community?

7. Have these attempts made a difference in your experience transitioning to your community?