

Dialogue: Understanding the Process of Collaborative Policy
Making in Aboriginal Education

by
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B.A., University of Victoria, 2006

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Faculty of Human and Social Development

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Abstract

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Since 1999, Aboriginal Education policy in British Columbia requires School Districts to collaborate with their local Aboriginal communities to establish appropriate definitions of success, set measurable goals and actions plans to enhance Aboriginal student's educational achievement. Together these groups produce five-year *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements*. This study employs Indigenous Methodology and Institutional Ethnography to learn whether and how process of working together to create these agreements contributes to relationship-building between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Key findings demonstrate that an engaged a dialogue between Indigenous peoples and education policy-makers changes the way that Aboriginal education is approached in BC school districts. Participants reported that the process changed them, touched their soul, and left them feeling humbled and renewed. The Enhancement Agreements hold promise as a process that works *from within* the institutional processes to address the unequal social relations of education for Aboriginal students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Indigenous peoples world-wide, who persist as a people and sustain knowledge systems that respect and honour all forms of life; and to the next generations of all peoples.

Chapter 1 Purposes and Previews

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements were created as an initiative to address the unequal social relations of education. The process grew out of a 1999 Memorandum of Understanding between the [BC] Chiefs Action Committee, the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the BC Ministry of Education, representatives of the First Nations Schools Association, BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association, BC School Trustees Association, and the BC Teacher's Federation (BC Ministry of Education, 1999). With the MOU, these bodies made a commitment to work together to improve school success for Aboriginal learners. The Enhancement Agreements bring Aboriginal peoples, School District Administrators and the Ministry of Education together in a collaborative process to help change Aboriginal students' experiences of and outcomes in public schools. This is important because public schools provide education services to the majority of Indigenous students in British Columbia, including Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Status¹ and Non-status Indians.

The Enhancement Agreement initiative launched a framework for inclusive dialogue about Aboriginal education in BC public schools. The 1999 version, then called *Improvement Agreements*, focused on setting targets and closing the 'achievement gap'

¹ Status and Non-status Indians are legal terms designated by the Canadian Federal Government and have implications for and Indigenous peoples access to education and health services in Canada. This paper adopts the following definition of terms from Ermine, Sinclair & Browne, 2005 : "Indigenous Peoples are the tribal peoples in independent countries whose distinctive identity, values, and history distinguishes them from other sections of the national community. Indigenous Peoples are the descendants of the original or pre-colonial inhabitants of a territory or geographical area and despite their legal status, retain some or all of their social, economic, cultural and political institutions. ... The terms "Indigenous", "Aboriginal", "Native", "Indian, and "First Nations" are used interchangeably. These terms refer to the first peoples of Canada and (with the exception of "First Nations" which generally refers to Indians who have status" under the Indian Act) are inclusive of Indians as defined in the Canadian constitution—that is to say, Indian, Inuit, and Métis people."

between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. In 2002 the revised process established a new title, *Enhancement Agreements*, and shifted the focus to developing collaborative dialogue aimed at mutual decision making, goal setting, and a focus on learning. The process creates space for Aboriginal voices to make meaningful contributions to decisions about their children's education.

Aboriginal student achievement is tracked and measured against non-Aboriginal student achievement by the BC Ministry of Education (BC Ministry of Education, 2007). The numbers are often interpreted within deficit framework that ignores the social and environmental factors that contribute to student achievement. A “closing the achievement gap” approach is not helpful because standard education measures based on socially stratified values may have no relevance for Aboriginal students or their families (Williams, 2008). For example, “The organization of school knowledge, the hidden curriculum and the representation of difference in texts and school practices all contain discourses which have serious implications for indigenous students as well as for other minority ethnic groups” (Smith, L. T., 1999, p. 11).

Western approaches to learning have historically excluded Indigenous knowledge systems. This study of the process required to develop an Enhancement Agreement—dialogue, engagement and relationship building—offers one opportunity to crack open our understanding of how Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, two very different ways of understanding the world, might co-exist. The process relies on establishing an environment of equality and respect to ensure school district administrators and Ministry of Education bureaucrats can enter collaborative space with Indigenous parents, education workers, students and teachers. Some participants describe

this as an “open-hearted and open-minded approach”; quite different from public education’s typical focus on statistically measurable outcomes.

A meaningful Enhancement Agreement requires truly collaborative relationships to put the needs of children at the centre of questions about education. Participants must work together to find ways to build mutual understanding about what student success means, what it would look like, how it could be measured, and what steps are needed to achieve the goals. Out of these processes are emerging new approaches to how educators understand, imagine and serve the educational needs of Aboriginal students, families and communities. This study shows that the dialogic process between Indigenous peoples and education policy-makers is changing the ways that BC school districts approach Aboriginal education and could potentially translate into significant shifts for Aboriginal students, families, communities, the educators that serve them, and school populations in general.

A review of Enhancement Agreement texts since 1999 shows that working relationships between school districts and the Aboriginal peoples and communities in their catchments are changing. Recent Enhancement Agreements are framed in more inclusive language; involve broader urban Aboriginal communities; and use a holistic framework to define and articulate student success. By July 2010, fifty of the Province’s sixty school districts had signed agreements with the Aboriginal communities and organization in their catchments. A few of these are now in a second or third five-year agreement. Virtually all districts in the province are now working toward, creating, or implementing an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

The decision to look at the relationship building process of creating Enhancement Agreements emerged out of my undergraduate research on obstacles to post-secondary education for Aboriginal students. I describe the origin of the present study, steps taken to understand the topic, and data collection in Chapter 2, *The Research Journey*.

The study is grounded in Indigenous methodology, a perspective that honours Indigenous world views and processes of knowledge acquisition. A secondary framework, Institutional Ethnography, excavates the ways that Indigenous experience gets organized within public education settings in British Columbia. These epistemological foundations are elaborated in Chapter 3, *Two Understandings of Lived Experience: Indigenous Methodology and Institutional Ethnography*.

In Chapter 4, *Colonial History: Education Policy*, I explore the policy structures relevant to Aboriginal education in Canada: the Indian Act; bifurcated federal/provincial jurisdiction regarding the education of Status Indians; and how these structures organize First Nations students' education experience (one quite unlike that of non-Aboriginal students). The social relations embedded in these policy structures cannot be ignored in any attempt to understand current developments in Aboriginal Education.

Chapter 5, *Ways of Knowing, Teaching and Learning*, describes Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning, and the colonial processes of suppression carried out in the religious, educational and social institutions of Canada. Indigenous peoples place a high value on the processes of teaching and learning. Children are cherished. Two world views collided when colonial governments began to impose Western education on Indigenous communities. The processes of colonization began with mission schools in the 1600's. Western education models actively suppressed traditional Indigenous

processes of knowledge translation from elders to children. This direct attempt to assimilate the Indigenous children to Western² ways of life brought painful disruption to Aboriginal social organization, family ties, language transmission, and learning systems. This chapter situates the research within areas of scholarship relevant to the issues I explore in this study: fundamental differences in the values and organizational paradigms of Indigenous knowledge systems and social organization and Western approaches. The discussion provides a context to understand the cultural clash that Indigenous peoples experience within imposed colonial and modern education systems. This research looks at a policy framework that could make space for Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning within Western Education systems.

I recount the findings of the interviews and fieldwork in Chapter 6, *Working Together: The Process of Developing an Enhancement Agreement in Riverbend³ School District*. I explored peoples' lived experience through interviews with key participants in Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement processes, observed community forums in a school developing their second Enhancement Agreement, and attended a naming ceremony.

The social organization of Western education requires that all important decisions be rendered into text. In Chapter 7, *Making Dialogue Actionable Through Textual Mediation*, I analyze the rendering of the Riverbend Enhancement Agreement Process into the text that will now guide decision-making for the next five years. I compare the process I witnessed with the text of the school district's first Enhancement Agreement in

² Western refers to the knowledge systems and values characteristic of social systems originating in Europe. "It is the comprehensive repository of the Western experience that wills into being intellectual, political, economic, cultural, and social constructs of Western society and is therefore embedded within all the standing disciplines of the Western academy" (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffrey, p.5, 2004).

³ Riverbend is a pseudonym.

2003. Riverbend School District's second Enhancement Agreement goes much further to include Aboriginal voices, and Aboriginal ways of knowing. Aboriginal people in the community were primary creators of the Enhancement Agreement text, language, goals and measures.

In Chapter 8: *Broader Context: Enhancement Agreement Developments in BC*, I look at all the Enhancement Agreements completed in BC to find evidence of changing relationships in other school districts.

Chapter 9: *Interspace: Finding Ways for Two World Views to Co-exist* synthesizes the study findings and implications relative to topics explored throughout the thesis. I return to earlier discussions to find connections between the two very different ways of understanding the world as examined here.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements process presents an opportunity to create dialogue within an environment which equally honours both knowledge systems. This study of that process adds to our understanding of mutually collaborative policy-making efforts in situations where people from different social systems must manage the process of working together toward a common goal. The findings will be useful to Aboriginal communities, educators, activists, and School Districts involved in developing Enhancement Agreements in BC. Policy makers across all levels of government might make use of these findings to build collaborative relationships with Aboriginal peoples. People working on Enhancement Agreements demonstrate that it is possible for policy-makers' to listen to, truly hear, and include Aboriginal voices in decisions that affect them and affect all Canadians.

Chapter 2 The Research Journey

In this chapter I describe my location in the research process, the research plan, data collection procedures, and analytical approaches. This account of the research methods provides an orientation to the findings, described in the following chapters.

Researcher Location

I am a descendant of European settlers. Lured by the promise of “free land”, my maternal and paternal great grandparents entered Canada from the Ukraine and from Norway via the United States to Alberta in the early 20th century. Each family took up a homestead traditional territories of Plains and Woodlands Cree, an area then controlled by the Dominion of Canada under Treaty #6. These beginnings situate my life in relatively privileged circumstances in Canadian society, and have bearing on my standpoint as a researcher.

My concerns about Aboriginal students’ experience within institutions of public education began in the mid 1990’s, when I learned about the widespread impact of residential schools on Aboriginal people, families and communities. This understanding helped me to recognize the deep contradictions in Canada’s relationship with Aboriginal peoples. I developed an interest in learning about the particular social relations underlying these contradictions, and what is needed to bring social change. An undergraduate program, with a focus on social research and Indigenous Studies, introduced me to a new perspective on the history of colonization; revealed details of Indigenous struggles and efforts to resist assimilation; and shifted my understanding of my own place in the social fabric of North America.

Understanding the invisible privilege inherent in my everyday life shed new light on the relationship between Euro-settler privilege and the often unacknowledged sacrifice of the homelands of Indigenous peoples in North America. I began to question the “common sense” understanding of Canada as an egalitarian and just society. I gained new understanding that ignited a desire to *help* Indigenous peoples. I also learned that helping approaches grounded in assimilationist principles and agendas produced primarily disastrous results.

As a non-Indigenous person I needed to embark on a process of self-reflection and education prior to taking up this inquiry. I reviewed the emerging literature by Indigenous scholars on Indigenous ways of doing research, with and for Indigenous peoples. Chapter 3 discusses these aspects of Indigenous Methodology in more detail.

I explored my own location through a directed study that queried the power dynamics of *helping relationships* in Aboriginal contexts (Lowen, 2003). The central finding of that study showed that, from an Indigenous perspective, whether or not *help* is needed, how *help* is offered and whether *help* is useful, is most effectively evaluated by the person who receives help, not the person providing it. Simply having a goal to *be a helper*, as an individual or an organization, does not qualify one to evaluate the need for, or the effectiveness of the *helping* relationship. Key themes showed that to *help* as an ally requires a deep process of self-reflection that involves looking into and resolving the painful places of one’s own life and developing an ability to compassionately listen to oneself and to others. I found that the person or people who received help are the best judges of whether the assistance is effective. I learned that an ally is a *learner* who has the ability to stand *beside* the helping process, and not in front of it. Participants

emphasized that the ability to listen is more critical than the power to act. A truly supportive relationship must recognize Aboriginal peoples' own capacity to explore and implement the revitalization of their social structures. Reflecting on these findings, I found my interest in *helping* shift to an interest in *developing a relationship as an ally with* Aboriginal peoples. This became the foundation for my research.

Participants in the 2003 study were primarily self-identified Aboriginal adult post secondary students. A central theme threading through their stories made me curious about why these capable students, now completing undergraduate and graduate degrees as adults, were told in high school that they “were not capable of academic study”. I learned that the particular obstacles that effectively steered Aboriginal students away from post secondary studies are embedded in the institutional delivery of public schooling. I took up an undergraduate thesis on the topic.

The study (Lowen, 2005) identified a disturbing and prevalent discourse within the public education system that assumes an inherent deficiency in Aboriginal students' academic performance. This discourse has a powerful effect on educators' expectations of Indigenous students in their classrooms, on Indigenous student's sense of self-efficacy, and their sense of belonging in the school environment. The study illustrated this point of departure has an effect on the organization of Aboriginal students' trajectory through the public education system in British Columbia.

During data collection for the 2005 study, I completed a course titled *The History of Aboriginal Education* (Williams, 2004). Dr. Williams is a member of the Lil'wat First Nation of Mount Currie, BC. She holds the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning, is an assistant Professor in Aboriginal Education and

Linguistics, and is Program Director of Aboriginal Education at the University of Victoria. Williams is the former Director of the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch in the BC Ministry of Education, and has worked with the Vancouver School Board as a First Nations Education Specialist (Williams, 2008). William's own Indigenous knowledge and world views originate within the oral tradition, the stories of her ancestors that were based on an understanding of the relationship of humans to the family, the earth, the universe, and the spirit world. Her experiences in an education system that failed to recognize Indigenous students' inherent cultural knowledge and abilities motivated her life-long work to ensure that Indigenous worldviews are honoured, included and taught within the academy and communities (Haysom, 2006; Williams, 2006).

In lectures on the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements, Williams showed how the process evolved from an originally "top down", institutionally-driven directive into a collaborative process involving community members, school district administrators, and Ministry of Education staff. School boards and communities worked together as learners to find ways to improve educational experiences and outcomes for Indigenous students. I recognized this as a process that might also identify and remove some of the obstacles Aboriginal students face in BC public schools (Lowen 2003, 2005). Enhancement Agreements had potential to engage educators and Indigenous peoples in a hopeful process toward systemic change in the delivery of education in BC. This sparked my interest. Dr. Williams suggested that this new collaborative approach to relationships between people working in the education system and Aboriginal peoples is an important process of social change that should be documented. Such a study would add to our

understanding of how the collaborative process of creating an Enhancement Agreement might advance a social justice paradigm in the institutional relationships between Aboriginal communities and providers of public education in British Columbia.

The work of D.E. Smith (1990; 1993; 1998/1987; 2005; 2006) provided a potential approach. Smith's Institutional Ethnography is aimed at understanding how the practices of power operate to organize and shape social relations. According to D.E. Smith (1998/1987), practices of power must be made recognizable in order to unearth the voice, and to emancipate the experience of everyday lives that are shaped by them. I recognized a possible fit between the research approach D.E. Smith developed and an inquiry into the Enhancement Agreements development process. Dr. Williams and I agreed to take the project forward. From my location as a descendant of Euro-settler Canadians I had an interest in documenting this promising and relatively new process for improving dialogue and understanding between Indigenous peoples and newcomers.

I began data collection in the spring of 2007. Enhancement Agreement processes were underway in each of BC's sixty school districts: thirty-five in the implementation stage; three in a second five year agreement; and twenty-five in the planning or draft stages of a first agreement. By April 2010, forty-nine School Districts have Enhancement Agreements: five in a second term, one in a third term, six at the draft stage and five planning to develop an EA (BC Ministry of Education, 2010).

Getting Grounded in the Literature

This research approach is grounded in the principles of Indigenous methodologies, and draws on Institutional Ethnography as a methodological framework. I

reviewed the work of scholars in both fields. In Chapter 3, I describe the two approaches, and how they collectively are used in this research.

Scholars querying the purpose and power relations embedded in Western education (Battiste, 1998; Cardinal, 1969; Ermine, 2009; Hare & Barman, 2006; Williams 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008; Wotherspoon, 2003), and an emerging examination of ‘whiteness’ as an ideological framework (Apple, 2004; Fine 2004) informed my understanding of unequal social relations and the very different approaches to education within Western institutional and Indigenous traditions.

Research Plan

This research set out to explore three central questions:

- a) *Did the nature of relationships between Aboriginal and policy communities change during the process of developing these consensus-based agreements? If so, how did they change?*
- b) *Did the process bring a shift in established practices of power in the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and education policy makers?*
- c) *What dysfunction or disjuncture is visible, or invisible, within the process of creating and implementing the agreements?*

Thesis advisor Lorna Williams and key staff from the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch at the BC Ministry of Education provided support and advice on initial project design. We identified potential community members, school district officials, or ministry officials who could contribute to the research. We considered potential research sites based on location, particular features of the process that might illustrate a relationship building process, and community interest in participating in a research study. We also discussed the scope and timing of data collection.

We identified three distinct stages of Enhancement Agreement development underway in the province. These were: beginning to develop a first agreement; implementing a first agreement; and developing or implementing a second Enhancement Agreement. Each offered unique and important opportunities for study. I developed Table 2-1: Analysis of Data Collection Strategy to organize my thoughts, focus the decision-making process about what could be learned from each data collection opportunity, and set some boundaries on the scope of data collection.

Table 2.1 Analysis of Data Collection Strategy

Enhancement Agreement Development Stage	What is known:	Questions that can be asked:
Beginning stages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling with the process now • These are the resistant groups that delayed their entry into the process • Struggles to find common ground are churning now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the roots of resistance? • What obstacles remain? • Are transformations occurring in the process of negotiation? • Do the parties envision spaces in which they can find common ground? • What 'undiscussables' emerge? • How do 'undiscussables' complicate the process
Implementing new agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory of the struggle to find a meeting ground are fresh in mind, but matured • Now coming to face the limitations of what has been put in place • Policy implications become visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did they meet these struggles? • What were the 'watershed' moments that moved the process through obstacles? • What is working well in the implementation process? • What are the roadblocks to implementing the vision? • What are the unexpected outcomes?
Implementing 2nd 5 year agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process began in a different time and place • Parity discourse in original agreements • Performance awards for parity achievement • A way to end targeted funding: Parity awards designed to progress to no financial benefit • Original agreements included only reserve communities • New agreements include urban communities • The struggle for inclusion, • No single group could control the process. Everyone had to be involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is it working to include Urban Aboriginal populations? • How do you have a voice legitimately there, but not representing a larger group? IE: teachers represented "teachers" but no the teacher's union

I planned to focus on the relationship-building process of developing an Enhancement Agreement in one school district. Enhancement Agreement Coordinators from the Ministry of Education introduced me to staff and community members in Riverbend School district as they were beginning to develop a second Enhancement Agreement. They invited me to observe the process of creating the Agreement. I aimed to interview participants representing the diverse locations within the process including Aboriginal community members, School District personnel, and Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch staff. An analysis of the completed Enhancement Agreement would provide some indication of how these relationships came to be mediated in text.

Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical review and approval from University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Review Board (HREB) (Certificate of Approval Protocol No. 07-363), and Riverbend⁴ school district. Some preliminary data were collected in the fall of 2007 as a field research project under HREB Ethics Review of Course-based Research approval for SPP 519/590 *Theory for Policy and Practice* with Dr. D.E Smith.

The UVic HREB Notice of Ethical review found potential limits to confidentiality in the research plan to gather data from one school district site. They noted that participant anonymity may be compromised if respondents were identified by their social roles, ethnicity or institutional affiliation. I revised the Participant Consent Forms to highlight these limitations and mitigate this risk. This risk proved a barrier to

⁴ “Riverbend” is a pseudonym. The School District requested they not be identified.

participation for some individuals who verbally agreed to be interviewed; but failed to confirm appointments after reviewing the consent form.

Riverbend School District required an additional ethical review process. They allowed the research, but limited research activities to participation in public forums and ceremonies related to the development of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements. They approved individual interviews with staff members provided they take place outside of business hours and away from school premises. The School Board denied permission to conduct focus groups citing a concern that group interviews might pose a potential breach of confidentiality between staff. These limitations necessitated a broader approach to ethnographic data collection, described in the following section.

According to L.T. Smith, (1999), ethical issues framed in Western definitions of individuality and ‘social good’ may not recognize Indigenous rights, views of community, and forms of knowledge appropriately. Aboriginal communities and research/academic institutions are developing new ethical standards for conducting research with Aboriginal communities to address these issues (CIHR, 2005; Clayoquot Alliance for Research, Education and Training, 2003; Ermine, et al. 2004, 2005; Namgis First Nation, 2003; John, 2003, Interagency Panel on Research Ethics, 2009; UVic IGOV Programs, 2003). The new protocols require researchers in the complex Indigenous research environment to honour principles of partnership, participation and protection.

As this particular research process would not: engage a singular Indigenous community; be conducted on particular First Nations, Métis or Inuit lands; or seek specific cultural heritage, unique Indigenous knowledge, or personal information—it would be inappropriate to establish a formal community research partnership with any

one community (Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics, November 2009). In the absence of a formal community partnership, the ethical principles for research developed by Indigenous peoples, discussed in more detail in the Indigenous Methodology section of Chapter 3, served as guiding principles.

Ethnographic Data

I collected ethnographic data from a broad range of locations. I interviewed four key participants and conducted one focus group. As a participant/observer I attended five community events in Riverbend school district and three provincial meetings involving the Ministry of Education, school districts, community members and the Provincial Enhancement Agreements Advisory Board. As the process of data collection began, participants engaged in Enhancement Agreement processes in other communities volunteered to be interviewed. The multiple perspectives of people situated in different locations in the process provided an understanding of the complexities at work in the process of developing Enhancement Agreements Table 2-2: Ethnographic Data provides a complete list of field experiences and interviews.

Table 2.2 Ethnographic Data

Participant (s)	Format / Date	Documentation
Parent and EA advisory committee member (Aboriginal person) Seaside ⁵ School District	Face to face interview	Audio recording transcribed
Aboriginal Program teacher (Aboriginal person) Riverbend School District	Face to face interview & follow up phone call	Audio recording, failed. Field notes recorded next day
Aboriginal Program Administrator (non-Aboriginal person) Riverbend School District	Interview and phone calls	Audio recording, transcribed (interview) Field notes (phone calls)
Enhancements Agreements Coordinator (non-Aboriginal person) Ministry of Education	Interview, phone calls and meetings	Audio recording, transcribed (interview), Field notes (phone calls and meetings)
Aboriginal Program teachers from various locations across BC (6 Aboriginal people, 1 non-Aboriginal person)	Focus group interview	Audio recording transcribed
Community members, Riverside School District staff, Ministry of Education staff	Community forum November 2007	Field notes
Community members, Riverside School District staff	Community forum June 2008	Field notes
Community members, Riverside School District staff	Naming ceremony November 2008	Field notes
Community members, Riverside School District staff, Ministry of Education staff	Community forum February 2009	Field notes
Community members, Riverside School District staff,	Ceremony: completed agreement June 2010	Field notes
Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch staff, Aboriginal community members, School District staff from across BC	Shared Learnings conference November 2008	Field notes Presentation of preliminary findings
Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch staff, Advisory committee members	Advisory meeting November 2008	Field notes
Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch staff, Advisory committee members	Advisory meeting November 2009	Field notes

I established an interview guide based on the focused conversation method (Stanfield, 2000). The guide provided a consistent, flexible thread of inquiry that allowed informants to add to or direct their discussion toward issues important to them. In addition to direct data collection, I participated in Indigenous community events and attended conferences related to Aboriginal Education and research. These formal sessions as well as the informal conversations with conference delegates and speakers helped broaden my critical understanding and contributed to my contextual understanding of the

⁵ a pseudonym

issues Aboriginal families and students face within the education system. These are detailed in Table 2-3: Contextual Experience, below.

Table 2.3 Contextual Experience

Context	Format	Documentation
First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) Conference, Vancouver, BC	School District presentation on their experience of implementing their first Enhancement Agreement November 2007	Field notes, hand outs
Canadian Society for the Study of Education Conference, Vancouver, BC	Inaugural meeting June 2008	Field notes
First Nations Education Research Conference, Winnipeg, Manitoba	Presented preliminary findings of my thesis, received valuable comments and feedback, attended sessions related to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, challenges faced by Indigenous students and families in public schooling and one presentation by a Provincial Ministry of Education on standardized assessment tools. April 2009	Field notes, handouts, presentation
Ethics of Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples, University of Victoria	Presentations and discussions	Field notes and handouts
Presentation	The Fabric of Indigenous Research & Research Ethics: Weaving the Strands of Traditional & Contemporary Knowledge with Research by Raven Sinclair, July 2008	Notes
First Salmon Ceremony and Seafood Festival	Tsawout First Nation June 2009	Memory and photographs
Camas Pit Cook	Camosun College and Songhees Land Management Department	Memory and photographs
Kaay Lingaay Cultural Centre in Haida Gwaii	interpretive tour of poles and Haida carving	Field notes and photographs

Textual Data

An Institutional Ethnography approach, described in more detail in Chapter 3, sets out to expose linkages between different kinds and different levels of data (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). First level data are in human interaction and come from field work and interviews with people involved in the situation. Second level data are based texts typically produced in locations far removed from peoples' experiential accounts. This

study maintains a focus on the actual production of a text that is explicitly rooted in people's experience. First level data provided clues to the connections between participants' lived experience the actual production of an Enhancement Agreement in Riverbend School district. From Riverbend School. Second level data began with minutes of the community meetings related to EA development, and detailed analysis of each of Riverbend's two Enhancement Agreements. Details of this analysis are reported in Chapter 7, *Making Dialogue Actionable Through Textual Mediation*.

I also studied the texts of each Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement signed in BC since 1999 (available on the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Agreements Branch web site <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/>). From this site I also accessed and read School Districts' annual reports on their Enhancement Agreements; Aboriginal student performance data annual reports (province wide); Aboriginal Education funding policy directives, and "Shared Learning" reports (a compendium of successful practices in developing Enhancement Agreements).

An additional source of information flowed from a 'Google alert' search term "Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement" alerting me to current news items, press releases and blog posts related to Enhancement Agreements.

Analytic Process

The analytic process involved a series of reflective and analytical log notes which I re-read, reviewed and sorted along with the data into eight bankers' boxes, described in Table 2-4 and illustrated in Figure 2-1.

Table 2.4 Analytic Sort

General Textual Data: related to the EAs, events and processes in BC and Canada, including measurement systems	Specific Textual Data: Specific Enhancement Agreements	Ethnographic Data: Transcripts, fields notes, communication	Data analysis: notes, writing, reflections, papers, conferences, classes
Methodology Literature: Indigenous methodologies and Institutional Ethnography	Peer Reviewed Literature: Indigenous knowledges; Aboriginal Education; School accountability, improvement, networks, collaborative processes; whiteness	Media: Press releases, news stories, blogs, web reports related to Aboriginal Education, Enhancement Agreements and general representations of Indigenous Peoples	Grey Literature: Published reports related to Enhancement Agreements specifically, and Aboriginal Education in BC generally.

Figure 2.1 Analytic Sort Process

From this sorting process I formalized a system of analysis and synthesis. At this stage the primary questions of the data were:

- *Is the material comprehensive?*
- *How best to approach the material?*
- *What might be missing?*



I created an inventory of: field notes, transcripts and reflective logs for analysis. I considered the breadth of locations in the Enhancement Agreement process and created a detailed list (See Table 2-5).

Table 2.5 Ethnographic Locations

Location	Evidence
Ministry of Education Aboriginal Enhancements Branch	Interview, field notes from meetings and phone calls
School Districts from across the province	Field notes of Provincial Advisory meeting and Provincial District meeting
Aboriginal teachers from across the province	Focus group transcript and field notes
Local school district Aboriginal Program Administrator	Interview transcript, field notes, meetings and phone calls
Aboriginal program teacher	Interview field notes
Aboriginal parent	Transcript
Enhancement Agreement advisory committee member, local school district	Transcript
School district/ community members	Field notes of meetings, forums and ceremonies

I reviewed and organized the electronic data files into four folders: ethnographic transcripts and field notes; Enhancement Agreement texts; documents related to specific Enhancement Agreements (reports, minutes, contracts, policy statements); and analysis logs. Then I established a systematic analytical structure to review the literature, reflect on my location, and plan the next steps. With the support of Marge Reitsma-Street, the methodological advisor on my committee, I framed the approach detailed in Table 2-6 Analytic Process, below.

Table 2.6 Analytic Process

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read through: transcript or set of field notes. 2. Informal free write: what I learned from the transcript/field note; things that strike me as important. 3. Reread: the free writes. 4. Developing themes: Note issues or elements that emerge as significant to the process of developing relationships, building relationships, and applying those relationships to the development of an enhancement agreement. 5. Organize themes: Create a table of contents of the emerging themes. 6. Reread the transcripts and field notes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Purposefully gather evidence and examples of the identified themes b. Colour code with highlight marker c. Identify new themes emerging through the reflective read process

Drawing on transcripts and field notes for descriptive detail I created a series of “theme” documents. These became a repository of my emerging thought on the findings. In a second level of analysis, I created a sort-able table of themes. This provided the ability to sort create groups of related themes, and surface common areas of concern.

Textual data analysis occurred at three levels. First, building on the field work and interviews conducted with Riverbend Enhancement Agreement participants, I examined the minutes of each community forum held during the development of the Agreement. These documents confirmed the breadth of participants, and processes I witnessed, and provided details of meetings I did not attend. Second, I compared the 2003 and 2010 Riverbend Enhancement Agreements. I examined the presentation of the text, articulation of processes and participants, principles and purposes, and goals and measures to look for evidence of change from one agreement to the next. Third, I examined all current and expired Enhancement Agreements to look for evidence of emerging relationships between Aboriginal communities and school districts. I selected key features, common to all agreements: Statement of Purpose, Principles and Goals to find clues to levels of inclusion and engagement; emergence of Aboriginal voice; changes in forms of language; shifts in what goals and values are prioritized; and how those are measured. This meta analysis provided a useful overview of how Agreements are developing across the province. The results are reported in Chapter 8, *Broader Context: Enhancement Agreement Developments in BC*.

Chapter 3 Two Ways of Understanding Lived Experience

This inquiry employs two epistemological perspectives, Indigenous Methodology and Institutional Ethnography, to make sense of the layers of complexity in the process of developing the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements. Indigenous researchers have developed research methods developed by (and for) Indigenous peoples that now inform national guidelines for such research in Canada. Their work anchors this research in the standpoint of Indigenous peoples' concerns about their children's education in public schools. Institutional ethnography provides a framework to examine the institutional processes that generate lived experience within an Aboriginal standpoint. Together, these approaches inform this effort to discover if and how Enhancement Agreements can shift Aboriginal student's experience of public schooling in BC. I outline Indigenous approaches to research first, then discuss Institutional Ethnography, and conclude this chapter with a discussion of the confluence that brings the two approaches together in this study.

Indigenous Approaches to Research

Indigenous people identify the history of Western research as a significant site of struggle between the two world views (Smith, L.T., 1999). In traditional settings, Indigenous systems of knowledge acquisition account for spiritual as well as empirical existence and are integral to all aspects of daily life (Atleo, 2004; 2005). Currently Indigenous scholars are developing integrated approaches to research that address their concerns about research processes and knowledge translation. (Smith, L.T., 1999).

Issues and Concerns

Indigenous peoples recognize knowledge as a sacred means to serve and uphold the community's interests. Specifically selected people trained as knowledge bearers to ensure that a community's knowledge base is transmitted with ethical and accurate continuity. In contrast, scientific approaches prioritize objective distance, and empirical testing (Cram, 1997). Indigenous scholars identify several problems for Indigenous peoples involved in Western research approaches, outlined in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Indigenous Research Concerns

Indigenous Concern	Common legacy of Western Research
Research as a Tool of Oppression	<p>Social research findings have been used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to advance the notion that Indigenous populations were disappearing people ▪ to justify the ideological assumptions of scientific racism ▪ to inform dominant ideological assumptions and legitimize policy structures that harmed Indigenous people's well-being ▪ to prioritize the goals of advancing settler societies and progressively restrict Indigenous peoples' access to their homelands
Power to Define	<p>Historically, Western researchers tend to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ prioritize research questions of interest to themselves ▪ retain all benefits of the research product ▪ exclude Aboriginal participants from collaborative power sharing processes that would allow solutions to 'problems' to emerge from within Aboriginal communities
Pathological Assumptions	<p>Statistical results interpreted through a deficit-based lens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ignore underlying social conditions ▪ fail to acknowledge Aboriginal people's strength, resiliency and cultural connectedness
Inappropriate Interpretations of Research Findings	<p>Universal, objective, un-biased research approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ are grounded in uni-cultural norms ▪ lack the necessary complexity to interpret findings in Indigenous contexts ▪ risk culturally misinterpreting results ▪ may make inappropriate choices for data collection and interpretation
Mis-representation of Indigenous Knowledge	<p>Oversimplified research findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ commodify Indigenous knowledge ▪ increase potential for misconstrued cultural practices to become accepted as 'truth'
Misappropriation of Indigenous Knowledge	<p>Anthropologists removed useful and important ceremonial and everyday goods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ many of which were still in use, and ▪ important to the everyday life, governance structures and spiritual life

(Smith, L.T., 1999; Harkin, 2001; Cram 1997; Cole, 1985; Bishop, 1994, 1999; ITHA, 2007; Cardinal, 1969)

Principles of Indigenous Approaches to Research

Indigenous protocols for research take an integrated approach to cultural protocols, values and behaviours (Smith, L.T., 1999). An Indigenous orientation ensures

respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful research is conducted for, with and by Indigenous peoples (Smith, LT, 1999; Porsanger, 2004). Indigenous researchers recognize a deep kinship between everyone involved in the process (Bishop, 1999). The approach is based in community, and involves community members as researchers and knowledge gatherers. “For Indigenous peoples, this means being able to make decisions about the research agenda and methodologies for themselves without any outside influence” (Porsanger, 2004, p. 108).

Indigenous communities are concerned that the research process honours and accounts for the lives and views of Indigenous peoples who are involved in the study (Smith, L. T., 1999). Indigenous activists ask researchers to consider research in terms of who owns it, whose interests will it serve, and who will benefit. These questions involve who frames the scope and designs the research process; who carries out the research work; who will write the results; and how they will be shared. Larger questions concern the researcher’s capacity to undertake the work with a clear spirit, good heart and self awareness. Communities want to know if the researcher will actually be able to provide practical, useful help if necessary (Smith, L.T., 1999). Table 3.2 summarizes key principles Indigenous scholars identify as essential to respectful and ethical research involving Indigenous peoples.

Table 3.2 Principles of Indigenous Approaches to Research

Research Agenda	An Indigenous frame of reference for research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • located within an Indigenous world view • accepts Indigenous language, culture, knowledge and values • is designed and controlled by Indigenous people • tells Indigenous stories in people's own voice • is grounded in social responsibility, healing, decolonization, and spiritual recovery
Relationship	Importance and meaning of relationship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous participants included in decision-making process • collectively determined agendas • there is a critical analysis of unequal power relations • research partnerships between Indigenous communities, the academy and independent settings
Responsibility	Researchers are responsible to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and use culturally safe practice • Be aware of conflicts between Western and Indigenous Knowledge ideals • Understand, respect and protect the integrity of Indigenous knowledge • Give credit to owners of Indigenous knowledge
Accountability	Researchers who are accountable to Indigenous peoples & community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use culturally relevant forms of accountability • communicate research results back to the owners of the knowledge • use appropriate language and form to communicate research results • protect the intellectual property rights of the Indigenous people protect Indigenous knowledge from misinterpretation and misuse • support research participants autonomy
Research Product	The products of research with Indigenous peoples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance the interests of Indigenous peoples (over the interest of the researcher) • benefit the Indigenous community • benefit all research participants • produce publications that support Aboriginal community's needs

(Smith, L.T., 1999; Cram, 1999; Bishop, 1999; Porsanger, 2004; Redwing & Hill, 2007; ITHA, 2007)

Institutional Response

Public research institutions are obliged to acknowledge and support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in their effort and desire to maintain their collective identities and cultural continuities (Interagency Panel on Research Ethics, 2009). The 1982 Constitution Act recognized and affirmed the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal peoples, including Indian (First Nations), Inuit and Métis ensuring that Indigenous peoples do have a right to decide whether and how research can be conducted in their communities.

Frameworks to guide researchers are available from a number of sources. First Nations people developed the principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession

(OCAP) as a tool to establish research conditions that are beneficial benefits to all participants (First Nations Centre, 2007). The principles are listed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 OCAP Principles

O wnership:	Refers to the relationship of a First Nations community to its cultural knowledge/data/information. The principle states that a community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his/her personal information. It is distinctive from stewardship [or possession].
C ontrol:	The aspirations and rights of First Nations to maintain and regain control of all aspects of their lives and institutions include research, information and data. The principle of 'control' asserts that First Nations peoples, their communities and representative bodies are within their rights in seeking to control over all aspects of research and information management processes which impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a particular research project-from conception to completion. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on.
A ccess:	First Nations people must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities, regardless of where it is currently held. The principle also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols.
P ossession:	While 'ownership' identifies the relationship between a people and their data in principle, possession or stewardship is more literal. Although not a condition of ownership per se, possession (of data) is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected. When data owned by one party is in the possession of another, there is a risk of breach or misuse. This is particularly important when trust is lacking between the owner and the possessor.

(First Nations Centre, 2007, pp. 4-5)

On Vancouver Island, BC the Inter Tribal Health Authority adopted the 4 R's Principles of Research, drawing on Kirkness & Bernhardt's (1991) work in education. See Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 The Four R Principles of Research

R espect:	is demonstrated toward First Nations Peoples' cultures and communities by valuing their diverse knowledge of health matters and respect towards health science knowledge that contributes to First Nations community health and wellness.
R elevance:	to culture and community is critical for the success of First Nations health training and research.
R eciprocity:	is accomplished through a two-way process of learning and research exchange. Both community and university benefit from effective training and research relationships.
R esponsibility:	is empowerment and is fostered through active and rigorous engagement and participation.

(ITHA, 2007, p. 3)

Indigenous researchers and scholars worked with the Canadian Institute of Health Research, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and National Science and Engineering Research Council to establish specific principles in the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCP) on research ethics. The statement formally acknowledges Indigenous knowledge systems, and ensures Indigenous people are represented at every stage of research—from planning to dissemination. The TCP identifies core ethical principles for research. These aim to establish mutual trust, open communication and address power imbalances among all participants (Interagency Panel on Research Ethics, 2009).

Issues raised by Indigenous methodologies bring into question whether it is culturally appropriate for non-Indigenous researchers to participate in Indigenous research (Cram, 1997; Bishop, 1994). Hope for inclusion of both views lies in the willingness to look at things in a new light. Indigenous methodologies provide a process for Indigenous researchers to work from Indigenous perspectives, use Indigenous epistemologies, and undertake research that is relevant and meaningful to Indigenous peoples and communities (Smith, L. T. 1999; Porsanger, 2004).

An Indigenous epistemological approach moves away from social pathology, deficit-based research agendas. Non- Indigenous researchers need these guidelines to learn how to enter research settings appropriately, and engage with community members to determine what questions will be asked, how data will be collected, interpreted and shared. Bishop suggests researchers learn to understand their role from within the group involved in the study. The process requires humility, and sensitivity to the ancient cultural scripts of Aboriginal people (Atleo, M. 2008, Feb).

Institutional Ethnography: A Mode of Inquiry

Indigenous institutions are traditionally organized and reproduced in face-to-face relations. Colonization brought new forms of social organization into the Indigenous context. In this inquiry, Institutional Ethnography (IE) provides a launch pad to investigate particular documentary and institutional practices of social relations that penetrate and coordinate Indigenous lived experience in the present day.

Institutional Ethnography as a method of inquiry originated in the work of feminist sociologist D.E. Smith (1990). Smith began with her own experience of the ways that institutional orders of society operate to exclude and silence women's voices. Working as a sociologist in the university setting, she saw that the knowledge structures of the discipline did not properly account for her experiences as a woman and a mother. She described her experience in the academic setting as "practicing embodiment on the terrain of the disembodied" (Smith, D.E, 2005, p. 13).

For Smith, bringing the awareness of her mother/woman experiences into the sociological site from which she did her world-work, brought the social relations of academia into view, and helped her realize that the two spheres were disconnected. The 'disembodied' sphere (sociology) claimed to be a site of knowledge, but it knew nothing of the 'embodied' experiences of half of the population of human beings. At the same time, the knowledge claims of sociology informed the organization of practices that effect the lives of the embodied (women, mothers, wives). The framework proves useful as a tool to excavate the organizing features of lived experience in many settings. The following sections discuss several key conceptual tools Smith developed to investigate the experience of her everyday life.

Problematic

According to Smith (2005), the terrain on which everyday life is experienced is subject to interventions that come from outside. These influences may transform the daily routines and ordinariness of local life even when they have no logical relevance within everyday life. In an IE study, these sites of struggle are transposed into a *problematic* for investigation. The problematic provides an origin point to explore the social relations that coordinate an individual's activities and experience. "A problematic is a territory to be discovered, not a question that is concluded in its answer" (Smith, 2005, p. 41). For example, the problematic of this study is Aboriginal students' experience in schooling.

Social Relations

Social relations describe the ordinary everyday activities of individuals. Peoples' own decisions and actions are sometimes unknowingly coordinated with events and actions that extend beyond their local settings into sites where power is held. Social relations are integral to social organization. For example, the social relations of schooling organize the experiences that students and their families have in public schools.

Social Organization

Social organization describes the interplay and purposeful coordination of local social relations with extra-local entities. These relations are transmitted through textual accounts that are recorded in one site, and form the basis of decision-making by people who work in another location and are not connected to the original event. For example, the account recorded within the Enhancement Agreements is transferred through School District records to the Ministry of Education. In this way the goals of an Enhancement Agreement enter into the social organization of schooling. Texts are discussed in more detail texts further on in this section.

Standpoint

Smith developed the concept of ‘standpoint’ as a methodological device that would make it possible to examine the realities of living within these organizational practices. Standpoint marks the place where an inquiry can begin to look at social relations from *within* to explore how they are actually coordinated. D.E. Smith (1990) posited that, looking into micro social relations provides analytical access to the macro relations that organize the actual experience of everyday life. This study begins in the standpoint of people working together to create an Enhancement Agreement.

Texts

An institutional field of action is organized and reproduced in a complex of work processes that are mediated by texts. Institutions develop documentary structures (often standardized forms) to collect particular forms of information, from which particular kinds of decisions are made. These standardized documents dictate what can be ‘known’ about a particular situation, event, experience or dynamic. Information is made to ‘fit into’ the check boxes or text boxes of a form. From this information decisions are made that govern the lives of and choices available to people in their everyday lives. Some examples of these forms are: Documents, reports, cases, applications, decisions, appeals, acceptances, messages, directives, records, credentials, policies, laws, contracts, offers, video surveillance, testimonials, inquiries, inquests, literature, evaluations, marks, transcripts, photographs, film, census and surveys.

Each text is a production of an event, situation, dynamic or occurrence between or among people in the process of everyday living. Texts reduce and condense the particulars of an event into a form that can be translated and transported to levels of authority that are removed from the actual experience. Yet in those levels of authority

reside the capacity to make and enact decisions and distribute or withhold resources. These decisions have an impact on the everyday lives of people in the situations where the text originated, or in similar situations far removed from where the decisions were originally made. Texts that are used in these decision-making processes are designed to collect specific kinds of information and in this way they can determine the focus of what is recorded and known about a particular situation (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

The ruling apparatus of contemporary capitalist societies are composed of institutions of administration, management, and professional authority that organize, regulate, and direct citizens' everyday activities. These relations of power are accomplished through the seemingly innocuous and often invisible use of texts and documents. For example, the proceedings of a meeting are organized based on a shared understanding of what constitutes the rules of conduct appropriate to the gathering. A documentary representation of the event enters into the official record as minutes or transcriptions or other forms which can be read, analyzed and discussed at a later point in time by individuals who may or may not have been present for the meeting. Some events, occurrences and exchanges that occur in the meeting are not recorded as relevant to the event. These may include breaks for lunch and the kinds of discussions that people share as they are milling about the room, communicating in relationship with each other. Therefore, it is only the 'text' of the meeting that can enter into the extra local relations of governance, accountability, policy making and implementation. The actual experiences of individual lives fall away—like flesh leaves the skeleton with the passing of time, we are left with bones to tell us the story.

Institutional Ethnography makes use of texts as an analytic device that gives entry into the social organization of power in the institutional structures that govern modern life.

One can begin with a particular text...but the analytic goal is to situate the text back into the action in which it is produced, circulated and read, and where it has consequences in time and space. ...Next...the inquiry focuses on how the text is “taken up” in unique and standardized ways. (Turner, 2006, p. 140)

According to Turner (2006), ethnography of institutions is possible because we can observe people’s actual practices of putting institutions together in the complex of work processes that produce organizational texts. The Enhancement Agreement process is observable in this way.

Relations of Ruling

According to D. E. Smith (1990), even when the world is disorderly and chaotic, people are always at work coordinating and co-ordering their activities. Western society is organized and kept organized by these documentary structures. A methodology which can account for local and particular experiences is necessary to reveal the ways that the power relations get reproduced through the cycle of document production and the actions and decisions that are activated through the production and communication processes. Ordinary people participate in the production of all of these forms of knowledge and through their participation produce the operations of ruling relations that transcend their everyday lives.

Smith developed the concept of ruling relations as a way of describing the complex of relations in which ‘what we do’ is ‘caught up and embedded’ in multiple

ways. Relations of ruling are constituted and organized by texts that are activated in institutional settings (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The concept of ruling relations gives a framework for discovery that will allow us to learn more about and take into account how these relations operate in everyday lives (Smith, 2007).

Relations of ruling are composed of socially organized, objectified forms of knowledge that can be easily transferred from site to site. We participate in the production of this power over us by our continued fulfilling of the duties of filling out the forms, application and reports. If we did not participate in these activities that uphold and perpetuate the relations of ruling, we would lose access to the resources, programs and activities and benefits of the social world we inhabit. Ruling relations arise out of human collaboration that subsequently becomes a power that exists over individuals.

Despite silencing and exclusion from the power structures, the relations of ruling embedded in institutional structures have had profound effects on the lives of humans who are systematically excluded from positions of influence within the relations of ruling; for example women, Indigenous people, visible immigrants, people with physical or mental health challenges.

Discourse

Though discourse is not explicitly an IE concept, understanding discourses and how they work is elemental to an IE inquiry. Discursive organization is accomplished through texts that purposively connect people to each other.

In this inquiry, Institutional Ethnography provides a launch pad to investigate particular documentary and institutional practices of historical and present day state and educational systems and their part in Aboriginal life. The method provides a foundation

to investigate how, in the process of colonization these practices have been used in an attempt to penetrate and coordinate Indigenous social systems that are traditionally organized and reproduced in face-to-face relations, and to understand how these processes may be shifting in the production of Enhancement Agreements.

Confluence: Methodological Reflections on Indigenous Methodology & Institutional Ethnography

This inquiry looks at the potential of the Enhancement Agreements to develop a different, and more active and deliberate way of participating in the relations of ruling; to infuse Indigenous values within the institution of education, and in the process change the experience of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples' experience of everyday life in the school system.

This study is possibly the first time that the work of Smith (D.E.) and Smith (L.T) have been paired and applied in a systematic fashion. On the strengths of these two maps, I embarked on this research. Working from both perspectives enriched and challenged the process.

The two approaches were congruent with this particular inquiry. The essential orientation is to anchor the standpoint in relevancies of Indigenous concerns, then use institutional ethnography as a framework for examining the organizational structures and institutional processes that shape Indigenous peoples' lived experience. For example, the following quote expresses Inuit women's concerns about what gets lost within institutional frameworks of public education in their communities:

We had no experience with the southern institutional way of doing things.

Institutions handle complex activities by breaking them up into many smaller tasks and spreading them out among many people. With the organization to guide

them, it is no longer necessary for most people to have an overall understanding of what is being done. As long as they follow instructions the institution will keep working, like a machine with moving parts (Nunavik Educational Task Force, 1992, p. 1).

The institutional framework described above appears to negate the value of or need for relationship. Institutional ethnography looks at the issue of how things work in an organizational setting. Indigenous worldviews are distinctly different from institutional frameworks. The inquiry begins in lived experience and looks for clues to what shapes that experience within organizational action. IE can be used to discover issues that may shed new light on accepted practices. It shares with Indigenous methodologies a commitment to produce knowledge that will benefit the people involved in the study.

I adopted Indigenous approaches within the confines of my location in this research. The suggestion for this study came from Dr. Williams, an Indigenous scholar who worked closely with educators and policymakers on the development of the Enhancement Agreement framework. The process of data collection and analysis centralized concepts of relatedness, connectedness, and engagement—connecting, rather than isolating variables. I considered both the empirical and spiritual dimensions of the research topic and process in the account. I undertook my own process of self study, self questioning, feedback and sharing. The findings of this research seek will be useful to the Aboriginal children, families and communities involved in public education in British Columbia. The process of decolonization is an important focus of this approach.

Adopting Indigenous methodology was helpful to the research process and to situating myself within it. Indigenous methodologies taught me to appreciate my blunders

as guides, and builders of knowledge; to remember that effort, and struggle and perseverance are part of the conditions of reality. I appreciated this touchstone as a guide through confusing and challenging times. The approach expanded my understanding of relationships as a deeper level of interconnection than one explained in terms of social science variables. My own relationship as researcher to community was challenged by distance and time. These limitations draw attention to the high level of commitment required to build research relationships in Indigenous contexts.

The interlocking institutional arrangements of Aboriginal education are not well known by Canadian people in every day life, though they may have opinions about them. The central tenet throughout this work has been to keep the institution in view as an organizer of social relations that give rise to everyday experience. The advantage of Institutional Ethnography is its great potential to uncover complexities of significance for the person trying to act in the work setting. This is relevant to the Enhancement Agreement study, because there are tremendous complexities that influence the process of developing EA's, indeed influence whether or how one will be developed and extend into the implementation process.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements are a vehicle which bring Indigenous methodologies, an Indigenous perspective, Indigenous analysis and Indigenous voices into the institutional setting of education. Together these methodologies have been helpful to uncover the experiences of people who are involved in creating Enhancement Agreements, and to trace out their work in the texts they produced.

This methodological pairing goes beyond standard methods of policy analysis to understand these layers of complexity. Questions of relationship between people are rarely considered in policy development or in an Institutional Ethnography. Questions of relationship are a primary concern of Indigenous methodology. As a researcher who is located outside of Indigenous communities, I required and appreciated the grounding that Indigenous methodologies brought to the process, particularly in exploring the question of relationship between peoples.

Institutional ethnography is concerned with the socially organized relationships of power, expressed, articulated and enacted through the production and mediation of texts. The epistemological framework is explicitly concerned with lived human experience, and how it is organized by social relations, but not concerned with actual relationships between people. In this study I employ Institutional Ethnography in an unorthodox way, to show how the everyday experience of constructing a policy document shapes what can be articulated in a policy text. In this context, the relationships between people were key factors in how the text developed, and what it expressed. Indigenous approaches consider these interrelationships within the setting.

Chapter 4 Colonial History: Education Policy

Introduction

The impact of colonization on the history of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people was huge, but remains largely invisible to present day Canadians (Williams, 2008). This chapter provides a brief orientation to policies that have shaped, and continue to shape the colonial influence on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples' experience of education in Canada.

The Indian Act

Since long before the time of confederation, Aboriginal peoples have held a unique legal and constitutional position with the colonial governments of Canada. The legal relationship originates with the Royal Proclamation issued by King George III in 1763. That document confirmed and recognized Aboriginal peoples as self-governing nations with relative political autonomy and land rights, and guaranteed a separation of Indian lands from the developing colonies. The proclamation recognized tribal nations' autonomy as "self-governing actors within the British imperial system in North America" and established the Crown as a protector of the Indian peoples. Today, the Supreme Court of Canada recognizes the Proclamation of 1763 as having significant legal force (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9).

The Dominion of Canada ignored the Royal Proclamation when it passed "Gradual Civilization Act" in 1857. Indian Status and Band membership had already been defined under laws passed in 1850. Confederation brought legislative authority over all lands reserved for Indians in 1867 (FNESC, 2009b; Hanselmann, 2001). In 1869 Canadian lawmakers imposed elected band council systems, an effort that deliberately

undermined traditional Indigenous governance structures. In 1876, the Indian Act consolidated all existing legislation related to Indian peoples.

Under the Indian Act, the Canadian state retains the power to define who is a registered, or status Indian, and who is not. The category 'Status Indian' includes persons who are Aboriginal by birth or blood, a member of a particular band of Indians, married to, or adopted by Registered Indians (Atleo, M. 2008). Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) employs a Registrar, who retains sole authority for determining which names can be added, deleted or omitted from that Register (INAC, 2010). A "registered" Indian is recorded in the Indian Registry System and has an assigned registry number (INAC, BC Region, 2010). State controlled definitions of "Indian Status" have been criticized for putting Indigenous people in the position of needing to negotiate their own identity (John, 2003). Many people have lost their status rights when their life activities contravened stipulations in the Act. For example, from 1951 until 1985, a registered Indian woman who married a non-registered man (First Nations, Inuit, Métis or non-Aboriginal) lost her status (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9). Prior to 1960, registered Indians could not vote in a federal election unless they gave up their status. Registered Indians who lived outside of Canada for more than five years also lost their status (INAC, 2010, March 11). Until the middle of the 20th Century in BC, the Indian Act prohibited Status Indian children from attending public schools, unless their parents chose enfranchisement and gave up their constitutional Indian rights (Hare & Barman, 2006, p. 240).

From its inception, successive changes to the Indian Act increased restrictions Aboriginal peoples' daily lives. For example, an 1884 amendment banned the potlatch,

making it a federal offence to participate in the rituals and ceremonies that comprised the backbone of social and political organization in west coast communities. A 1914 extension of the same law prohibited Indians from donning “Aboriginal costume” in any “dance, show or pageant”, without official permission (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9). In 1894, the superintendent general of INAC assumed the power to lease reserve lands to non-Indians, as he saw fit (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9). By the 1920’s the Indian Act made attendance at industrial or boarding schools compulsory. The education policy prioritized the early removal of children from parental influences as a means to ensure that the young ones’ contact with old ways would be severed before they took root (Haig-Brown, 1988). A 1927 amendment required Indians to obtain a permit from the superintendent-general prior to fundraising for the legal claims they were pursuing with the federal government; failure to do so could result in a prison term of up to two months (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9).

Aboriginal people were not included in the decision-making process regarding any changes to the Indian Act until 1946, but even then, policy-makers ignored their contributions. In fact, the 1946 revised Act retained the goal of “Liquidating Canada’s Indian Problems within 25 Years” (Haig-Brown, 1988). A 1969 federal government White Paper on Indian policy proposed a full repeal of the Indian Act that would eliminate Indian status, treaty rights, and all Canadian responsibility to Indian peoples (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9). The government withdrew the proposal the following year in the face of massive opposition from Aboriginal peoples.

Through the Indian Act, the Government of Canada has a constitutional and fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal peoples. Yet it is also a “legislative straightjacket”,

regulating almost every aspect of daily life. (Canada RCAP, 1996. Vol. 1, Ch. 9) Raven Sinclair (2008) describes it as a coercive mechanism of social control. According to the RCAP, the “Indian Act is the single most prominent reflection of the distinctive place of Indian people within the Canadian federation” (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9). Discriminatory laws embedded in the act subjected Indian peoples to disparate rights, penalties and prohibitions that could not be legally applied to any other citizen under the Canadian Constitution.

Indian Control of Indian Education 1972

Battiste (1998) argued that the assimilationist agenda of the residential schools (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) breached the federal government’s treaty obligation to provide education to Aboriginal peoples. From the beginning of colonization, First Nations peoples struggled to regain control of their children’s education. Pleas and petitions from individual nations brought little response from the federal government. Things began to change in 1969 with the creation of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB). This organization established the first opportunity for First Nations governments from across the country to engage with each other and with the Canadian government on a national basis (Cardinal, 1969). In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood presented the federal government with the position paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (a response to Trudeau’s 1969 White Paper). The document criticized federal, provincial and territorial governments’ failure to implement policies that would appropriately address First Nations’ goals for education. (National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations (NIB/AFN) 1972; Canada RCAP, 1996 Vol. 3 Ch. 5). The statement was grounded in Indigenous values and culture, emphasizing self-

reliance, respect for personal freedom, generosity, and respect for nature and wisdom. These qualities are established within family relationships from a child's early years. *Indian Control of Indian Education* argued that two principles, widely recognized in Canadian education *Parental Responsibility* and *Local Control* were denied to First Nations people under the Indian Act; and further, that these principles must be extended to Aboriginal peoples through a cooperative relationship with Indian Affairs (NIB/AFN 1972).

Indian Control of Indian Education recommended: adequate Aboriginal representation on public school boards; the removal of biased or erroneous information about Aboriginal peoples in textbooks and curriculum; training for Aboriginal teachers and counsellors; and in-service cultural values and cultural relevancies training for non-Indigenous teachers and counsellors in teacher education programs. The position paper pressed for Band Education Authorities to be granted power to define education funding and administration requirements in their own communities. (NIB/AFN 1972). It recommended that substandard education facilities on reserves be closed or replaced, and the numbers of students in residential schools be reduced or eliminated.

In 1973, the federal government adopted *Indian Control of Indian Education* as national policy, giving First Nations parents and communities the legal right and the responsibility to determine the extent and delivery of their children's education for the first time under Canadian law. The discussion between First Nations and the state then shifted toward restored control of education to First Nations, Inuit and Métis parents and communities (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, Ch. 5).

Nominal Role

Under the authority of the Indian Act, the federal government is responsible for education for all Status Indians living on reserve lands. Tuition funding for First Nations schools flows from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada according to the numbers on the *Nominal Role*. The *Nominal Roll* may include registered (Status), non-registered (Non-Status), native or non-native students. Eligibility for INAC education funding is limited to students on the nominal roll who would normally be resident on reserve. It is not part of the policy, but non-native students who reside on reserve may choose to be included on the nominal role. All decisions about funding are determined by a student's nominal role status on October 1st each year. Status Indians who live off reserve fall under provincial jurisdiction. BC is responsible to fund K-12 education for off-reserve residents (INAC BC Region, 2010).

The Nominal Roll Student Census Report must be completed prior to a funding request for any student eligible for INAC funding payable to on-reserve or provincial schools. The "Nominal Role Student Census Report" records 20 different pieces of information about each student. Name, initials, date of birth, and gender are required to match information listed in the Indian Registry. The form records identifying information specific to each student and their band affiliations.

Band-Operated Schools

In the mid 20th Century, Duff (1964) counted 250 settlements on Indian Reserves in British Columbia. Of these, 70 had day schools operated by the federal government. Following the introduction of *Indian Control of Education* in 1973, many First Nations communities British Columbia exercised their inherent, un-surrendered right to choose the education they want for their children, and took control of their own schools (Postl,

2005). A central advantage of band operated schools is the potential for the First Nation to bring their own culture, history and language into the modern education setting. By the year 2000, 120 community controlled schools existed in BC reserve communities (Kavanagh, 2000).

Schools located on reserves are locally controlled, but remain under federal jurisdiction and funding. INAC distributes tuition funding based on the nominal roll results in September each year. Federal funds applied only to reserve residents. The Province has no jurisdiction to fund education delivered on reserve lands. Therefore, students who attend reserve schools but live off the reserve are not funded. Some First Nations acquired Independent School status, a strategy that enabled them to receive partial provincial funding for students not on the nominal roll (INAC BC Region, 2010). In some cases, First Nations schools accept responsibility to education students with only partial funding, presenting a major financial hurdle for the schools.

Across Canada, schools located on reserves are funded by the federal government. On-reserve schools are not connected to the provincial education system, curriculum, resources or professional network (Hanselmann, 2001). At the same time they must use provincial curriculum to qualify for funding. As the federal government does not provide curriculum or instructional services, on-reserve schools are consistently resourced at much lower levels than provincial schools. Funds available to First Nations Schools fall short of resources available to provincial schools, resulting in constrained levels of professional support including fewer: resource people, trained language and culture teachers, school psychologists, language therapists, school counsellors, classroom assistants, and special education resources (Kavanagh, 2000). Consequently the schools

are challenged to operate without the benefit of being connected to a robust infrastructure (Kavanagh, 2000; Postl, 2005).

Provincial Education Systems: Overlapping Policy Arrangements

Provincial governments are responsible for providing education to the citizens of each province, with the exception of Status Indians who live on reserves. Status Indians who do not live on reserves and Aboriginal people who do not hold registered Indian status fall under Provincial Government jurisdiction in education. The Federal Government's fiduciary responsibility to provide education extends to Status Indians who live on reserve (Hanslemann, 2001; Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5). There are complicating factors in the overlap. The federal Government's responsibility for Indian education cannot be legally transferred to the provinces or territories, and tuition for Status Indian students who live on reserve can only be funded by the federal government. The complicated arrangement amounts to a policy vacuum, described below in a paper prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee:

Because Canada has exclusive jurisdiction over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians" under **section 91(24)** of the *Constitution Act 1867*, while the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over education under **section 93**, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty which of them has jurisdiction over "First Nations education"... Nevertheless, it can probably be said that the federal government has jurisdiction over First Nations education, while the provincial governments would face serious constitutional obstacles if they tried to deal directly with First Nations education. The provincial governments, however,

maintain the right to enact education laws of general application, which affect First Nations students in the provincial school system. (Morgan, 1998, p. 5)

During the 1950's, the federal government initiated plans to integrate First Nations children into provincial public schools. Their parents had no opportunity to discuss these changes before they were implemented (Canada RCAP, 1996 Vol. 3 Ch. 5). Provinces were reluctant to absorb the tuition costs for students who fell under the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government. In *The Unjust Society*, Harold Cardinal (1969) held that, when provincial schools boards finally did agree to receive the Indian children, it was with a singular interest in the funding it would bring, and no strategy to address the needs and interests of the Indian child (Cardinal, 1969).

By 1991, 42 percent of First Nations people in BC lived off-reserve; 68 percent of First Nations students attended provincial schools, including 46 percent who lived on reserve. Métis students attended provincial schools almost exclusively (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, Ch. 5). Today public schools are the primary institutions providing educational services to Aboriginal children in British Columbia. There are four times as many self-identified Aboriginal students in BC public schools than there are on reserves.

Local Education Agreements

Tuition for “Status Indian” students who attend provincial schools is paid by the Federal Government under negotiated contracts for services between Band Councils, school boards and the Federal Government (NIB/AFN, 1972). Students must be on the nominal roll for the transfer to take place (INAC, BC Region, 2010). Local Education Agreements (LEA) between First Nations and provincial school boards serve as instruments to transfer Federal Education dollars to Provincial school districts through

Band governments. Their scope does not apply to First Nations students who are not on the nominal roll, do not live on reserve, or are not registered as status Indian (FNESC, 2009a), nor does it include Métis or Inuit. Such students attend provincial schools under the same tuition arrangements as any other citizen of British Columbia would. INAC transfers the tuition funds directly to the band, which then pays the province. If no LEA exists, INAC pays the province directly.

BC Education Jurisdiction Agreement

Formal recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over education did not begin automatically with the acceptance of *Indian Control of Education* as policy in 1973 (FNESC, 2008a). It was over 30 years later, when the BC government formally recognized and established a legal foundation and process for BC First Nations' jurisdiction over K-12 education on reserves. *The Education Jurisdiction Framework Agreement* is one of the first such agreement on First Nations' education in Canada (the Migmaq also have a version). This Agreement is for Indians who reside on reserve lands, and attend schools on reserve lands, except for the clause on reciprocal tuition agreements which allows the province to pay the tuition for students who are not under the jurisdiction of the federal government and attend a band run school. The agreement includes separate, but related agreements with the Province of BC and with the Canadian government. (FNESC, 2006). Key features of the two agreements are summarized below:

Table 4.1 The Education Jurisdiction Framework Agreement

The Province of British Columbia recognizes Participating First Nations' Jurisdiction over education:	The Government of Canada recognizes Participating First Nations' Jurisdiction over education:
on First Nation Land, to make laws related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ education, ▪ teacher certification, ▪ school certification, ▪ education standards, ▪ capacity to grant graduation certificates, ▪ and reciprocal tuition arrangements 	including lawmaking powers related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ education, ▪ authorities to manage education systems and establish education standards, processes for financial arrangements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ funding arrangements, ▪ accountability, ▪ information sharing, ▪ and accounting procedures"

Sixty three *Participating First Nations* were represented by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in these Agreements. The Jurisdiction agreements specify that the Federal Government will pay tuition directly to the School Board for *Participating First Nations* students who enrol in Provincial Public Schools; and the Province will pay tuition for students who attend First Nations Schools. but are not reserve residents. Previously the Province would not fund off-reserve students to attend First Nations Schools (FNESC, 2006).

The BC-First Nations Jurisdiction over Education Agreements were completed in July 2006. The Canada-First Nations Education Jurisdiction Agreements were completed in May 2008 (FNESC, 2008b). However, funding to operate the program is still under discussion with the Federal Government. FNESC has stated that “First Nations are clear that without adequate funding the Agreements are defunct” (2008a).

Each of these agreements are designed to deal with the overlapping responsibilities of federal and provincial governments concerning First Nations peoples and education. None of them address the needs of Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit and non-status Indians. The province bears sole jurisdiction for the education of these students. The following sections discuss British Columbia’s response to these issues.

Aboriginal Programs and Services in BC Public Schools

Today the Provincial school system in British Columbia recognizes Aboriginal students as a unique group. Most school districts have established Aboriginal education departments and particular funding instruments directed at the needs of Aboriginal students.

In BC, public school tuition is funded through a per student 'base grant' from the Provincial Government for every student enrolled, including non-status Indians who live off-reserve. In addition to the base grants, per-capita funding for self-identified Aboriginal students comes into the School District as *Targeted Funding* for Aboriginal Education. Districts also receive tuition transfers from the Federal Government through the First Nation Band Government under the Local Education Agreement, only for First Nations students on the nominal roll.

School Districts' annual budgets include *targeted funds* for Aboriginal Education to operate culturally appropriate educational programs and services to support the success of Aboriginal Students (BC Ministry of Education, 2003). The funding policy requires School Boards to collaborate with the Aboriginal communities in their catchments to develop Aboriginal Education Programs and Services. The collaborative requirement is intended to ensure that *targeted funds* are used to integrate Aboriginal culture and language with academic achievement. Programs eligible for funding under this program include: Aboriginal Language and Culture programs; Aboriginal Support Services; and other Aboriginal Programs approved by the BC Ministry of Education. The Ministry requires all School Boards to articulate these services in their Enhancement Agreements, discussed in more detail in the next section (BC Ministry of Education, 2010).

Targeted funding is allocated on a per capita basis for students who voluntarily self identify as Aboriginal, including First Nations (on or off reserve, Status or Non-Status), Inuit and Métis students. This information, as well as basic demographics, program enrolments (special education, Aboriginal education, career programs), special needs categories and the number of courses for all students is collected in an official document called “Form 1701” (BC Ministry of Education, 2010). The Nominal Roll, explained earlier, must also account for students who identify as “Status Indian” and are also “Living On Reserve”. Funds are allocated to school districts based on Form 1701, submitted to the Ministry of Education in early October each year.

Targeted Funds are set at \$1160 per full time student per year (BC Ministry of Education, 2003). The funds cannot be used to replace ESL or Special Education programs, or for basic classroom instruction such as First Nations 12. Required documentation must include evidence that the student is receiving appropriate services or programs; that the student has self-identified Aboriginal ancestry; and that the parent/guardian has been consulted. The Ministry prefers that these outcomes be reported as an element of the district’s Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

School outcomes specific to Aboriginal students are collected in a separate data set at the Ministry of Education, reported annually in *Aboriginal Performance Data: How are we doing?* (available at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/performance.htm>).

Academic performance data is gathered from standardized Foundation Skills Assessment tests at grade 4 and 7 (reading, writing, and numeracy); plus required examination results in grade 10 English, math and science, grade 11 civic and social studies; and grade 12 BC First Nations Studies, Social Studies, English and Communications. The report also

tracks Aboriginal students' school transitions from grade 8, school completion rates, scholarships and awards, and post secondary transitions.

The reports are structured as comparison documents with each graph and pie chart laid out side by side with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student results. Data presented in the reports tracks numbers of self-identified Aboriginal students; gender; residence on or off-reserve; in standard public schools, alternate programs, “special needs performance reporting groups”, and the grade distribution of students with behaviour disabilities.

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements in BC

Enhancement Agreements are completely separate and independent of Local Education Agreements for public schools, and not related to Education Jurisdiction Agreements for First Nations Schools. These working agreements are intended to develop and establish programs, services and relationships that will enhance school success and experience for Aboriginal students in provincial public schools. Current BC Ministry of Education policy mandate requires School District to collaborate with Aboriginal communities within their catchments to develop an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/funding_abed.htm).

The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch in the BC Ministry of Education is the provincial authority responsible for the development of The Enhancement Agreements. Branch responsibilities include policy development, procedures and initiatives related to Aboriginal education in BC. A primary responsibility of branch staff is to work with school districts and Aboriginal communities to develop and implement Enhancement Agreements. It also ensures that school curriculum and resource materials accurately represent and integrate Aboriginal content. The Branch serves as a link

between the Government of BC, Aboriginal peoples' organizations and governments, and the federal government on issues related to Aboriginal Education. The following objectives serve the Branch's goal "To improve school success for all Aboriginal students":

- To increase Aboriginal voice in the public education system
- To increase knowledge of Aboriginal language, culture and history within the public school system
- To increase Aboriginal communities' involvement and satisfaction with the public school system (BC Ministry of Education, 2010)

Local school boards are required to work with Aboriginal communities to identify programs, services and implementation strategies to support Aboriginal student success. The Enhancement Agreements have been developed as the key text from which these programs and services will be implemented. Where there is no EA yet in place, School Districts are still required to seek involvement from their Aboriginal communities to identify needed programs and services. The policy expressly stipulates that the School Board is broadly responsible for the development and implementation of the EA. This work is not to be delegated solely to Aboriginal Education Departments.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch lists main elements of Enhancement Agreements as follows in Table 4.2 Elements of Enhancement Agreements.

Table 4.2 Elements of Enhancement Agreements

Elements of Enhancement Agreements	
Enhancement Agreements address specific performance and delivery expectations for all Aboriginal learners.	
1.	The Aboriginal communities must be represented by a unified body whose authority to speak for the Aboriginal communities is accepted by the Aboriginal communities.
2.	Shared decision making by the Aboriginal communities and the school district must be an established practice.
3.	Both the Aboriginal communities and the school district must support participation in the Enhancement Agreement.
4.	Joint consultation and collaboration between the Aboriginal communities and the school districts will enable vision and goal setting in all areas of education for all Aboriginal learners.
5.	The Aboriginal communities and the school district track key performance indicators at the student level.
6.	The Aboriginal communities and the school district must be committed to regular reporting of results. This would include an evaluation and reporting process on the outcomes of the Enhancement Agreements.
7.	The scope of the Aboriginal Education program must include a focus on continuous improvement in the academic performance of all Aboriginal students.
8.	Meeting the cultural needs of Aboriginal students in all aspects of learning. This includes resources, strategies and assessment.
9.	Focus on increasing knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal culture, language and history, which enables a greater understanding for everyone about Aboriginal people.
(BC Ministry of Education, 2008)	

The Enhancement Agreement guides school district's expenditure of targeted funding. Annual reports document progress in specific goals. The outcomes are not benchmarked so, there is no funding penalty when a goal is not achieved in the expected time. This deliberate strategy ensures that educators and communities focus on learning processes, and strategies. Enhancement Agreement policy states that, in addition to targeted funds, core funding should also be used to support the agreements.

The process of developing an Enhancement Agreement is intended to be inclusive, collaborative and iterative. This process of relationship-building requires a School District to make a special effort to connect with *all* the Aboriginal communities in

their catchment, including the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who are not connected to local reserve communities. In the early stages of development District administrators faced the challenge of learning how to initiate these relationships: who to include, how to reach all of the people who needed to be involved, and how to authorize involvement.

The agreements require a consensus-based decision-making process that ensures all parties are equally situated within the power structure of the development process. Relationship-building is an important aspect of the development process. (Personal Communication, Dr. L. Williams, 2006). Respect for diversity, sensitivity, and developing cultural awareness is a fundamental requirement to ensure that all parties learn to communicate respectfully and seek solutions that can be implemented collaboratively.

The Ministry of Education's initial mandate that every school district in the province would have a completed Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement by the year 2005 is still in progress. Chapter 6 reports on the processes involved in developing some of these Agreements. Participants interviewed for this study report that, in many areas of British Columbia, the relationships between Aboriginal communities, school communities and School Districts were initially non-existent, tense, and/or indifferent. Branch coordinators found that to begin the process at all is a very important step forward. Some school districts needed a long time to establish dialogue and build relationships. Staff in the Branch recognized these first steps as milestones that signified real progress and acknowledge that learning to work together, as a more important goal than a finalized agreement.

Chapter 5 Ways of Knowing, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements are developed through collaborative processes involving people from Indigenous and Western worldviews who learn to work together within public school settings in BC. The approach holds promise as an effort that may make space for Indigenous systems of teaching to co-exist within Western education institutions. For this to happen, the significant differences in Western and Indigenous approaches to learning must be recognized. This chapter situates the research within areas of scholarship relevant to Indigenous perspectives on knowing, teaching, and learning and provides ground for a later discussion of findings about the collaborative processes and resulting agreements. I begin with an introduction to Indigenous systems of teaching and learning, then compare the impact and effects of Western style education on Indigenous peoples since Europeans began arriving in North America. The final section addresses current and potential processes of decolonization, leading to the findings, reported in Chapter Six.

Teaching and Learning in an Indigenous World

From an Indigenous perspective, the purpose of education is: to become, or to be, a whole human being with a complete understanding of the self (Williams, 2008). No single epistemology is shared by all Indigenous peoples across North America, but some concepts are common to most (if not all) North American and other Indigenous peoples: respect for each other and nature; understanding of community; and need for authenticity or authentic voice (Redwing & Hill, 2007; Williams, 2004; Haig-Brown, 1988; Fournier & Crey, 1997). Indigenous peoples around the world reverently value and respect their

children. The time of childhood is considered to be very important and is accorded special attention to ensure that children experience balance and harmony very early in their lives (Williams, 2004).

Indian Control of Indian Education (NIB/AFN, 1972) laid out the historic principles of Indigenous education values within a modern context, as illustrated in the text box below:

Text Box 5.1: Statement of the Indian Philosophy of Education

STATEMENT OF THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns all he needs to know in order to live a good life. As our fathers had a clear idea of what made a good man and a good life in their society, so we modern Indians want our children to learn that happiness and satisfaction come from:

- Pride in one's self,
- Understanding one's fellowmen, and,
- Living in harmony with nature.

These are lessons which are necessary for survival in this twentieth century.

- Pride encourages us to recognize and use our talents, as well as to master the skills needed to make a living.
- Understanding our fellowmen will enable us to meet other Canadians on an equal footing, respecting cultural differences while pooling resources for the common good.
- Living in harmony with nature will insure preservation of the balance between man and his environment which is necessary for the future of our planet, as well as for fostering the climate in which Indian Wisdom has always flourished.

We want education to give our children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them.

(NIB/AFN, 1972, p. 1)

In Indigenous contexts, the process of education involves anticipation, preparation, practice, and when an individual is truly ready, a public unveiling. Richard Atleo describes these elements of training as sacred (in Woodward, 2008). An important aspect of learning is the ability to know oneself and know one's place in the universe (Williams, 2004).

“In many Indigenous cultures and communities, the role of finding self is a self-regulated and directed journey, often assisted or guided by others, although without intrusion or interruption... The learning journey that each person travels [should help them] to arrive comfortably at their own awareness of their strengths, gifts, capacities, which can broadly be seen as their learning spirit... the life journey is one that draws each person to certain strengths and motivations, and is constantly evolving, emerging, transforming and yet remains with us throughout our lives” (Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, n.d. Appendix 1, p. 2 in Tunison, 2007 p. 10).

It is a community responsibility to provide learning experiences that will help young people find and learn to use their gifts (Williams, 2004). Indigenous education systems were well designed to prepare young people for life in their communities, as Richard Atleo describes in the following excerpt:

For millennia, our children were eminently successful in their training programs. It's important to remember that Indian education was successful for far longer that it has been unsuccessful. Indian children grew up and coped with the difficulties and conflicts of life. Significantly, traditional education had complete parental involvement. Because parents understood the curriculum they could anticipate the requirements of the training and could direct each child to prepare for a role for which he or she was best suited (Richard Atleo in Woodward, 2008).

Story is an essential element of the learning journey for all humans. Indigenous cultural practices recognize the importance and the process of story in learning. For

example, in Nuu chah nulth families, Richard Atleo explains that teaching and learning is a process of observing and doing; a constant daily practice in the home and in the field. Every household employed specific methods to acquire and share knowledge. From the time of conception, story and song were a critically important. Elders sang to the pregnant woman. The words and songs became familiar before the birth, Later the meanings of the words and songs would begin to manifest (Atleo, R., 2008).

In Lil'wat culture, traditional education also began at the time of conception. The process involved members of the whole community, extended through the course of all seasons, and over the span of a lifetime (Williams, 2004; 2006). The following discussion of child development and learning systems in Lil'wat culture draws on Williams' lectures at the University of Victoria (2004) to illustrate how the whole community is involved in practices of knowledge transmission to children and young people.

Text Box 5.2: Child Development and Learning in Lil'wat Culture

Child Development and Learning in Lil'wat Culture

In the Lil'wat worldview, childhood development is understood to pass through distinct stages. The first one begins during pregnancy. During this time, the entire extended family supported the young parents to maintain a balanced emotional, mental, physical and spiritual state for the well-being of the unborn child.

Prior to the introduction of Western medicine and hospitals, a midwife from the community attended the birth. The community considered the children she brought into the world belonged to the midwife as well, so the newborn had two mothers. This relationship between the child and midwife carried on throughout the lifespan, ensuring newborns had an immediate and enduring connection with the community. The family also carried out ceremonies that connected the newborn to the land. The introduction of European medicine made it impossible for families to complete these beginning of life practices

for babies who were born in hospitals, away from their home communities.

From infancy, many family members had special roles in the child's upbringing—resulting in strong and significant lifelong relationships. Babies were treated with much affection and attention. They spent almost all of their time with the old people, who carefully observed and cared for them, according to their individual needs from birth until around the age of six. Babies rarely cried, and were generally calm and content. They were never left alone and held as much as possible. Young parents were taught to watch the children and keep them safe.

In every family the elders were responsible to observe the child, and identify the special qualities and characteristics that the child brings to the world and the community: temperament; signs of persistence; sense of humour; interests, and memory. Each quality and characteristic is considered to be important. Williams (2006) provides this example:

“If the child showed a fiery temperament, he or she would be given name to balance that temperament to achieve harmony, not to eradicate the fire but to build its positive strength. The adult's responsibility would be to help the children channel his or her unique energies in positive ways” (p. 90).

Elders told the children many stories – chosen specifically to bring balance and to help the child to become aware. Babies were told stories when they were awake, and even as they slept. The old people spoke to the infant about all the aspects of the life and world around them, things that were important to the people, the land, the activities and values of the community.

Around age six, children began to spend most of their time with siblings and peers. Through play, they learned to establish relationships and get along with others. Older children assumed responsibilities for younger children. This gave older children an opportunity to model what they learned from their parents and other adults in the community. Multi-aged groups of children spent whole days together. Adults seldom interfered with children's play, though they knew their location and activities at all times. When the children finally came home exhausted, elders told stories chosen according to

season, or their observation of in the group on that occasion. While the stories were being told, someone would respond, "ee-aye". The story teller would always continue until finally no one responded, and all the children were asleep.

The next stage began around age nine or ten when the child started to demonstrate the ability to direct their own behaviour and complete tasks. Significant members of the community recognized the child's growing competence and independence and provided him/her with more serious responsibilities. In this time, young people demonstrated their readiness for learning. They would choose their teacher. The learning relationship between the young person and the teacher developed as a type of contract, with the young person demonstrating their capacity and readiness to learn, and the teacher being very clear about what they would teach. Often, the young person would reside with the teacher during this time.

During puberty, grandparents, aunts and uncles played a significant role in guiding and teaching the young person. Puberty training for young men and women was specifically designed to help them progress through the extremes of adolescence in a state of balance and equanimity. Training included periods of time spent in solitude. Each young person emerged from this period with a vision, a song and a dance that were unique to them.

At this stage, each young person received their formal name, carefully chosen by the elders who had observed the traits, qualities and characteristics developing since birth. They selected a name that connected those qualities with people who previously held the name. This provided a historical connection to the community and inspiration for upholding the qualities inherent in the name. Names were publicly acknowledged through a public feast and formal introduction, described in the following quote:

"[Each of the elders] greeted the person, saying the new name many times; they described their own relationship to the previous name holder (a relationship now transferred to the new name holder), told stories about the person who last held the name, and told what they knew about the meaning of the name. Thus the young person's identity in the community was carefully fostered with a balance

between unique individuality and connections to the community and ancestors" (Williams, 2006, p. 94).

In the Lil'wat culture, children's games and activities were carefully thought out to facilitate memory development. Every ceremony had a place where people were called upon to remember. In naming ceremonies, each community member shared their memories about the person who held the name. In the naming ceremony the giving and receiving of gifts expressed a commitment to remember the event. Everyone attending has a responsibility to remember what happened that day.

In community life, everyone has to be a part of the group to function within the group. No one directs the behaviour of others. Each person, young or old contributed to family and community well-being. When the adults worked, children worked alongside them. Children helped with everything. Young people were given big responsibilities, learning to pick berries and clean salmon with big knives very early in life.

Teaching was a vital aspect of learning, because of the integration processes required. The older children taught the younger, from a very young age. Children learn self direction. They learned by doing, together. People were always learning by doing. Each person was supported to learn to figure things out on their own.

Communities did not think of people as having a "disability". Any challenge that a person lived with was considered to be "the way someone is. Everyone takes responsibility to accept people the way that they are and to be inclusive in everything.

These practices in Lil'wat culture share underlying values and fundamental methods with other Indigenous peoples in Canada. For example, Secwepemc people saw childhood and learning as an inseparable part of the ongoing processes of life. Children were educated through participation and example. Every community member was responsible to teach, with the Elders playing a very important role. Each child grew up with a sense of what their place is in the community and family systems.

Worldview and knowledge transmission systems are intrinsically rooted in language. “Language is the outward expression of an accumulation of learning and experience shared by a group of people over centuries of development” (NIB/AFN, p. 14, 1972). Language is essential to the transmission of knowledges that are particular to Indigenous worldviews. “Aboriginal languages are the repository of vital instructions, lessons, and guidance given to our elders in visions, dreams and life experience” (Battiste, 1998). The dynamic force of language shapes one’s worldview and philosophy of life. Knowing one’s maternal language is an important component of developing self-knowledge, and pride in one’s heritage and self. (NIB/AFN, 1972)

The processes of education integrate into the very fabric of Indigenous community, family and individual life. Intact Indigenous systems of teaching and learning ensure that the thread of knowledge flows from generation to generation. The systems are flexible, adaptable and capable of incorporating new knowledge (Atleo, R. 2008). Despite the efforts of colonization to interrupt and eliminate Indigenous knowledge systems, they do continue to thrive in the modern context (Williams, 2006). The following sections describe the nature and impact of the colonial interruption of Indigenous teaching and learning systems.

Colonial Knowledge Systems: Church and State

The institution of education is largely a cultural phenomenon. Since the introduction of formal white education to the Indians of Canada their own original educational processes have either been shunted completely aside or discouraged. The only purpose in educating the Indian has been to create little

brown white men, not what it should have been, to help develop the human being or to equip him [her] for life in a new environment (Cardinal, 1969. P. 166).

Colonial education systems operate from a different world view than the Indigenous perspective reviewed in the preceding section. Under colonial structures, the Canadian state purposefully used education as a tool to alter and disturb relationships within and between Indigenous communities. This section outlines the history of church-run education systems that emerged with the influx of Europeans to North America; forcibly shifting processes of teaching and learning out of the hands of Indigenous communities and families, and into the hands of various Christian churches. From as early as the mid 17th century, church-run schools established frameworks for colonial forms of education in Indigenous communities (Williams, 2004). These frameworks were later adopted by the state. I explore these relations of church and state in Aboriginal life as a background for understanding the complexity that is set in motion within a school district once a conversation about developing Enhancement Agreements begin.

Missionary Schools

When Europeans began arriving in North America, Aboriginal people were interested in learning their ways. Many communities requested teachers come to augment their own systems of teaching and learning and provide them with an education that would help them adapt to the changes brought by European settlement (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 9; McLean, 2002; Hare & Barman, 2006; Miller, 1996). Some areas of New France had established religious mission schools as early as the 1600's (Canada RCAP, 1996 Vol. 3 Ch. 5). Mission schools were often initiated 'with good intentions', but the focus on learning western forms of literacy along with an imperative to convert to

Christianity muted their potential benefits (Canada RCAP Vol. 3 Ch. 5; McLean, 2002).

Christian missionaries generally did not recognize Indigenous peoples' own well-developed systems of teaching and learning. By the 19th century, Methodist, Anglican and Catholic Missionaries were engaged in a competitive, expansive effort to convert Indigenous people across the land (McLean, 2002).

Forerunners of the residential school system, Methodist day schools were established at a number of locations across Canada, often at the request of Aboriginal communities who envisioned a collaborative learning relationship with the newcomers. For example, in 1820's Upper Canada, Ojibwa people collaborated with Methodist missionaries, financing the initial schools to provide their children with the necessary skills to interact with the growing European population (McLean, 2002). Mutual respect and understanding were key features of the early relationship between the Ojibwa and the Methodists.

Some Ojibwa communities did convert to Christianity when they established their mission schools, but conversion was not a requirement (McLean, 2002). Ojibwa partnered with the Methodists to collaboratively define their needs, and decide how to meet them. Many Ojibwa trained as teachers and taught in the schools. The curriculum was based on religious teaching but also included math, geometry, geography, astronomy, reading and writing. The broad range of academic subjects actually surpassed education opportunities available to European settlers at the time. Innovative approaches to teaching employed in the schools included experiential learning, and curriculum in both Ojibwa and English languages. Ojibwa students made great progress in this system (McLean, 2002). By the mid 1830's, the political leadership of the church shifted and

new leaders insisted on the schools adhere more strictly to Christian principles and teaching methods. Thus ended this approach to collaborative education (McLean, 2002).

The Tsimshian people of BC's north coast also collaborated with missionaries for the purpose of establishing European style education. In the 1870's high ranking Tsimshian people, Kate and Alfred Dudoward, converted to Methodism while living at Fort Victoria (Dudoward, 2006) They requested a missionary for their community at Lax Kw Alams (known to the colonists as Port Simpson). The Methodist Church dispatched missionary Thomas Crosby and his wife Emma to establish a mission and school there. The Tsimshian provided the Crosby's with important supports. They helped them become established, anticipating an advantageous relationship with the newcomers, as illustrated in Hare & Barman's analysis below:

The Tsimshian were effective agents in shaping their world, in taking advantage of the conventions that the missionary enterprise offered and using these to claim and maintain status, land and access to the new-comers world. the identities they assumed as part of this process illuminate the extent to which conversion entailed negotiation (Hare & Barman, 2006, p. 254)

However, in contrast to the Tsimshian goal of a collaborative relationship with the newcomers, the missionaries attempted to convert every aspect of Tsimshian life to a Euro/Christian model, illustrated in the following excerpt from Thomas Crosby's diary:

There is no better teaching than the object lesson of a good and well-ordered Christian home. If he is walking "in His steps," the teacher ...should be able and willing to show how to build a nice little home, from the foundation to the last shingle on the roof. Indeed, this is the only way to win the savage from his lazy

habits, sin and misery. So soon as the Missionary gets the language of the people –and every Missionary should do so – he should make an effort to get them out of the wretched squalor and dirt of their old lodges and sweat houses into better homes (Anglican missionary, Thomas Crosby in Hare & Barman, 2006, p. 95).

Crosby's missionary agenda for complete conversion ran completely counter to the collaborative relationship the Tsimshian originally sought. Eventually, the utility of the mission unravelled. As the Tsimshian increasingly resisted the strict requirements of the missionaries, the Crosby's found it necessary to confine children in the school. The original collaborative approach to day school education transformed into a residential school where children were incarcerated in the name of Christian education (Hare & Barman, 2006).

Supported by the state, missionaries laid the path for the church to enter Indigenous communities, and establish the schools (Cardinal, 1969). Although the Christian beliefs they taught dovetailed with many aspects of Indigenous life, the missionaries required more than simply sharing the principles of Christianity: they insisted that the people turn away from the spiritual practices that sustained them, and adhered their community, political, familial and social structures (Cardinal, 1969). Along with religious conversion, missionaries encouraged a shift to sedentary lives in communities close to missions and churches. These religious efforts effectively limited movement of Indigenous peoples and eased settler access to Indigenous territories without the need for violence, ultimately proving a great advantage to the expanding Canadian state (Haig-Brown, 1988).

Residential Schools

With the influx of settler society, the relationship originally set out in the Royal proclamation shifted to reflect prevailing ethnocentric attitudes. The Europeans viewed Indigenous peoples as savages in need of civilizing influences. These attitudes dovetailed with British and colonial desire to make land available for settlement (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1 Ch. 9). Legislative responsibility for the education of 'status Indians' began with the Indian Act of 1871 (Bryce, 1907). Between 1871 and 1977, the Dominion Government's efforts to clear the prairies for settlement and development led to the signing of seven numbered treaties with Indigenous peoples. The treaties included provisions for education (Bryce, 1907; Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 2). The residential school system, developed in the mid 1800's, built on the mission schools model and formalized the arrangement between church and the Canadian State. The Indian Education policy goal to reshape Indian people to Europeans norms, habits and standards also eased the governments objective of taking control of Indigenous lands (Haig-Brown, 1988).

First Nations people did not intend to give up their children for the purpose of education in far flung institutions; yet, for more than a century, parents and grandparents in reserve communities were legally compelled to turn their children over to the custody of residential school authorities (Canada RCAP, Vol. 3 Ch. 5). As Battiste (1998) points out, "Although the treaties agreed that the Crown could maintain schools, these delegations were to enable the nations to be enriched by new knowledge that supplemented Aboriginal knowledge, not to destroy all of their collective knowledge enfolded in their own language". The federal government relied on churches, (which shared the state goal of imparting Christian European values and breaking down the

generational transmission of Indigenous language and culture) to carry out its responsibility for education (Canada RCAP, Vol. 3 Ch. 5). Education policy actively aimed to remove any parental influences and deprive children of their community and ancestral knowledge and wisdom.

In essence, the expressed intent of residential school policy was to destroy a culture and rebuild Indian children as active participants in the industrial economy...The patriarchal nature of education as part of this assimilationist movement began essentially with the development of manual labour schools ...based on the principles of basic education, hard work and religious devotion (Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 43).

Industrial schools operating in the United States during this period provided additional inspiration for many new residential schools in Canada. Haig-Brown (1988) describes the education policy in these schools as a form of 'aggressive civilization'. Church officials and politicians of the day advocated the residential schooling as a means to 'save' Aboriginal children from what they referred to as "insalubrious influences" of home life on reserve (Kelm, 1998). According to Kelm (1998), life in the schools reinforced a racially charged and gendered message that Aboriginal home life threatened physical, social, and spiritual survival. Children were taught to hate the food their mothers cooked and reject their standards of cleanliness. At the same time, substandard physical facilities, poor ventilation, poor sanitation and substandard public health conditions posed a major threat to children's survival in the schools (Bryce, 1907).

Some reserves did have local day schools, where communities were afforded limited autonomy regarding the operation of the school. For example, the chief could

choose the denomination of the teacher, provided other dominations had access to a separate school (the only two choices were Protestant or Catholic). However, because day schools allowed children to maintain contact with their families and traditions, Federal officials considered them ineffective as a means of assimilation.

The residential schools were chronically under funded. Poor food and conditions compromised the children's health, many children died in the schools. (Bryce, 1907; Williams, 2004; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5; Haig-Brown, 1988). Dr. Peter Bryce, (then Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Indian Affairs) toured residential schools across the country in 1907. In every school he found healthy children housed in the same poorly ventilated dormitories as those who were ill with TB. Bryce found that, at minimum, 25 per cent of children who attended the schools in the period between 1900 and 1906 died either while in school or shortly after leaving. As most of the schools reporting to him admittedly provided incomplete data, he suspected that the actual number of deaths were much higher. Only one school provided a complete record of students. That school reported 69 per cent of their student body died within the 6 year period Bryce studied. In several schools, Bryce documented situations "so dangerous to health that I was often surprised that the results were not even worse than they have been shown statistically to be" (Bryce, 1907, p. 19). Bryce fought for years to have the federal government face its treaty responsibilities toward the health and education of First Nations peoples; the DIA and parliament ignored his recommendations and went so far as to ban him from publishing his findings (Bryce, 1922; Sproule-Jones, 1996).

A growing body of research documents abuses that occurred against Aboriginal children and youth in the residential schools, and further, connects these practices with the official policy of assimilation (Haig-Brown, 1998; Wotherspoon, 2003). Aboriginal children in residential schools experienced the trauma of forced separation from parents and loved ones. Sisters and brothers were forbidden contact with each other (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5). Children were forbidden to speak their own language, and were beaten or otherwise punished when they did (Cardinal, 1969; Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5; Fournier & Crey, 1997; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2004). Many endured physical and sexual abuse while resident in the schools (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5; Haig-Brown, 1988).

The schools lacked qualified teachers. They offered fewer hours of instruction, and maintained lower academic standards than those required by provincial ministries of education (Cardinal, 1969; Haig-Brown, 1988). Students in residential schools attended classes only half days and spent the other half performing manual labour, ostensibly training, that served to maintain the school environment in a system described as child slavery (Haig-Brown, 1988; Wotherspoon 2003). R.F. Davey's 1968 review of the educational performance of the residential school system (up to 1950) found training available in the schools "contained very little of instructional value, but consisted mainly of the performance of repetitive, routine chores of little or no educational value" (Canada, RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Ch. 10). With classroom instructional time limited to half-days, Davey assessed the potential for progress as "impossible". He found that in 1948, out of a population of 9,149 students, only just over 100 were enrolled above grade eight (Canada, RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Part 2, Ch. 10). Over 40 per cent of teaching staff had no

professional training, and struggled in difficult conditions with few resources for language training (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 1, Part 2, Ch. 10). Federally sanctioned lower standards of education, coupled with the forcible removal of languages ensured that generations of First Nations suffered from compromised language skills in English as well as their own languages (Weber-Pillwax, 2001).

Today an estimated 93,000 survivors of residential schools are alive in Canada. The legacy of residential schools and the intergenerational effects of these traumas have an enormous impact on former students and their families (Sinclair, 2007; Wotherspoon, 2003). For example, Sinclair (2008) found that the divisive methods of socializing students at the Onion Lake School in Saskatchewan had later consequences for former students in their adult relationships, a legacy that continues to have a negative impact on family and personal relationships.

According to Cardinal (1969), church-run residential schools preached brotherly love and tolerance and taught the abstract concepts of democracy and freedom; but their actions bore no resemblance to the doctrines that they preached. He argues that experiences in the schools familiarized Aboriginal children with a cultural environment that would not include them, and at the same time rendered them strangers to their own people. Held in residential schools through their formative years, they were deprived of the social training needed to fulfill their responsibilities to kin and community. Traditional education and parenting systems were compromised, and extended families were destroyed by the trauma of long periods of separation (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2004). Despite this, the residential school

system did not succeed in assimilating Aboriginal people into Euro-Canadian society (Haig-Brown, 1988).

Though the delivery of education has changed over the past century, the changes have not had much impact on the effectiveness of education for Aboriginal students. According to Wotherspoon (2003), the only lasting legacy of the state sponsored assimilation project has been the harmful attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures. In 1996 the last federally run residential school, Gordon Residential School in Saskatchewan, closed (AFN, n.d.) In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended a public inquiry be held to investigate the effects of residential school policies and abuses. In 2007 the federal government began receiving applications for payment under the “Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement”. As of October 2010 over 100,000 applications were processed (INAC, 2010). As part of this agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been established. The Commission’s mandate includes acknowledging the experiences, impacts and consequences for students in the schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, n.d).

The Sixties Scoop

The term *Sixties Scoop* refers to the sharp increase the apprehension of Aboriginal children between 1960 and the mid 1980’s. A look at child welfare policy provides some clues to this occurrence. Until 1951, the provinces were responsible for child welfare under the Canadian constitution. However, the Indian Act absolved provinces of responsibilities to First Nations people (Hughes, 2006). First Nations people had no access to government child welfare services until 1951 when an amended the Indian Act brought Status Indians under provincial child welfare laws. No new funding accompanied

the change in jurisdiction. Consequently, provinces were reluctant to take up their new responsibilities (Hughes, 2006). New funding arrangements between federal to provincial governments were finally initiated in the 1960's, during the time when many residential schools were closing. Coincidentally, Schools of Social Work were developing at growing rates in Canada. These combined factors coincide with notable increases in the apprehension of Aboriginal children by state authorities (Sinclair, 2007; 2008). The number of Aboriginal children in care in BC increased from 29 in 1955 to 1446 in 1964 (Hughes, 2006). Sinclair (2007) and others have traced this increase to an extension of the assimilationist agenda of residential school policy:

The ideology behind the residential school system was to “civilize” Aboriginal people and to assimilate them into the mainstream body politic... Consequently, Aboriginal communities and families have now faced several decades of fallout from the Residential school period, which included, as by-products of an assimilationist agenda, the deliberate destruction of traditional family, social, and political systems, intergenerational abuse, and social pathology in many communities. A logical consequence of the replacement of traditional socialization with institutional abuse and trauma over several generations is the current high level of child welfare involvement in the Aboriginal population. Child welfare intervention that began in the late 1950s, referred to in retrospect as the Sixties Scoop, was the tip of the emerging iceberg of what is now the institution of Aboriginal child welfare. Currently, Aboriginal children are still “in care” in disproportionate numbers, but for a multitude of reasons beyond just apprehension by “overzealous social workers” (Sinclair, 2007, p. 68).

The 60's scoop saw large numbers of Aboriginal children apprehended from their homes and communities without their family's knowledge or consent: social workers from the period report that it was common practice in British Columbia to "scoop" almost all newborns whose mothers resided on a reserve (Sinclair, 2007). Sinclair describes the forced removal of children during this period as "an act of genocide, deliberately implemented upon the demise of the residential school system to perpetuate the governments' assimilation policies" (2007, p. 67).

Approximately 70% of Aboriginal children apprehended during this time were adopted into non-Aboriginal homes. By the 1970s, one in three Aboriginal children were separated by their families by adoption or fostering. (Fournier & Crey, 1997). Many Aboriginal adults who were transracially adopted during the Sixties Scoop acquired identity issues associated with the contradictions of being socialized and acculturated into middle-class white society. Adoptees report great personal difficulties associated with the process of reconnecting with family members who are among the most marginalized and oppressed group of Canadians (Sinclair, 2007). Aboriginal adults who were adopted as children into non Aboriginal families identified loss of identity and loss of culture as significant barriers to their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health. (Carrierre, 2005).

De-colonization

According to L.T. Smith (1999), the ideas that are seen as 'real', and accepted as universal truth, are generally defined by dominant systems of knowledge and culture, to the exclusion of all other possible understandings of reality. Marie Battiste (1998) agrees and has used the term *cognitive imperialism* to describe the ways particular sources of

knowledge are empowered to exclude other ways of knowing that exist outside of dominant frameworks. Public education is a primary medium for advancing these dominant political and social agendas (Apple, 2004; Fine, 2004). Apple (2004) argues that any efforts to understand and engage in the struggle over meaning, identity and control in the process and practice of education require a direct focus on understanding the power relations that created this terrain.

From the First Nations perspective, Western education existed as a specific tool to alter the identity, values, and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples: residential schooling was designed to Christianize and re-socialize Indigenous children, break their relationships with families, their ancestors and their connection to the land (Williams, 2006). Schooling continues to be a factor in disconnecting people from their relationship with the land, families and communities (Cardinal, 1969).

Student achievement is affected by linguistic, historic and cultural realities that undermine Aboriginal students' experience in public schooling. "Public school teachers are generally unaware of these complexities and in most instances are unprepared to address the uniqueness of Aboriginal epistemologies in their pedagogical practice" (Cherubini, et al, 2010, p. 335). Mainstream education curriculum models are designed for large-scale instruction. The hierarchical structure of these learning environments have been criticized for the limitations they place on students' opportunities to engage, solve problems and think creatively. Indigenous scholars argue that such rigid pedagogical approaches are problematic for all learners (Redwing & Hill, 2007). There are also value conflicts that may occur for Indigenous children in public schooling, as illustrated in the following RCAP excerpt:

Values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and nations are diverse, but there are common elements that often conflict with those dominant in the conventional classroom. For example, Aboriginal children may be raised in a home environment where co-operation and non-competitiveness are emphasized. They may be taught that intellectual and other gifts are meant to be shared for the benefit of others rather than for personal gain. In some Aboriginal cultures, the principle of non-interference predominates; the child's will is respected, and adults do not interfere in the choices made by the child. The imposition of the adult's will on the child is considered inappropriate except, of course, in instances where the child may encounter harm. By contrast, the regimentation of the classroom experience, the emphasis on individual achievement, and the exertion of the teacher's authority constitute a rupture with the child's home environment. (Canada RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3 Ch. 5)

From an Indigenous place of learning and relationship, a conflict emerges when engaged in Western learning systems. Williams explains that it is difficult for children's psyche to shift from Indigenous society—where sharing resources, generosity and giving things away are the measure of a good community member—to a Western environment dominated by values that prioritize wealth accumulation and individual gain (in Rhydwen, 2009). Colonial education systems achieved this end by separating children from families and communities, and learning from labour. Indigenous ways of teaching and learning emerge from a very different perspective. The essential elements are based on:

- inclusivity
- community building

- recognition and celebration of individual uniqueness
- sharing story
- mentorship
- apprenticeship
- learning by doing
- learning by deeply observing
- learning through listening
- measuring the worth of an individual on his or her own merits—not against the worth of their peers
- the ability to be in a place of dissonance, uncertainty and anticipation (cwelelep)
- developing a listening openness
- transformative learning through affective connections
- an energy that indicates an emergence of a group’s sense of purpose (kamucwkalha)

(Williams and Tanaka (2007))

The following stories provide examples of conflicts Indigenous peoples experience within environments completely organized by Western principles. Willie Ermine (2009) spoke of Aboriginal people’s experience in residential schools at a conference on Aboriginal Education Research. He delivered his address entirely in Cree language, with translation headphones provided for non-Cree speakers. Ermine (2009) told how children, sent far from home, had their hair cut off, and “were forced to pray, pray, pray”. He argued that, even today, things are little changed when children are required to attend school from a young age:

Our thinking is taken away from us, and still they try to teach us how to be white men. As if they don’t look at us as human beings. We were led into this world to be Cree. No one should take it away. ... The Western frame of mind is putting a stop to our development (Ermine, 2009)

Ermine outlined the problems of contemporary Western education for Indigenous students. Elders are not part of the school system, nor are Indigenous ways of knowing incorporated in teaching structure. He recounted his own experience of developing a ‘Western frame of mind’ in school, one he had to let go of when he went home. Once he returned home, the Elders taught him how to live according to the knowledge, culture and medicine of his people; how it is to be good hearted, to have something he described as “heart knowledge”.

We who are First Nations know where we come from. Elders tell us. Legends tell us. How we recognize our kinship with everything is not being taught in school. ...Elders have our knowledge. We have to learn carefully, to be related to people (Ermine, 2009).

A survey of Inuit women in NWT, Nunavik and Labrador (Pauktuutit, 1991) echoed these concerns: the school environment limited a child’s activities to one location. This confinement interrupted the relationship building process between children and adults, particularly since the teachers in the schools were strangers to the children. Prior to the introduction of school settings, adult family and community members spent more time with children and consequently could respond to their needs for food, rest, and provide teaching moments in an organic manner. The women reported that being in school settings also had a negative impact on children’s diet and the values they associated with the kinds of foods consumed in school (Pauktuutit, 1991).

Interspace: Knowing, Teaching and Learning in Two Worlds

Finding a terrain on which to establish an appropriate, respectful and fertile ground for learning—one that has the capacity to recognize and operate in ways that

build skills and understanding—is a complex task. I have adopted the term *interspace* to discuss the possibility for institutionalized education systems and Indigenous peoples moving forward together to create, build, and maintain responsive learning environments that support and foster Aboriginal student success in public schooling. The term recognizes a place at the centre of a relationship where people who come from different knowledge systems, ways of understanding, values and languages can come together with respect; acknowledge and accept the knowledge forms of the other; and share learning without requiring either party to give up or denounce their identities or ways of knowing. Harold Cardinal spoke to the importance of maintaining cultural identity in 1969:

[It] is our belief that the Indian must be an Indian. He cannot realize his potential as a brown white man. Only by being an Indian, by being simply what he [she] is can he [she] ever be at peace with him[her]self or open to others. (Cardinal, 1969, p. 170).

The Indigenous worldview is rooted in a practical, personal, contextual, accepting and supportive environment. The world is understood as animate, and the universe as purposeful. There is a strong sense of the interrelatedness of all things. In contrast, argues Sinclair (2008), the Cartesian rationality of the non-Indigenous world view is goal-oriented, views the world as inanimate, and assumes a hierarchy of human over nature.

Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous approaches to learning should not be confused with what some educators have called different ‘learning styles’. Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning, based in relationship, are approaches that would be beneficial to all learners. For example, in the Sencoten language there is no single word that could be interchanged with English to describe the purpose of teaching and learning

and education—which is “to become or be a whole human being” (Williams, 2008). In this context, the process of education refers to all the necessary things a community of people do to ensure that their people will continue, and to ensure that each individual will be able to stand as a whole human being (Williams, 2008). In the Dine language the word for teaching and learning, K’e’ describes a way of understanding interdependent compassionate relationships as they manifest in life. We need to understand these relationships in order to be whole human beings. The understanding of relationship includes all elements of life including earth/sky, human/spirit world, self/community/nation, animals, plants, ancestors/descendants. (Williams, 2008) Every decision/action we make will affect our descendents.

“Original Indigenous education is comprised of the systems created by Indigenous societies to perpetuate many of the systems present today despite Canadian government policies that have attempted to disrupt and dissolve traditional education. These policies – residential schools, ceremonial bans, imposition of externally controlled governments — have created a legacy of education as a tool opposed to the perpetuation and continuation of IK [Indigenous Knowledges]” (Redwing & Hill, 2007, p 1024).

Successful processes and strategies required to further establish an interspace would likely accrue benefits for entire student populations, and be of particular help to those who have been marginalized by ‘common sense’ acceptance of Western values and forms of knowledge in schooling. *Indian Control of Indian Education* (NIB/AFN, 1972) discussed the consequences of integration as residential schools were phased out:

Integration in the past twenty years has simply meant the closing down of Indian schools and transferring Indian students to schools away from their Reserves, often against the wishes of the Indian parents. The acceleration with which this program has developed has not taken into account the fact that neither Indian parents and children, nor the white community: parents, children and schools, were prepared for integration, or able to cope with the many problems, which were created. (National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations (NIB/AFN), 1972, pp. 25)

Indian Control of Indian Education calls for a conceptual approach to the process of integration, one that respects difference and provides a curriculum that draws the best from both traditions. It warns that, if integration is approached from only one perspective, it will be a failure, as had all previous attempts to bring Indigenous students together with the settler population. These attempts stemmed from the perspective that the Indian student would give up identity, values and a way of life. The NIB/AFN (1972) argued that, approached from this perspective, integration held no benefit for Indian children. A successful approach would require inclusive participation of all parents, teachers, pupils—Indigenous non-Indigenous—and recognition of Indigenous customs, values, languages, and contributions to Canadian history. The paper's comments on integration conclude, "The success of integration is not the responsibility of Indians alone. Non-Indians must be ready to recognize the value of another way of life; to learn about Indian history, customs and language; and to modify, if necessary, some of their own ideas and practices" (NIB/AFN, 1972, p. 26).

One of the earliest known treaties between Indigenous peoples in Canada, and Europeans is the Two Tow Wampum between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch in the 1600's. The treaty is documented in a beaded belt that symbolizes two canoes running in the same direction in one river, neither crossing the path of or diverting the other. Principles of the treaty recognized each people as separate and equal, in a commitment to live as neighbours in peace without interference in each other's way of life. These principles provide an original framework that could be the foundation from which to repair the relationship between Haudenosaunee and Canada (Redwing & Hill, 2007).

“Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him; the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being” (NIB/AFN, 1972, p.9). Possession of a sense of identity as an Aboriginal person, and a sense of belonging in a school or any environment require more than having knowledge and connections to Aboriginal culture; it is also necessary to have a sense of hope, to experience a sense of comfort and well-being. When these conditions exist within a group, members feel free to allow their true voices to emerge. The level of trust brings a feeling of freedom to express, and confidence that one's voice is being heard. In this kind of community engagement, each individual is honoured and has a place within the community process (Williams and Tanaka, 2007).

When Lorna Williams presented *Weaving worlds: Enhancing the Learning of Aboriginal Students* at the 5th National Education Conference in Hobart, (Rhydwen, 2009), she spoke of the importance of learning in two worlds for living in two worlds, and the importance of understanding colonization and decolonization. She said "unless

we reclaim our humanity, literacy and numeracy scores will mean nothing”. The purpose of learning is to be a good human being, "to be a whole human being”.

Five centuries of colonization have significant impacts, but Indigenous peoples around the world do persist. They are driving an emergence of a new consciousness and vision, coupled with advances in the constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples rights (Battiste, 1998). A postcolonial framework must be constructed from within a renewal and reconstruction of Indigenous principles, worldviews, and languages. Current researchers in Ontario argue that the success of such policy initiatives relies on educators making meaningful connections between Aboriginal children’s cultural heritage and the education they receive in public schooling (Cherubini, et al., 2010).

The following chapter reports on this study’s findings about the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements in BC, an intentional process to renew and reconstruct these principles from within the institution of public schooling in British Columbia.

Chapter 6 Working Together: Riverbend School District Enhancement Agreement

Introduction

In the spring of 2007, 35 of BC's 60 School Districts had completed an Enhancement Agreement: 3 were into their second five year agreement and 25 were in planning or draft stages of an initial agreement. By April 2010, 49 School Districts had signed an EA (5 in a second term, 1 in a third term); 6 School Districts had a draft EA; 5 were in the planning stages (BC Ministry of Education, 2010a). The goal of the process is to develop an open dialogue about what success means for Aboriginal students and families, then to identify the conditions required to support Aboriginal students to succeed. This analysis of the process builds on findings from multiple perspectives and explores the extent to which the relationship-building process has provided space for these groups to find common ground.

This chapter provides an account of the process to develop an Enhancement Agreement in school district from the standpoint of people involved. To protect the identity of those involved, this district is called Riverbend. The first section describes general characteristics of the school district, Aboriginal programs, and demographics. The following sections describe the participants and process of developing the agreement derived from data collected in interviews, community forums, and meeting minutes. Chapter 7 examines the text of the Enhancement Agreement this group produced.

Riverbend School District

Riverbend School District⁶ had completed its first five-year Enhancement Agreement and had begun work on a second agreement when I observed this community process between November 2007 and June 2009. This section provides an overview of the school district and discussion of the processes and themes that emerged.

Riverbend School District sits on the traditional territory of three First Nations⁷. The nations are separate ethnic groups, affiliated through a major language group. Each nation holds a number of small reserves, some located in Riverbend School District as well as other neighbouring school districts (where they are also involved in Enhancement Agreement processes). The Aboriginal population of the Riverbend School District includes students from the local traditional territories; several reserve communities; and a diverse urban population including Métis, Inuit, and First Nations peoples⁸. A major highway cuts through part of the district and isolates one small area of this mixed urban and rural catchment. In 2010, the district served a student population of 19,788 students, 8.9% of whom self identified as Aboriginal. There were 1,533 Aboriginal students participating in Aboriginal programs (BC Ministry of Education, 2010b).

The District's Aboriginal Education Program staff included a half-time District Administrator, two District teachers, two office assistants and 20 Aboriginal Support Workers. The Aboriginal Education Department operates under the guidance of the Aboriginal Advisory Board, with representatives from each of First Nation A, B, and C as well as the local Métis society and the local urban Aboriginal society. A School

⁶ The name of the school district is masked to protect the anonymity of participants

⁷ To protect participant anonymity, the First Nations will be referred to as "First Nation A; First Nation B; and First Nation C"

⁸ The term Aboriginal includes people who self identify as Aboriginal or Indigenous. First Nations include Status Indians as defined under the Indian Act and the Canadian Constitution.

Trustee and Aboriginal program staff represent the school district on the Aboriginal Advisory Board.

The Aboriginal Program provides Aboriginal students with personal and academic support through Aboriginal Support Workers. The Aboriginal Education Teacher assists Aboriginal Support Workers to develop support plans for individual students. The Aboriginal Program includes two cultural awareness programs. The first involves classroom presentations and hands on learning experiences for all students and are facilitated by Aboriginal presenters. These are tied to the provincial curriculum Prescribed Learning Outcomes. The second is a Cultural Enrichment Program which provides Aboriginal students with opportunities to learn about their culture and history. The Program also supports district staff through professional development workshops related to Aboriginal culture, history and curriculum resource materials.

Building the Enhancement Agreement Process in Riverbend School District

This account of the Enhancement Agreement development in Riverbend School District follows the process from its beginning in October 2007 to the agreement signing in June 2010, reporting key participants' contributions observed in three community forums, two ceremonies, and three interviews. One Aboriginal Program Teacher, an Administrator, and one Aboriginal Education Branch Coordinator consented to be interviewed for this study, and provided additional information and updates about the process. Their perspectives are reported in detail in a later section, *Situated Perspectives*. The following sections tell the story of developing the agreement.

The Aboriginal Education Department staff and Program Administrator played key roles in coordinating and facilitating the process, with input and assistance from the

Enhancement Agreement Coordinators in the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch at the Ministry of Education. The 15 members of the Riverbend School District Aboriginal Advisory Board were integral to every step.

The forums involved Aboriginal Program Staff and Administrator, Aboriginal Support Workers, Aboriginal Cultural Presenters, Elders and representatives of many Aboriginal community organizations. School District representatives included Assistant Superintendents, curriculum and instructional specialists, and School Board Trustees and Chair.

Participants in the Enhancement Agreement process connected on multiple levels through community, professional and familial relationships. Each of the nearly 50 participants offered unique and important contributions to the process. Between 38 and 48 people consistently attended each community forum. Every Enhancement Agreement forum, gathering, or ceremony opened with a prayer and a welcome song offered by husband and wife Lorne⁹ and Cathy¹⁰ who held multiple roles as advocates and supporters of Aboriginal children's learning, as Elders, Cultural Presenters, Education Coordinator, and local and provincial Aboriginal Education Advisory Board members. The territories of each First Nation were formally recognized. At each gathering Lorne reminded participants that they were involved in great work together—blessed with the Elders' support—the young ones are the connection to the future.

At the beginning of each meeting everyone introduced themselves. Often, Aboriginal participants introduced themselves by English and Indigenous names. They

⁹ Pseudonym

¹⁰ Pseudonym

included details of their ancestry, their relationship to the land, and to the people in the room. Many spoke of their commitment to the task at hand, and to the well-being of children, now and in the future.

Each meeting included a meal, lunch, dinner or snack depending on the time of day and length of the meeting. Elders were always invited to the table ahead of other participants. Each meeting closed with formal words of appreciation for people's time and work, for the journey and the sacrifice of their time, a wish for their safe journey home and a drum song.

What is Success?

At the first community meeting in October 2007, 38 participants formed working groups to discuss three questions posed by the Enhancement Agreement Coordinators from the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch:

- What is success for our students?
- What does success look like?
- What do you want for your children?

In answer to these questions the groups collectively produced a list of 95 items, shown below in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Riverbend Community Defines the Elements of Success

Self-knowledge	Emotional foundation	Personal strengths	Relationship	Achievement	Skills	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self determination • Strong sense of self • Knowing who you are and where you are from • Self-confidence • Self-worth • Self-identity: for the child to know who they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being happy • Balanced • Being open-minded • Solid foundation • Need to feel "safe" • Focus on the positive aspects of each child • If the child trusts you they will share more things • Self-esteem • Self-confidence • Pride in yourself • Strength • Support • Love yourself and being loved • Self-respect • Independence • Self-worth • Pride • Belonging • Resiliency • Adaptability • Flexibility • Culture feeds spirit, contentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of accomplishment • Sense of humility • Healthy risk taking/overcoming challenges • Being able to seek the advice of Elders • Being up front and aware of failures • Achievement • Never giving up • Listening • Leadership • Acknowledgement • Consistency • Commitment • Planning • Organization • Failure: learning from taking responsibility • Owning your actions • Working hard • Accomplishments • Plan goals • Prioritize • Motivation • Generating their own success • Learn from choices, not judging choices • Success is hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role models and community • Community sense-for students to feel a sense of community • Support mechanisms for students • Building trust-this is most important! • Have parents involved • Validation of one's family • Sense of belonging • Positive role models • Finding the strengths for each child • Parental support • Include Support Workers in school meetings concerning the child • Trust amongst the school, families, counselors, students, etc. • Connections • Role models • Positive reinforcement • Nurturing environment • Ownership of a child's success • Finding the right mentor, the right path • Lead by example- "walk the Talk" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process not the product • Assess the individual as a whole person-not all statistics or academic qualities • We need to enhance their education not be relied upon to fill the gaps in the system • Coming to school-not being absent • Physical, Emotional, Mental, Spiritual Balance • Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing students with skills and knowledge base to succeed in school • Encourage creativity • Life skills • Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect of differences (we are a global community) • Culture and history knowledge for all kids • Find a balance on all aspects of the child's life • Nutrition • Physical activity • Basic needs met • Healthy lifestyle/ decisions

Defining the Meaning of Success

The group reconvened one month later at an all-day forum, facilitated by Riverbend Aboriginal Education Program staff, once again with the assistance of the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch coordinators. Branch coordinators asked Aboriginal community members to work on developing a concrete definition of what success means for their children.

Participants built on the list created in the previous meeting. “Feelings” were a topic that became central to many of the discussions, highlighting participants’ concerns about the importance of relationships between students (younger and older), between youth and elders, in family, and in community. People expressed concern for children’s need to feel safe, accepted, included, and heard within the non-Aboriginal context of school. Students need the emotional foundation that comes with having a sense of belonging, feeling connected with their community and school, trusting those connections, and feeling contented with them. A sense of self-worth is an essential element of success. “Students who feel bad about themselves give up”, said one contributor. Participants emphasized that meeting these needs is more relevant and important to student success than academic learning.

Participants reported that to create conditions for success required attention to balance on many levels: the whole child; life balance; the school environment and; the education program must all be taken into consideration. People noted the need to balance resources across the school district, where some schools were nearly empty, with others bursting at the seams. Other elements required for success included: the need to capture student interest in curriculum that had relevance for them; implement more engaging learning activities; and initiate peer support programs for homework.

Factors that interfered with students' potential to develop a positive sense of self worth included: exhaustion brought by long school days and heavy homework loads; poverty; tenuous food security; and the feelings that emerge from parents' and grandparents' experiences in residential schools. In many schools, Aboriginal Support Workers had no existing physical work space. Consequently, they reported that they were compelled to store files in their cars, and meet students in custodian's closets. One support worker noted how difficult it is to help a child feel comfortable when she wasn't comfortable herself in her work environment.

Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch Coordinator, Aaron¹¹, introduced the afternoon session and asked participants to engage in a "process of construction to shape the goals into statements that could be measured". In response to the idea of measurement, participants instead raised issues of identity and belonging. One said, "You have to know who you are, your parents, your past, your culture. Otherwise, the search takes you in circles. Knowing who you are puts you at ease". An Elder identified having a sense of belonging as a very big issue for students. Another stood to explain that finding identity is difficult for Aboriginal children, because there is a shame put on it, and there are time constraints that limit opportunities to explore the meaning of identity.

Aaron acknowledged that belonging and identity are important, but insisted that they find ways to measure the results of their Enhancement Agreement. He said, "You would have to know *how* you would know that these things make a difference. Could it be measured in a survey?" One participant protested, "The system wants to quantify. The system needs to understand, grow, and broaden, to be willing to live with things that

¹¹ a pseudonym

cannot be quantified. We are our feelings. Feelings cannot be quantified. The system must recognize this.” Another participant challenged the system’s capacity to measure the reality students faced. As an example, she raised the relational challenges Aboriginal Support Workers face daily in their efforts to support students in a school environment where their clothes, skin, and culture set them apart, and many families survive on annual income levels less than half of the \$12,000 poverty line. These circumstances place demands on ASW’s well outside the boundaries of their jobs. They are compelled to provide critically needed student supports that will never be measured.

Aaron acknowledged that early Enhancement Agreements employed quantification as an ‘easy way’ to assess outcomes, but also noted their usefulness: for example, the drop-out rate can concretely indicate a problem that needs attention. Even though measuring outcomes does abstract results from the actual growth of the child, he argued that it is a necessary method to indicate achievement and connect educator’s work to the experience students’ have in the classrooms. He encouraged participants, “To clarify and capture the meaning of the goals, and breathe life into them” and stated that, in order to do this, “the dialogue needs to continue”.

An Elder reminded participants that “the child in the school belongs to all of us, and we have to take care of each one, find a place for them and make sure that they belong”. He said, “each person has different gifts, but we all belong to the same circle of life. In order to learn, we must trust. Lack of trust is a barrier to learning. Take the barrier down. Start teaching in a good way. The puzzle has to start fitting. We belong here to do this, and it is time”.

He suggested participants approach the exercise by working to fit the goal statements into the seven circles of the Seven Laws. These Laws are foundational to the local First Nation culture and for millennia formed the basis for human development and successful fulfilment of a purposeful life. He spoke in detail about each of these laws: Health, Happiness, Generation, Generosity, Humility, Forgiveness and Understanding. These concepts later became central to the final text of the Enhancement Agreement, and are reported in more detail in Table 7.3.

The Enhancements Branch Coordinators explained that they use the Medicine Wheel as a measurement tool. Aaron showed a diagram of four quadrants, each representing one aspect: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. He suggested groups begin to shape the goals by working each of the elements of success on their list into one of the quadrants on the wheel. At the end of the long day, the groups produced four flip charts with lists of elements under the four aspects.

Nicolas¹², an Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch Coordinator, spoke about the importance of Aboriginal communities taking ownership of the Enhancement Agreement to hold both the School District and Aboriginal communities accountable. “Good education is required to create healthy leaders and to live in both worlds”, he said.

Circles and New Thoughts

The group met for a third time in January 2008. Following the traditional opening of the meeting and words of appreciation, Aaron emphasized the non-linear nature of the process. He encouraged the group to bring new thoughts and ideas forward, noting that the Seven Laws introduced at the November meeting were integral to the process. The

¹² a pseudonym

group reviewed the work of the previous meeting, paying particular attention to the” sense of belonging” theme that emerged so strongly in previous discussions.

The record of this meetings work produced a long list of items, grouped by themes in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Riverbend Enhancement Agreement: Circles and New Thoughts Meeting

Identity	Success	Community	EA Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural presentations are making children feel better about whom they are. • The more teachers embrace it, the more students will get out of it. We should be respecting and embracing all cultures in school. • Stereotyping • What is the solution? Keep repeating the message continuously. • It's tough to explain yourself when people perceive you in a different way. Sense of identity is very important. Be proud of who you are. • Some school districts have their goal as making children feel welcome at school. Don't forget about the child who is trying to find itself. • The identity around shame needs to be undone. • Elders are the main artery. What are we teaching our grandchildren? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition is very important. How can kids learn if they are hungry • The term 'measurement' should be more on how the students apply themselves more than what grade the student gets. • Success should be the holistic view of the child. • Students should feel and be valued through definition of success through the Enhancement Agreement • Child is the central focus • Are we looking at each child? Success shouldn't be on grades. Are we failing the children? We should be looking at how or what the schools are doing to make individual children successful. • There is fear about having too much emphasis on hard data. • Instead of just looking at students, shouldn't we look backwards to see where the child came from • This is not just academic • We need to look at the bigger picture. • Keep it simple! If you slow down the rate of teaching, sometimes the learning gets better. • Ask kids what they need. • Don't use the word "measurement"; instead ask, "How will we know"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the community get involved • How do kids get the information or message home to parents? • Parenting and craft classes are available to parents, but parents don't come • Parents have to take responsibility • Role models • How do you validate community involvement? • The Advisory Board needs to have more say in who gets hired as head of programs. Principals are under pressure with making cuts due to budgets. Aboriginal Support Workers shouldn't have to be filling in gaps made by cuts. Support Worker Role Description needs to be clear in the EA regarding this. • We need to work together as a community. A simple lesson is to make students believe in themselves. • Everyone who signs the Enhancement Agreement is accountable to uphold it. • Don't break the circles. The circles only get stronger • The Seven Laws connect the circle and everyone to each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are at the focus stage of this process • The process is what is really important. We can't short-circuit it. We need to build dialogue. • Teachers need to play an important role in the development and implementation of the agreement. • The process is growing. • How much deeper does this process need to go? • We need to create a process where dialogue will continue.

In closing, Nicolas reviewed their work and spoke again about the important commitment that everyone makes in the Enhancement Agreement. He spoke about

success for Aboriginal students, and reiterated that, it is necessary to measure outcomes. Some indicators are needed to show whether or not progress is being made toward a goal.

Parents, Students, Community Members Contribute

The fourth meeting convened on an April 2008 evening in an elementary school located in the remotest neighbourhood of the school District. This school has a higher population of Aboriginal students, and home office of the District's Aboriginal Program. The accessible time and location of the meeting ensured that parents and students could contribute to the process. Ministry of Education representatives did not attend this meeting. The Aboriginal Program Administrator was on leave. An Assistant Superintendent from the School District attended in her stead.

Participants reviewed the data developed in the past meetings, and were invited to add their input to the quadrants. The Medicine Wheel concept began to form a framework for the developing agreement. Together the group drafted four charts, one for each Medicine Wheel quadrant: *Physical Goal*, *Emotional Goal*, *Spiritual Goal* and *Intellectual Goal*. Each chart included sections titled: *Rationale*, *Observing the Journey*, *Indicators of Success*, and *Community Commitments*. Each Rationale section listed 2-43 items (mostly one-word), in order of importance. The *Observing the Journey (performance indicators)* sections listed observable elements related to the goal, 5-12 elements. How to measure progress remained an ongoing question. The *Indicators of Success (Targets)* section was left blank on each chart. The *Community Commitments* section contained two identical questions on each chart. "How are we committed to our students?" and "What are we doing now to support this area?" Minutes of this meeting summarized these charts, and for the first time the word "Draft" appeared on the minutes.

Commitment Statements

At the fifth meeting in June 2008, forty-eight participants formulated a plan to achieve the goals they had developed for their Enhancement Agreement. The Aboriginal Program Administrator opened the meeting with an acknowledgment of the traditional territory of the three First Nations. Following the drum song, Lorne spoke seriously about the task to be completed today, reminding participants, “We are doing this for the children. The work we do today will have an impact on the future children as well”. The Assistant Superintendent explained that, in the summer, he would work with the Administrator of the Aboriginal program and one of the District Aboriginal teachers to assemble the Enhancement Agreement Document based on the work the group had accomplished so far.

Aboriginal Program staff facilitated—Darlene¹³ explained that the purpose and process of this gathering was to create the community commitment statements. Four flip charts labelled *Emotional*, *Intellectual*, *Physical* and *Spiritual* displayed material from previous meetings. Darlene asked participants to begin with the area that they felt strongest about, and work with people gathered there for about fifteen minutes. At the signal of a drum sound, participants moved on to contribute to another of the four charts, and so on.

Each group quickly settled into work on the charts. At the *Emotional* chart, people silently passed the pen back and forth. Each wrote their own commitment statements. The group at the *Spiritual* chart engaged in a lively discussion before their ideas began to appear on the paper. After an hour, each group completed their cycle through all four

¹³ a pseudonym

charts, producing four lists of 25-30 commitment statements for each goal area. Table 6.3 highlights the responses, randomly selected from the lists produced at the meeting.

Table 6.3 Riverbend Enhancement Agreement: Commitment Meeting

What are we committed to?	
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with parents, staff, community groups • Ensure staff/admin "walk the talk" respecting students as they expect to be respected • Hearing, not just listening to students • Non-judgemental support of students • Building self-esteem by always having a welcoming environment, cultural presenters in the schools on regular basis • Assist in building strong, self-assured students: proud of who they are • Safe space for students to express emotion • #1 priority for <u>all</u> schools: physical space to deal/listen to emotional issues • emotional needs need to be equal to intellectual needs • Peer Support and Restorative Justice-leadership skills taught at earlier ages • Common ground with students (where do I fit in) 	<p>Intellectual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal history-understanding First Nations • Lifelong learners • "Raise the bar" on graduation course selection, look more at individual course selections, trades programs • Schools connect with our community resources • Building self-confidence so the fear of success is not an issue • First Nations studies mandatory K-12 • Build the self-esteem: be proud of who you are • Culturally based leadership program, meeting with community leaders to learn what it means (protocol, songs, regalia) • Recognition that intellect and academic success are not the same thing • ASW invited to all IEP/SBT meetings • Mentoring (Elders/students) especially before leaving high school
<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural culinary program (lunches, snacks, Aboriginal health guide) • Plant life and vegetation (plant walks) • Provide a safe, comfortable, respectfully welcoming place • Aboriginal sports and games-Pow Wow dancing, Métis jigging—add to PE curriculum • Liaison with community contacts: dental, mental health, • More resources for students who have no where to live • #1 priority (linked with emotion) Every school needs a safe dedicated space for ASW and students only • Food budget for each ASW • Aboriginal Sports Day, inclusive of special needs • Extra-curricular funding and transportation in place • Teach students about traditional medicines such as cedar, sage and sweet grass baths 	<p>Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help student to be proud of who they are • Work together to give them back their spirituality • Practicing and using your gifts-everyone has a gift • Recognize that children can teach parents, which will bring them together • Keeping traditional openings • Aboriginal Kindergarten program • Teach the students there are teachings in every situation • The larger school community recognize the value in spiritual teachings, that may <u>or may not</u> be consistent with formal education • Connection and respect for nature and all living things • open-minded recognition of the difference between our medicine and Western medicine • more pro-d teaching Aboriginal cultures • teach with compassion! • Identity-reducing racism

One participant explained a strategy she employed to counteract racial tension in a school. She noticed that the subject of Aboriginal cultural presentations often brought cat calls and derisive comments directed at the Aboriginal students. As a result, many Aboriginal students preferred not to participate in cultural events that would bring them face to face with these reactions from the other students. In response, this education worker created an Aboriginal cultural event that would include all students. This involved Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students working together, mentored by Elders to host a family dinner. The Elders taught the students the ceremonial protocols and acknowledgments required to host a ceremony on the traditional First Nation territory. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants learned the proper and respectful ways to treat guests within these cultural traditions. All students learned and followed the protocols. They organized and hosted the feast together, and welcomed guests to the territory as part of the ceremony. The education worker described the event as a pivotal and moving experience for all who participated. After the ceremony students in the school treated the cultural presentations with respect.

In closing this meeting, the Assistant Superintendent reported the School District's progress on some issues raised at the first Enhancement Agreement meeting. They were making an effort to respond to Support Workers' concerns about work space, and also developed an agreement with the Ministry of Children and Families for two new social workers to support Aboriginal students in the schools. Cathy stood and said "I see that everyone is working hard together for the children and you should be proud of yourselves. Give yourselves a pat on the back", ending the meeting, as always, with words of appreciation.

Actualizing the Process: Writing the Agreement Text

The writing process to produce the Enhancement Agreement text began over the summer of 2008. Aboriginal Program Administrator, Lorraine¹⁴ worked on her own and with the Assistant Superintendent who had participated in the dialogue process. Working with the material developed in the meetings and forums, they drafted the intellectual goal. When I asked Lorraine about the writing process she described feeling some trepidation with this approach. She said that after the energetic synergy of the collective process, she didn't feel right about tackling this stage of the work on her own,:

It was really funny last summer. Here I am by myself trying to make this work. I felt so..... no word for it really—our strong team—ideas—exchanges—make things work —empowering—keeping kids in mind—good feeling—work through—chew on it. That helps us keep going. I felt I had no other voices when I tried to work on it alone. ... An elder once said this to me, “If your stomach doesn't tell you it's right, the stomach knows” and it was true, my stomach didn't feel right (Lorraine).

The Aboriginal Advisory Board received the draft of the intellectual goal in September. Board members reacted strongly to School Board staff's interpretation of the intellectual goal. Darlene explained that, from the Aboriginal Advisory Board's perspective, the text did not capture spirit of the material developed in the community meetings. Aboriginal program staff recognized a need for continued dialogue to produce an agreement that reflected the community's involvement. The Aboriginal community needed to write the document and own it. Thus began a process of the whole group

¹⁴ a pseudonym

working together to rebalance the draft in ways that would reflect the Aboriginal community's voice.

Reviewing the First Draft

In November 2008, the Enhancement Agreement Group met to review this first draft. Darlene asked participants to review the material for all the goals, look at the language, and make any necessary changes. They intended to complete the text and develop indicators of success.

Charts posted around the room displayed previous work from all the forums. People began circling and looking at the lists of words. Lorraine described a pivotal moment in that meeting when “the energy shifted and the whole group started working together” and move beyond that first draft of the intellectual goal. Lorraine described experiencing a feeling of freedom as the energy shifted and group began to work together. This is a good example of the phenomena that is called *kamucwkalha* in Lil'wat culture—when an energy flows through the group that brings them to work seamlessly together (Williams & Tanaka, 2007). People began to focus on their work together, not on protecting themselves.

The group emerged from their constructive dissonance to a place where everyone felt they had a place in the group. Lorraine expressed a sense of wonder at the new insight she gained in these moments. Areas she had struggled with during her attempt to write the first draft suddenly started to make sense as new ideas surfaced from the group:

Then, somebody in the group said, “No, this is what we should do.” You have no idea how freeing this is, because we sat and we struggled with this, but now we're getting the voices. ... The power was incredible in the group. (Lorraine)

Early in 2009, Lorraine went on leave. In her absence, the writing process shifted again. School District authorities were anxious to complete the document. Under these circumstances, Darlene felt pressured to fit the process into the School District's "accountability agreement" template. She said, "I don't know how to explain this. It just never sat right with me, the way [the School District representative] saw it, and the way I see it as an Aboriginal person. And they kept saying to us ... "we gotta get this done" and "let's get it done." Darlene's unwavering commitment to keep the writing process centred in the words and spirit of the Aboriginal people who contributed to the process prevailed.

It had everyone's voice in the work so far, the voices needed to be considered in the writing of the whole document. It will have all the voices in it. It will not be the kind of document that the district would have written on its own [with a tight timeline and specific kinds of accountability] (Darlene).

Aboriginal participants were resolute in their conviction that, for children to show academic growth performance, the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual goals had to be met first. The Aboriginal Advisory Board began a collective writing process to draft the text. They projected the words from a computer to a screen on the wall so all could see, and contribute to every aspect, every page, and every line of the text. Grounded in an Indigenous approach, this writing group saw the Emotional Goal as having the most significant priority, and began there.

The final text of the Enhancement Agreement started to take shape. Flip charts from the November meeting organize the four goals in this order: Emotional, Physical, Spiritual, and Intellectual. Each page begins with a goal statement followed by three bulleted sections: Rationale; Indicators of Success; and Community Commitments. The

Rationale statements all began with a statement saying that the “community wishes to” develop or encourage students in ways particular to the goal. Indicators of success listed 5 or 6 items under each goal. Many of these items might be measured quantitatively. For example: attendance and participation in activities, programs or events under the emotional, physical and spiritual goals. Indicators of the intellectual goal included standardized measures such as grade-to-grade transitions, graduation rates and literacy performance. Some indicators of success were qualitative. For example, under the Intellectual goal one indicator is: “find new ways to motivate the potential of students”. Another indicator under the Physical Goal states “students feeling like they can have an open dialogue”.

The chief of First Nation A closed the meeting. She acknowledged front line workers and their important contribution to the process. She also stated that owning this agreement was important. “First Nations have become “very accustomed to fitting into what other people want—as opposed to what is in their hearts”. Strengthened with the language of the First Nations people this agreement “cannot be argued if it includes ... [our own language]” (Chief, First Nation A). The group had embraced Nicolas’ early encouragement to ‘own the Enhancement Agreement’. They planned to formally sign the Agreement in April 2009.

Bringing the Stories to the Text

The next and final meeting of the development process took place on a snowy evening in February 2009. As I arrived, Aboriginal Program staff were decorating the room with photos of happy children engaged in school activities. The room filled and people settled into friendly conversation as servers brought coffee. Some key participants

were unable to attend this meeting, including the Director of the Aboriginal Education program, the Assistant Superintendent, and the Chief of First Nation A. Each table had a letter from the Chief saying “our children are precious to us, they are our future leaders”. Participants had a good chance to visit and catch up, and discuss and share their concerns about emerging issues in the schools before the singers took their place at the front of the room.

As always the meeting began with a prayer and song. Lorne then eloquently acknowledged everyone’s efforts for the children. He spoke with reverence, expressing deep appreciation, respect, and humility. After this opening, the Elders were called to start the meal.

This meeting provided an opportunity for the participant’s to reflect on their work. Darlene spoke about the significance of the Enhancement Agreement document as a visible demonstration of “how much we care about our children”. She talked about the importance of sharing stories, particularly the stories of success that people have experienced in their own lives, and in the Aboriginal program. Stories were shared in the several presentations: a performance of an original song by a community participant, a drum song, a poem, and a success story about a student. Cathy spoke about her experience of developing this Enhancement Agreement, and as a member of the Provincial Enhancement Advisory Board. Reading a letter of thanks from the Enhancement Agreements Branch, she told participants, “It is the work of all [of you] present over the past 18 months—your work that brought life to this letter. You put your heart in it. She gave her sincere thank you because of your words”.

Lorne also told the story of his involvement in the Enhancement Agreement process over the past few years. In the beginning, he said, he didn't know what an Enhancement Agreement was. "We haven't had this before," he noted. "First Nations leaders and chiefs worked hard to get funding from both Federal and Provincial governments. Each time they made progress, laws changed or provincial leaders changed, making progress very difficult". He noted the historical antagonism of the non-Aboriginal community in the local area, and quoted an Elder who advised, "If things don't go right, make amends". He likened the work of being on the Enhancement Agreement committees, provincially and locally to learning a whole new language. Travelling around the province he saw the work that needs to be done, and at the same time saw teachers becoming more aware of those students who fall through the cracks.

Lorne noted how different this Enhancement Agreement process in Riverbend was from the first agreement. This time, he said, it is family oriented, we learn from each other: *what was, what is, what will be*. He pointed out that the only thing that can be changed is *what will be*, and reminded participants, "Everything you do has meaning in life. Have a passion to help those who fall, help them get up". He thanked everyone "for staying together, for working together, thinking together, and changing together. Now enjoy it together". He also acknowledged, with appreciation, the many people at the provincial level who support the Enhancement Agreement process.

Other participants spoke, remarking on the strength that the energy of all nations working together brought to the process. A support worker commented "I love our group, its been so good to come together to talk about our children". An Elder noted, "We are trying so hard to help all children to be proud of who they are". When working in the

schools, the Elder tells the children “when you have tears, remember who you came from”. The Elder noted that “when you have parents in residential school, it is also in you. The Enhancement Agreement is for children and parents. Some parents still won’t go to culture because they are ashamed of who they are”. Another participant read a letter from a parent who grew up hiding her own heritage because of painful stereotypes of Aboriginal people. She noted how the Aboriginal programs in the schools are helping her learn the things that her grandmother couldn’t share. Some support workers are just discovering their own heritage, and they are doing so with the children. Another participant took time to explain the origins of the Aboriginal Program logo. Designed by a student, the logo includes symbolic representations of all First Nations. Coastal people are represented by the sea, Woodland people by trees, Inuit by an Inuksuk and Métis peoples’ symbol appears in the smoke from a pipe.

After the presentations, participants began the working session. Darlene thanked everyone first, then explained the evening’s task was to gather stories, “Tonight we want you to write your story about your own success...about your students, your journey with the E/A meetings, or your journey as an Aboriginal Support Worker/Cultural Presenter”. Each participant took the piece of paper set at their place on the table and began to write their story. A stillness filled the room while everyone wrote. These stories form an integral part of the final Enhancement Agreement document.

Finally: Drafting the Text

Following the final meeting, the writing group completed the text and prepared to celebrate the agreement. They sent invitations to the signing ceremony, then, the Ministry of Education requested changes.. The writing group accepted these changes that would

ensure flexibility and adaptability of the final text as reasonable, but were offended by the request to change the opening story. That statement (described in more detail in Chapter 7), provided a brief history of local Aboriginal peoples' historical relationship to their traditional territory, the effects of settlement and colonization and the impact of residential schools. The community's determination won out and the statements did stand in the final text of the Enhancement Agreement.

In May 2010 the community celebrated final version of the Agreement in an evening presentation and ceremony. The official signing ceremony occurred on National Aboriginal Day in a day long celebration, completing a three year development process.

Naming Ceremony: Formalizing the Commitment to Education

Just over one year into the Enhancement Agreement process, the Aboriginal Advisory Board decided to accept a traditional First Nations name. In Aboriginal culture, taking a name is an important signifier of specific responsibilities that the name bearer accepts. Taking a traditional name is both an honour and a duty.

The Advisory Board members received instruction on the process and protocol of the day long ceremony from the Chief of First Nation A. The chief told them that naming was a way of lifting the group up. They needed to be prepared for the responsibility. The chief told the group that their collective strength prepared them for their duty. He said, "Now we are strong enough to look after our children. We know what to do. We have the strength. We don't need a middle person to mediate for us. We are strong enough to care for our children ourselves". The name and its responsibilities included everyone on Advisory Board as a unified group, and as individuals. They accepted and were bound by their responsibility to "Work Together Reciprocally for the Children" for the duration of

their involvement with the Aboriginal Advisory board. Any person who left the committee would also surrender the right to the name.

An important part of the ceremony involved a give-away. The Advisory Board made sure that every guest received a gift and food. The Chief instructed them to pay particular attention to those who have travelled. “Find someone to give everything to, an elder who needs them, people who have travelled. There is to be nothing left”, she said.

Guests arrived, and the formal part of the day opened with a welcome song. Our host instructed guests on the proceedings and protocols of the ceremony. Every thing is done in fours, he said. First, the main work of the day would be to bestow the name; second, there would be a formal witnessing of this work; third, a giveaway, and fourth, a feast. He explained that in consideration of those with health issues, the order would be adjusted so that the meal would be served first. Elders and any who needed assistance were called to the buffet table first. The host formally introduced honoured guests including chiefs and leaders of local First Nations and Tribal Councils, the Member of Parliament, RCMP superintendent, Mayor, and many representatives of the School District.

Witnessing is a formal and significant part of the ceremony in the local First Nation culture. Following the feast, the host called upon several guests, including me, to act as witnesses. He said, “The family has some work for you to do. They’d like you to help at this time. Witness the work we have to do. Take it all in. Take it home. At the end you will be asked to respond. The family would be honoured for you to be a witness today. Thank you for coming”. With this request, each witness received four quarters. The working part of the ceremony began. The host explained each stage as it occurred.

Four brand new blankets placed on the floor represented new ground and purity, part of a traditional memorial. Eight women from the community formed a witness line.

Drummers circled the room. Each wore a blanket, pinned in a formal style specific to this occasion. The Aboriginal Advisory committee members, referred to as “the family”, sat on chairs placed on these blankets. The chairs ensured the comfort of those who had health issues and needed physical support. He spoke about how the ‘family’ represented the relationship, and the responsibility that they shared for the children in their work as Advisory Board members.

An Elder who is an expert in local languages provided a detailed explanation of the meaning and significance of the name. He also reminded the witnesses of their responsibility:

Witnesses take note. The name is important because of the dialect it comes from. I will explain it four times. Witnesses, you remember your job. Know the history. Know the language. Know the territory you are rooted to. To know exactly who you are, you need the language to do the cultural process. That’s where the words are. Inner strength is reclaimed through language. The meaning of the name is “To work together reciprocally”. The witness’s job is to repeat verbatim. Take it back to where you came from. Each witness receives two quarters for their work. The 50 cents you received is symbolic of a huge amount, and the huge honour of witnessing. (Elder’ Speech, Riverbend Naming Ceremony)

The elder repeated the name several times.¹⁵ After the elder spoke, drummers began an honour song to welcome the “new ones”, the Advisory Board with their new name. Guests formed a line all around the room, and in turn shook the hand of each new name recipient. Our host explained that each of the ‘new ones’ wore a blanket draped in a particular style showing the highest honour. They would keep their blanket as a remembrance, and also had giveaway blankets that they distributed to honoured guests.

Before the proceedings ended, four special witnesses were called on to respond. The first witness, a man from a local First Nation, talked about the witness’ important and sacred responsibility to remember this moment in time, and to ensure that the community knows of it. He said that the payment of quarters signified something much greater than a few coins. The meaning of the name is significant, he said, it translates in English to “Working together reciprocally for the children. There is a great responsibility involved in carrying the name”. He also spoke about his own name and its significance to him and to his community. The second witness, representing the local Member of Parliament, expressed appreciation for the work the people were doing for the children. The third witness, an Elder from First Nation C, was a powerful orator with a booming voice that filled the room. He recounted the historical lineage of the people, from old to new. The fourth witness, a Tribal Councils Grand Chief rose to speak with his wife. They talked about the importance of identity. They said that it will be important for the group to live the name “working together”. He asked those who received the name to work hard for children to make sure they succeed. All witnesses had a responsibility to take the information home to their own communities and share, verbatim the events of the day.

¹⁵ In the interest of maintaining the anonymity of the school district, the name given at the ceremony is not specifically included in this description.

The ceremony represented a significant nodal point in the Enhancement Agreement process; though not specifically part of the Agreement Development, it involved all the key participants. As the Chief anticipated in her earlier remarks to the group, the ceremonial occasion lifted the spirits of all those who are working hard to improve conditions for Aboriginal children. It also provided an opportunity for the broader community to witness the work, and to see that those doing this work take it very seriously. Accepting the name formalized this commitment for the Aboriginal Advisory Board as a body, and for each individual member.

Situated Perspectives

This section explores the situated perspectives of three key participants in the Riverbend Enhancement Agreement process. Darlene is an Aboriginal person, educator, and staff member in the Riverbend Aboriginal Department. Lorraine, a non-Aboriginal person was the Aboriginal program Administrator during the early development of the Enhancement Agreement. Aaron, also non-Aboriginal, was an Enhancement Agreement Coordinator with the Aboriginal Enhancements Branch in the Ministry of Education. They shared their perspectives in one on one interviews.

The Multiple Roles of One Aboriginal Participant

From her location as an Aboriginal person working in her home territory, Darlene filled multiple roles: family and community member, parent, educator, Aboriginal Program staff, and a key facilitator of the Enhancement Agreement process. She led most of the community forums and meetings. Darlene comes from a family of strong community leaders. Her parents were instrumental in their children's development of these qualities. She says,

My Dad and Mom did the right thing, [laughter] because, well if you treat people that way, if you see their gifts, then you just keep building up on it. So, I think that's what they did, without us really even knowing it. You know what I mean? ...They encouraged it without us even realizing it! You know you don't really [realize it], not until you get into it and you find out... "I know how to do that" and "I can do that" and "that's no problem with me". (Darlene)

In an interview, she explained that Riverbend School District developed one of the first Enhancement Agreements, when no process existed for School Districts to collaborate with Aboriginal communities. The School District simply accepted the Enhancement Agreement template provided by the Ministry with its standardized goals: literacy, numeracy, transition and social responsibility—without any community involvement at all.

The process of developing this second agreement purposefully engaged the Aboriginal community in a more extensive and inclusive way. Aboriginal program staff reached out to bring together a committed and consistent group of participants representing the three First Nations, Urban Aboriginal communities in the School District, Aboriginal Support Workers, cultural presenters and Elders involved in the school district's Aboriginal programs. In the forums I observed, I noticed that participants in the Enhancement Agreement process seemed to develop a strong sense of family and community. Darlene agreed with this observation:

It is remarkable how the people have stayed together and kept coming through the whole process... Whichever group, whatever if its [The Aboriginal Advisory Board], if it's [Community Group], if it's the parent group, if it's the

Nations... whatever group. They all feel a part of it. They don't feel left out. And we've made it that way. (Darlene)

Darlene explained that a community of Elders' who had been engaged in their own healing work for a long time brought great strength to the process. She described the elders as essential educators, a tremendous resource to the community, and key collaborators in the process of developing the Enhancement Agreement. Darlene noted that some ASW's are discovering their own Aboriginal heritage along with the children, and their experiences discovery are significant contributors to the process.

School District Administrator

Staff in the School District's Aboriginal Program were responsible for facilitating engagement around the Enhancement Agreement process. The Aboriginal Program's half-time administrator, Lorraine, is a non-Aboriginal person. She explained that her own teacher training included no specific courses related to Aboriginal peoples—but she was interested in learning more. To make up for the lack of information in her teacher training program, Lorraine made a special project of her grade four practicum which specialized in Aboriginal curriculum content. Recently Lorraine reviewed some of the material from her university years. She was surprised to see the dearth of knowledge about Aboriginal people available to student teachers at that time, “Oh my gosh”, she said, “we didn't know very much. I was open ... but who knew about residential schools?”

Lorraine taught in the classroom and served as a vice-principle in the Riverbend School District prior to her position as Aboriginal Program Administrator. She credits her predecessor in that position, and the community of Elders and Aboriginal Cultural presenters in the Riverbend Aboriginal Program with helping her gain insight:

I credit Riverbend and the program with [my predecessor] teaching us as much as they could, and she brought elders in, and they explored with us and helped us. And I've just learned as I've gone along, and the program's taught me so much. We are always learning. It's an incredible learning experience. Then when I moved into the high school as a vice principal, ... our support worker... did a button blanket and we did a dedication, and we had it at our awards ceremony and had the chief [of First Nation A] there. And the importance of cedar, and just learning and so we had all of that one evening. And so it's been a growth for me personally. So when the opportunity came [to become program administrator], I couldn't think of a better place to be. I'm constantly learning. (Lorraine)

Lorraine explained that, to begin the conversation about the second Enhancement Agreement, the School District drew on its long establishes links with Aboriginal communities. They developed these through the district's practice of hosting 4 or 5 "Aboriginal evenings" each year for a number of years. Up to three hundred students, parents, extended family members, Aboriginal community groups and Aboriginal support workers typically attend each evening, which includes dinner, fun and educational programming. October's event has a literacy theme with author readings, book give-aways and Halloween dress up. The November dinner features a 'Santa Store', where children can purchase gifts for their families with items priced from 25 cents to five dollars. The February feast has a health and wellness theme, heart smart activities, and information booths for local Aboriginal services. Aboriginal Day is celebrated in June with a District sponsored family picnic.

These community events provided a basis for school district staff and administrators to develop relationships with Aboriginal community members, and provided an opening to engage them in the Enhancement Agreement process. Community forums at different locations throughout the School District and times of day ensured that people with transportation challenges and different work schedules had opportunities to participate.

Through these established relationships, School District administrators learned that traditional opening and closings for every meeting were important elements of the process. These traditions included songs, prayers, and words of encouragement and appreciation for peoples' efforts together. Lorraine explained that the Enhancement Agreement meetings and forums always opened with tradition. For Lorraine, the traditional openings underlined "the importance of having open minds, an open spirit, and a feeling of being there for all the kids. ... It's always been, *We're here for kids*, it doesn't matter who you represent when you come to this table you represent all kids. It's very powerful".

Aboriginal Support Workers and District Teachers attached to the Aboriginal Program were integrally involved in the Enhancement Agreement process. Aboriginal Program admin staff and District Teachers were classified as employees so evening work is considered part of their job. Lorraine explained that the district used their Targeted Funds to pay Aboriginal Support Workers' for attendance at the evening meetings. Lorraine reasoned, "Our front line workers run our program. We could use our Targeted Funds differently, but we couldn't hire teachers to cover the area that the support workers are able to do". Lorraine felt that engaging front line workers used available resources

more effectively than paying overtime rates or substitutes for classroom teachers to attend evening or daytime meetings. The level of available resources meant that classroom teachers were not deeply engaged in the development stage of the Enhancement Agreement. Lorraine explained that teachers engaged with the Enhancement Agreement at the implementation stage where they have access to the broad range of cultural presentations and experiences offered by the Aboriginal Program.

I asked Lorraine what promise, or what challenge the Enhancement Agreements held for students, the school, and the Aboriginal communities. She responded:

It's important—our Aboriginal communities. What I have seen in the few years that I've been involved is the shame, the ...the put downs as people see it—the things that have happened to our Aboriginal communities, and many of us didn't even know! I think at the time people did what they thought was right. But we now are looking and saying, uh uh. Uh uh! We need to do this differently. I think to acknowledge it; to help people move forward in it; to give strength within communities for them to heal; to acknowledge that they're people that have many worthwhile things to offer; and to heal and move forward; and to take from the lessons from that—the history lessons, right. And there are ways that are different ways of dealing with things. So how do you meld it together to make a difference for all kids? Cause there are things that we can do that would make a difference for everybody. It doesn't just have to be, well, this is going to make a difference only for Aboriginal kids. What are the best practices out there for all kids? Cause it's a different learning style, a different way. To say, yeah, things were done

wrong, they weren't right. We see what it's done. Have we learned from that?
And move forward as a system; and embrace it. (Lorraine)

She described her participation as one that helped her transform her perspective to a more heart-centered process of learning:

[One of the elders told us] "Don't feel rushed. We want everyone to feel you have an opportunity and words are important". Then the stories started. To engage we needed the stories in the document. They are important. So it doesn't matter the time it takes. You really need to have that engagement. And it has to be honest. It has to be a reflective, respectful. But time is needed for that. You just need to show... that to me is just a respectful way of allowing it to evolve and that. And the last meeting we had, it was powerful.

It was an incredible learning and teaching opportunity, one that came from the heart. I started the process in the head, thinking about what to do. The heart said, 'we need involvement' but I didn't know what that meant. It was an emotional journey to begin to say what needs to be said; to feel trust at the table. We've come a long way from the linear beginning. You know, you go in and you have these ideas of what you are going to do and what it is going to look like, and along the way that has to shift and change. It has been a real healing journey.
(Lorraine)

Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch, Ministry of Education

The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch in the Ministry of Education is the central department responsible for Enhancement Agreements in the provincial government. The department is responsible for facilitating the process to develop

Enhancement Agreements with school districts and communities. It collects and shares information with all participants through its web site and annual provincial meetings. An advisory committee of Aboriginal people supports the Branch. The group includes members across the province, including Elders, educators and policy advisors. The committee met four times each year.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch employed two Enhancement Agreement coordinators, one Aboriginal, one not, who were often on the road to all corners of the province meeting with School District officials and Aboriginal community members. Aaron and Nicolas worked to facilitate the dialogue among participating groups in community forums and meetings. Aaron described his work as, “helping School District administrators reach beyond the boundaries of the schoolyard to find out exactly who their Aboriginal communities are, and to ensure that everyone is invited to be included in the dialogue and the goals of the agreement focus on students and student outcomes”.

Aaron explained that when Enhancement Agreements were first introduced, many School Districts in the province had no relationship at all with the Aboriginal communities who use their schools. Some had relationships that were very tense. Prior to joining the Ministry of Education, Aaron was a school principal, involved in one of the first Enhancement Agreements. He explained that, his School District administrators had no idea *what* would work, only that what they *were* doing was *not* working. The School District reached out to the Aboriginal communities in their catchment to ask for guidance. Aaron described the experience of working with Aboriginal communities to develop an Enhancement Agreement as an important personal learning experience that taught him to

see dialogue as an important form of engagement, one that goes deeper and further than ‘consultation’.

Aaron noted that prior to initiating its first Enhancement Agreement, a school board’s mechanisms for communicating with Aboriginal communities typically involved consultation, not necessarily collaboration and dialogue. His role as Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement involved introducing and modelling the process for participants.

The Aboriginal Education Branch provides critical supports to school districts and Aboriginal communities as each Enhancement Agreement evolves. They meet regularly with an Advisory Board of Aboriginal stakeholders from across the Province for feedback and counsel. They host regular province-wide meetings with Aboriginal participants, School District staff and Ministry personnel to share challenges and successes in their local Enhancement Agreements. Each meeting opens with a prayer and song. Speakers always express heartfelt appreciation for everyone’s efforts and emphasize this work is important for children and their future role as leaders. Each opening and closing included sincere acknowledgement of those who have gone before, or could not attend.

The provincial meetings also provide the Branch with a data collection point from which they collate and share best practices with all School Districts—a key building block for each new Enhancement Agreement. Shared practices document the challenges groups have faced in developing their EA, and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

Aaron described the work to develop an Enhancement Agreement in terms of collaboration and engagement. He explicitly avoided the words ‘negotiation’ and ‘consultation’ because the term ‘negotiation’ implies that agreement comes at the cost of giving up a strongly held position. This type of outcome is greatly influenced by the real or perceived power held by each person or party (Lewicki & Wang, 2004). ‘Consultation’ suggests that information flows in one direction only and there is no assurance that the advice provided will be taken, or considered in the final decision. Aaron explained that the Aboriginal Education Branch now recognizes that conversation, dialogue, and engagement are required first to begin to make a consensus-based agreement that is shared and owned by all participating parties. Full participation is time consuming, but Branch staff see it as essential to real change taking place. The approach within the Branch has evolved from “consulting” with Aboriginal communities to a practice of “engaging communities”.

Aaron reported that this shift initially evolved in one urban school district, where the district had a good working relationship with the reserves in their catchment, but over 90% of the Aboriginal students did not live on the reserves. This population distribution made it necessary for the district to extend their Aboriginal community connections beyond the local band governments to seek out parents and other organizations. Aaron credited their work as instrumental in helping the ministry learn to “formalize the need for all Aboriginal communities to engage fully in the process”, one that went beyond the confines of “consultation”.

Aaron noted that the particular discourse and language of educational institutions is resistant to change. He felt that to create a successful learning environment for

Aboriginal students requires a change in the ways that language is used, and to some extent this is beginning to happen. Some of these changes are noted in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Evolution of Language

Original Discourse	Evolved to a new way of working
Consultation	Collaboration, engaging communities
Negotiation	Dialogue
Student achievement	Student success
Measurement of achievement	Evidence of success

The first Enhancement Agreements developed where School Districts had existing relationships with local Aboriginal communities. Aaron noted that, in those districts, School District administrators made the big leap of faith required to let go of a consultative approach and adopt a collaborative one. He observed that, when participants embraced this approach, the process is very powerful. He also noted that the School District's willingness to participate is an important factor. Some districts are willing, but also feel that they should do the agreement themselves.

And so to certainly adopt a leadership style which is very different than the ones that perhaps have been accustomed to we had, for example, we had one administrator who is a wonderful person and she said one day, she said you know "I thought it was my job... to make the decisions. And it was very difficult for me to let go and listen and encourage others to voice their opinions and participants in that decision making process". She says, "I felt that I wasn't doing my job when I was doing that. Now I felt very comfortable, in that sense, but its take me a long time to get there. (Aaron Nov 07)

He talked about Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch staff's efforts to ensure that the written policy would not be too narrow to implement practically over the course of a five year Enhancement Agreement, to make room for the practice to evolve as things grow and change. According to Aaron, it can take a long time to develop the ideas raised in dialogue into a completed Enhancement Agreement. The primary challenge is often finding ways to bring people into the process in an inclusive and respectful way. The Ministry of Education and many school districts needed to learn effective ways to do this.

Officials in the Ministry of Education initially assumed that a signed agreement was the only signal of a successful outcome of the process. The Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch coordinators advocate for Aboriginal communities and encourage Ministry personnel to accept the lengthy development process required to create an Agreement. Aaron argued that to be initiate the conversation at all required significant relationship-building: an established relationship demonstrated measurable evidence of progress, as important, or even more important than the final agreement. Aaron recognized that policy making structures of government do not necessarily harmonize with governance processes of Aboriginal communities. Here he articulates how he came to understand these differences:

The Aboriginal communities are quite different. It's *respectful*. The emphasis is on respect, in terms of how one behaves to another. Not that [government] is intentionally disrespectful, but its become *acceptable*. Our parliamentary process is an example [where] it's become acceptable to argue and debate furiously to win a point. Whereas with the Aboriginal communities, everybody's voice is equally

heard, that's the culture. So there is a disconnect between the two. So how does the [education] system *respectfully* incorporate the communication styles of the Aboriginal communities and the decision making processes? How does it do that in a respectful manner? ... So, from a kind of conflict model, to a more harmonious one. That again is a kind of cultural shift, so how do you do that?

(Aaron)

Aaron also explained that learning the cultural shift transfers into the broader process. This is evident in enhanced relationships where school districts have adopted an open-hearted approach:

And so what we are finding in districts is, the districts that are most willing to learn from the Aboriginal communities, and adopt more respectful behaviours, if you like, or be sensitive to that respectful nature—they're the ones with the relationships that are much healthier. And where that learning is, it helps to shape how those communication mechanisms can work most effectively. ... There's more of a willingness to become involved and where those relationships can occur. (Aaron)

Aaron noted that every Aboriginal community and group involved in Enhancement Agreement development tell policy makers that the approach must extend beyond the limits of a purely academic focus and embrace the concept of the whole child. He argued that accepted institutional discourse associates Aboriginal students with learning dysfunction, something that works against their success within educational institutions. "Failing. What is it?" he asked. In Aaron's view, it is the education system

has failed Aboriginal students. To change outcomes requires a change in the culture of education, and a shift in responsibility.

The Aboriginal Enhancements Agreements Branch influences the Ministry of Education's role in the process. EA coordinators participate in the community forums. They provide feedback and facilitative support to School Districts and Aboriginal groups. Aaron recalled one of the first community forums they attended. They planned a formal agenda and PowerPoint presentation. The 'warm up' exercise asked participants "what is success?" The planned fifteen minutes opened up a broad discussion that ultimately extended through the entire meeting. Aaron related how, in answer to the question of success, people began to tell their stories. One woman described herself as an honour student in school, a university graduate with a good job and a nice home. She said that many people perceived her as a successful person, but, she did not feel successful because she didn't feel connected to her identity. Without this connection, she found it difficult to know who she really was. Other participants told heart wrenching stories. The emotional impact of what people shared at this meeting inspired Aaron and Nicolas to change their whole approach to community forums. Thereafter, they placed the discussion of what success means to the Aboriginal community front and centre.

Aaron and Nicolas recalled another pivotal moment in a community forum. A mother spoke to the gathering with her daughter standing proudly beside her. However, the girl's smile dissolved, and a tear ran down her cheek as her mother told her story. One day in school, the young girl suffered an experience that could only be described as racist. It was so incredible, that when she told her own parents, they could not believe it happened. Not only did the young girl experience the trauma of racism in the school, she

also suffered the trauma of loss of her parent's faith when they, at first, disbelieved her. Hearing this story had a significant impact on everyone attending the meeting, including the District Superintendent who responded directly to the mother and daughter. He said that hearing the story opened his eyes to the discrimination Aboriginal students faced in his schools. With this deepened understanding he made a specific commitment to resolve the issues Aboriginal students face in his School District.

Aaron noticed that the community meetings provided an environment in which participants felt safe to share, and to be supported as people shared their personal stories. He and Nicolas witnessed learning and transformation made possible through sharing stories. They began to share their own personal stories at community meetings, as an opening and invitation to others to do the same.

Aaron was hopeful that an Aboriginal approach to education has real value and potential to shift focus of education in a positive way:

I really think Aboriginal people are helping us to lead the way. ... back to our children, when we look at the whole child. Because schools are arenas of failure for many kids. We say kids fail on the basis of fairly narrow criteria, when in fact every child has value. But as they fall through the secondary system, we teach them otherwise. We teach them to devalue themselves. And I've seen that happen. ... in many situations. And until ... we learn to get back... that connectedness...this is helping lead us back to where we need to be.

It takes a long time to change the way that people think about some things. And it doesn't matter how clear it is, it doesn't matter how obvious it is. It's lip service until its *internalized* and becomes part of the paradigm. And I think that

what's happening with Enhancement Agreement is that its now becoming internalized. We're 6 -7 years into them. We're adopting a language that will help to impact on the culture of the organization. I feel that that's happening. but I think we have to consciously challenge the assumptions. (Aaron Nov 07)

Goals and Strategies: Evolution, Articulation

Branch Coordinators work to ensure that school districts involve all the Aboriginal communities in their catchments. Then they help the group develop their agreement goals. Each new Enhancement Agreement evolves, based on learning from other agreements. These developments reshape the structure of the Agreements to come.

For example Aaron explained, the Enhancement Agreement Committee in one district, prioritized 'improved relationships' as an essential goal for student success. Branch Coordinators felt this was not a measurable student focussed outcome. They recommended that 'relationship' be part of an appendix, rather than a goal in the Agreement text. Aaron explained:

This would be a typical conversation with [the District Enhancement Agreement coordinator]: "Well this, this isn't really a goal because it isn't really a student outcome. It says what *you* are going to do rather than what *the students*, how they will improve." [the school district EA coordinator responded] "Well this is what the communities are saying. Its important". So what we did there is, we said, "Well in that case, ...we really need to keep this and retain it so what we did was we separated the goals and actions." (Aaron)

In that district, relationships remained a goal in the Agreement text. The experience helped coordinators see that, due to the living nature of the agreements, their structure needed to be adaptable:

What we'd learned from the other districts, for example—if you would identify the strategy in the Enhancement Agreement, and then ... as you learn and grow with the community, you find that strategy [should be adapted], if you've made a commitment for five years through that collaborative process, then your are you going to say, well we're not going to do that anymore? So where the goals were defined and agreed upon, where the indicators, how we will measure these goals...they would be constant. So they were in the main agreement. Strategies for example would be in the appendix. Now having said that, a strategic emphasis, so something that was driving the strategies, they might call it a commitment statement, or a strategic statement or something. Those would be built into the body of the report of the Enhancement Agreement—because that would endure. (Aaron)

Coordinators began to encourage all districts to use this form of Appendix. It provided a living textual structure to house strategic approach for achieving the agreement goals. The Appendix became part of the annual reporting cycle.

Through time we see a shift in the way goals are identified and expressed. Aaron explained that, in the early Enhancement Agreements the Ministry of Education assumed that the key to Aboriginal student success simply involved academic measurement and including culture in some way. As the process evolved, Aboriginal communities contributed new perspectives, an approach to success that involves the whole child, and

focus on a strong sense of belonging for each child. The language of the agreements moved away from an exclusively academic view of success to encompass a more holistic view. For example, participants in one school district introduced the concept of the Medicine Wheel as a way to encompass mental, spiritual, physical and intellectual dimensions of education. Branch Coordinators now encourage all districts to adopt this approach. It provides tenuous resolution to the issue of measurement practices.

Branch coordinators endeavour to ensure that the Agreement goals arise from the Aboriginal community. They must also see that the goals express student outcomes, and can be measured, an idea some communities challenge. For example, in Riverbend, Aboriginal participants passionately resisted the idea of measurement. They argued that no form of measurement can give an accurate, sensitive assessment of what is really happening for Aboriginal students in schools. Based on what they learned in Riverbend, Aaron and Nicholas stopped referring to “measurement” when they facilitated a meeting. They developed the concept of ‘commitment statements’ as a framework to define specific conditions that will have an impact on the success of the Agreement’s goals. They built accountability in to the Commitment Statements by including tracking measure for these. This Commitment Statement strategy became part of the Enhancement Agreement evolution, used by subsequent school districts. How these developments play out in the text will be explored in more detail in the textual analysis section of this chapter.

Conclusion

Indigenous ways of teaching and learning, discussed in Chapter 5, are based on inclusivity, community building, recognition and celebration of individual uniqueness.

Sharing story, learning through listening, the ability to exist in a place of dissonance, uncertainty and anticipation, and to develop affective connections can make space for transformative learning to emerge (Williams and Tanaka, 2007). The process of respectful dialogue has the potential to bring a group to consensus eventually.

Participants in the Riverbend Enhancement Agreement experienced feeling of dissonance and uncertainty that exposed the gaps in their collective understanding. For example, Lorraine experienced uncertainty when she wrote the initial draft of the from the school boards' perspective. Aboriginal participants resisted the interpretation of their work. Out of that dissonance, the Indigenous processes that had nurtured the development process resurfaced. The value of dissonance, says Williams is that "Uncertainty creates a space where open listening can occur.Anticipation sheds light on new possibilities of understanding" (Williams & Tanaka, 2007, p. 5). With new understanding, the group brought the text of the agreement to a new level.

The Enhancement Agreement process in Riverbend built on relationships established long before the first community forum. Those relationships deepened and new ones emerge within the spaces this process created. In the eighteen months it took to develop the Enhancement Agreement principles and draft them in to text, participants became like family—a community committed to their responsibility, to each other and generations to come. The process created space for Indigenous voices to emerge within the institutional discourse of the school district, and Ministry of Education. The school district increased it's capacity to reach out further into Aboriginal communities in the school district. Aboriginal people increased their capacity to penetrate deeper into the

administrative level of the institution. In Chapter 7, I trace the ways that this penetration is visible in the actual text of the Riverbend Enhancement Agreement.

Chapter 7 Making Dialogue Actionable Through Textual Mediation

Introduction

In this Chapter I examine the Riverbend Enhancement Agreement text to see how the human interactions, discussed in Chapter 6, are produced in language and text. The analysis takes the two Enhancement Agreements developed in this school district (2003 & 2010) to look for textual clues to shifts in the social relations through this process. An analysis of the body of all Enhancement Agreements in BC from 1999-2000 is reported in Chapter 8.

Reading the Riverbend Enhancement Agreements (2003 & 2010)

First Agreement 2003

The 2003 Riverbend Enhancement Agreement document is simply presented: three pages of black and white text. The first page shows School District and Aboriginal program logos in the top corners, the title “Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement” and contact information for the district. Inside, the “Riverbend Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Framework” is detailed in five numbered bullets:

1. “Preamble” describes the Aboriginal Advisory Committee representation and collective responsibility for promoting the success of all Aboriginal children in the district. The committee expresses respect for a special relationship with the First Nations whose traditional territories comprise the school district.
2. “Purpose” of the agreement states: “to enhance the education of Aboriginal learners and ensure the collection of data which measures student achievement in the selected performance areas” (Riverbend EA, 2003). Paragraph #3 “Principles” outlines performance areas selected specifically for so data can be: “tracked with

integrity; tracked over time; effectively used to implement intervention; and related to the School District's accountability agreement".

3. "Performance Goals" echoes the District Accountability Agreement three major goals: Literacy, Numeracy, and Social Responsibility. The District agrees to support Aboriginal students in these areas. Specific improvements will be tracked through standardized tests or statistics already collected by the board in seven specific areas: primary literacy; Foundational Skills in reading and writing; Foundational Skills in numeracy; district wide numeracy assessment; provincial exams in Math; retention; and graduation. Social responsibility measures come from District surveys and District measures from BC Performance Standards (BC Ministry of Education, 2001). Here the District acknowledges that a cultural component is essential for Aboriginal student success, but does not define that component or how it will be extended to students.
4. "Stable Indicators of Performance Goals" specifies quantitative benchmarked measurement procedures. The singular qualitative attribute under "Social Responsibility" appears with the caveat that the District is working to establish measurable Performance Standards of social responsibility. Under "Increased Graduation" the Ministry of Education acknowledged that its data system lacked the capacity to recognize graduates with different forms of certification, or those who took longer than six years to complete.
5. On the final page, "Memorandum of Agreement", signatories agree these terms "form the basis for Aboriginal Education funding in the School District." Five people signed the MOA, School Board members, the Minister of Education and

District Administrator and the chief of First Nation C (on behalf of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee). One of these five signatories is an Aboriginal person.

Second Agreement 2010

The second Riverbend Enhancement Agreement differs from the first in perspective, presentation, and scope. The text is organized to highlight values the Aboriginal community prioritizes in the Enhancement Agreement. The final text of the 2010 Agreement is presented in a coil bound document. The cover has a large round circle divided into four quadrants, white, red, yellow, and black, each graphically related to one of the Agreement goals. The local Aboriginal artist who created the logo describes the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual aspects of each quadrant on the inside cover. Each concept originates with the First Nations people of the area.

The following page displays colourful logos of the three local First Nations and formally acknowledges their territories. Two chiefs contribute statements about the importance of children and education. Then a page titled *The Importance of Education* outlines the power of education as a tool to provide strength, guidance, understanding and compassion, develop the ability to learn from history, and the capacity to direct one's future and destiny.

The *Importance of Education* page includes a *Vision Statement* from First Nation A. This outlines Seven Laws that served to guide the ancestors. It describes the processes of learning, family, health, culture and caring for land and resources to make a better world for future generations. The Vision Statement stresses that Elders, grandparents, ancestors, the land, all living things, songs, traditions, prayers, children and the unborn are all important sources of knowledge. It acknowledges the challenge to practice

traditional teachings in balance with living in the modern world. Here states that, "It is a balance that we must strive for: and it is this balance that our education system needs to support" (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 4).

The next pages include the history of this Enhancement Agreement, a detailed explanation of the Seven Laws of Life, and acknowledge all participants by name. These preliminaries conclude about the middle of the document. Only then does discussion of the goals begin. The four goals are shown in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1 Goals—Riverbend Enhancement Agreement

<p>Emotional Goal:</p> <p>To nurture, guide, strengthen, and enhance a sense of belonging and strong cultural pride for Aboriginal children – our future leaders.</p>
<p>Spiritual Goal:</p> <p>To strengthen the spiritual connection for our Aboriginal children.</p>
<p>Physical Goal:</p> <p>To improve the physical well-being of Aboriginal children and to empower them to make healthy choices.</p>
<p>Intellectual Goal:</p> <p>To improve the success of our Aboriginal children by building their self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence.</p>

Each goal is connected to one of the quadrants introduced on the cover of the agreement; presented on a separate page, with the related graphic; and followed by Rationale, Indicators of Success, and Community Commitment statements. Each Rationale statement expresses the community's wishes for the children. See excerpts from these statement in Table 7.2:

Table 7.2 Rational Statements—Riverbend Enhancement Agreement

<p>Emotional Goal:</p> <p>The community wishes to develop well-balanced children who feel a strong sense of belonging, who are proud of their Aboriginal heritage, and who feel safe in expressing their identity.</p>
<p>Spiritual Goal:</p> <p>The community wishes to encourage and strengthen the voices of Aboriginal children, through the teachings of history, language, culture and traditions. Spirituality encompasses the inter-connection of spirit to balance mind (intellect), body (health), and emotion (self-esteem), to the world around us – past, present, and future". The Rationale section of the Spiritual Goal goes on to elaborate on ways that the spiritual journey may be understood from one's personal perspective. The list includes the importance of Elders as advisors, the significance of oral teachings, drumming, and singing, the role of Aboriginal languages, the protocol and purpose of specific ceremonies, and the connection and need to respect the earth and all living things.</p>
<p>Physical Goal:</p> <p>The community recognizes issues outside of school impact learning. We need to provide for the unique needs of our Aboriginal children and families. The community wishes to address the physical needs of our children.</p>
<p>Intellectual Goal:</p> <p>The community wishes to acknowledge and nurture the gifts of each child to help develop their knowledge, skills, and attributes to become successful.</p>

Between each goal statement the Enhancement Agreement shows further evidence of Aboriginal community involvement. Here we find personal stories of participants in the Enhancement Agreement process including Aboriginal support workers, parents, community members, and School Board staff. Many stories provide reminders of the historical injustices that Aboriginal people have endured.

Developing relationship/Producing text: Comparing the 1st and 2nd Agreements

The 2003 Enhancement Agreement states that the school district identified three major goals from its Accountability Plan, with an intent to provide support to Aboriginal students to improve in the identified areas. The text does not provide details of the process of creating the agreement, or the participants in that process.

In contrast, the 2010 agreement explicitly details the collaborative relationship with three First Nations, community organizations, Aboriginal families, students and School District staff in a preamble to the agreement titled "Our Journey". The

collaborative process helped the group to identify goals meaningful to Aboriginal people based on these questions:

What is success for our children?

What does success look like?

What do you want for your children? (Riverbend EA, p. 6)

Principles

The first and second agreements differ profoundly in their expression of principles. The 2003 agreement principles are related to “performance areas”, selected for their data tracking potential, and tied to the School District’s accountability agreement. The 2010 Enhancement Agreement acknowledges each First Nations language within the traditional territories where the school district is located. This is important to the Agreement principles because language has fundamental relationship to knowledge construction, learning and culture. The principles are grounded in the Indigenous teachings of local First Nations, expressed as the Seven Laws of life. See Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 The Seven Laws of Life

Health	Encourage the physical needs of our children.
Happiness	Encourage the sense of belonging within the school.
Generations	Attention to the historical impact on the Aboriginal children and families.
Generosity	Sharing the teachings through Nation-to-Nation gatherings. Knowing the joy of giving.
Humbleness	To honour ourselves and be thankful and give back. When people thank you, you need to be humble to accept it. To be able to learn your own lessons. To be able to share your own mistakes that you have made.
Forgiveness	To forgive is to continue life—recognizing the things that you can’t change. To forgive can change others. If you don’t forgive, it is the end of the life cycle. You need to be humble to forgive. Asking for forgiveness takes humbleness and courage. You need courage to forgive.
Understanding	You need to have empathy and to see outside of your own self. You need to see the other person’s perspective. Knowing that you teach what you know to be ‘the truth’ and you also need to teach our younger generations to be worldly.

(Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 8)

Participants

An important difference in the 2010 Enhancement Agreement text is that all participants are formally acknowledged. A page titled “The Voices of Our Community” states:

This document reflects the voices of our community who participated in the Enhancement Agreement journey. With good hearts and good minds we worked together to develop these goals. It is the expectation of this Agreement that the following partners will work together for the benefit and success of our Aboriginal Students. (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 9)

The participant list includes First Nations, Aboriginal Inuit and Métis communities from the local territories and beyond, organizations, educators, students, families, parents, grandparents, and elders, the Aboriginal Program, the School District and the Ministry of Education. Each person’s name, role and affiliation is given for each the seven meetings that occurred. Participant lists do not specify Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal identity, but the listed affiliations definitively connect forty-six participants to a First Nation, Métis or Inuit community. More Aboriginal participants may be found among the fifteen students, parents, and grandparents who did not list an affiliation, and some teachers, administrators and other participants. From this we can infer that more than half of the participants in the process to develop the second Enhancement Agreement were Aboriginal people. In contrast, the first agreement states only that the Aboriginal Advisory Committee includes representatives from the three First Nations, Métis and off-reserve First Nations communities. See Table 7.4 for a list of participants in the 2010 process.

Table 7.4 Riverbend Enhancement Agreement Participants 2007- 2010

Aboriginal Program		53
Aboriginal Program Staff	2	
Aboriginal Teacher	2	
Aboriginal Advisory Board	11	
Aboriginal Support Worker	17	
Aboriginal Program Consultant	1	
Cultural Presenter	13	
Elder	7	
First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Urban Aboriginal People		50
First Nations people who are visitors on the territory	18	
First Nation A	12	
First Nation B	5	
Métis Society	13	
Inuit	1	
Urban Aboriginal Society (including president)	3	
Students		12
Student (Leadership, 1)	8	
Graduate, Secondary School	4	
Families		17
Grandparent	4	
Parent	13	
First Nations Government		5
First Nation Chief	2	
First Nation, Band councillor	1	
First Nation Education Coordinator	1	
Tribal Council	1	
School Staff		20
Teacher, Aboriginal Kindergarten	4	
Teacher, Elementary	3	
Principal: Elementary School 4, Secondary 4	8	
Vice Principal: Secondary	1	
CUPE (2 locals represented)	4	
School District Staff		13
School District Superintendent 1, Asst Superintendent 3, Aboriginal Program Administrator 1, Coordinator of Instructional Services 1,	6	
School Board Trustee	6	
District Parent Advisory Council	1	
Ministry of Education		2
Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Enhancements Branch	2	
Community		3
Grad Student	1	
Community Development Worker	1	
Aboriginal Child and Family Services	1	

The 201 EA reflects broader participation of First Nations, Métis and Urban Aboriginal people in the process as well as on the signed agreement. See Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Riverbend Enhancement Agreement Signatories : 2003 and 2010

Riverbend School District	1 st Enhancement Agreement 2003	2 nd Enhancement Agreement 2010
Signatories	School Board chair School Board Superintendent Minister of Education Aboriginal Advisory Committee represented by: District Administrator First Nation C, chief	Minister of Education School Board chair School Board Superintendent Aboriginal Advisory Committee represented by: District Administrator First Nation A First Nation B First Nation C Urban Aboriginal Society Métis Society

Inclusion

The 2010 Enhancement Agreement text emerges from an identifiable Aboriginal perspective. The section titled “The Beginning of the Story” states, “Since time immemorial, the First Nations people have lived on these lands” (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 14). This section describes a thriving, complete and holistic society that existed when Europeans arrived in the 1770s. It talks about how Europeans imposed their own religion and culture, and ignored the unique social, political and economic structures of local Indigenous peoples. Colonization, racism, assimilation, disease, loss of traditional lands, resources, hunting and fishing rights, and government policies—the *Gradual Civilization Act*, the *Indian Act* and the Residential School system unjustly caused a number of losses: loss of a sense of belonging, identity, spirit, inner self, pride, spirituality, language, culture and traditions, traditional parenting, traditional foods. These losses contribute to poverty, substance abuse, poor nutrition, and family breakdown (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 14). Study participants reported that, at first, the School District and the Ministry of Education resisted including this statement. The Writing Committee argued that the

dignity and strength required to walk in both worlds must begin with an acknowledging historical injustice, and its role in creating the difficulties of the present. They insisted that these words remain in the document, and they did. The statement concludes:

“Throughout their educational journey, we will raise our children with pride, dignity and strength. We will give our Aboriginal children the opportunity to walk in both worlds” (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 14).

Goals

Goals are the central element of an Enhancement Agreement. Originally, the *Improvement Agreements* were based on a stock set of goals, common to each agreement. In Riverbend, the 2003 Agreement closely followed the template of the original *Improvement Agreements*: all goals and performance indicators were expressed on just over two pages. These goals, drawn from the School District’s own accountability contract, relied on standardized forms of assessment and represented a direct link to ruling apparatus in the School District and Ministry of Education. The 2003 goals do not attempt to identify or address Aboriginal peoples particular concerns about appropriate and relevant ways to support their children’s success within the education system.

The 2003 Agreement goals failed to connect fundamental aspects of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning to school outcomes. Yet the first Agreement marked the beginning of an important conversation. In the 2010 Enhancement Agreement, the language shifted. Participants engaged in a dialogue to wrestle with the conflicting aspects of Indigenous and Western approaches and collectively and collaboratively identified four holistic goals. These holistic goals would become enshrined in policy. The inclusive and collaborative process of developing 2010 Enhancement Agreement is

visible in goal statements that are directly connected to medicine wheel concepts. The text devotes one page each to the emotional, physical and intellectual goals, and three pages for the spiritual goal. Each goal includes supporting statements: rationale, community commitments and the contributing voices stories described earlier in this chapter. Several pages of text support each goal.

Table 7.6 compares the goals of the two agreements. The comparison shows that the holistic approach of the 2010 agreement did not abandon the academic goals set out in 2003. These subsume under substantially more qualitative goals that, participants argued, were required conditions for success in the standard academic goals stated in the 2003 agreement.

Table 7.6 Goals Comparison: 2003 and 2010

2003 Enhancement Agreement	2010 Enhancement Agreement
Primary Literacy Foundational Skills in Reading and Writing Foundation Skills in Numeracy Numeracy Mathematics Increased Retention Increased Graduation Social Responsibility	<p>Emotional Goal: To nurture, guide, strengthen, and enhance a sense of belonging and strong cultural pride for Aboriginal children—our future leaders.</p> <p>Spiritual Goal: To strengthen the spiritual connection for our Aboriginal children</p> <p>Physical Goal: To improve the physical well being of Aboriginal children and to empower them to make healthy choices.</p> <p>Intellectual Goal: To improve the success of our Aboriginal children by building their self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence.</p>

Measures

The 2003 Enhancement Agreement expressed goals and performance measures in managerial terms derived from standardized assessments in the Provincial Curriculum and Foundational Skills Assessments (FSA) test results (Riverbend EA, 2003). These are outlined in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7 Performance Measures Riverbend Enhancement Agreement 2003

Performance Goal	Measure
Primary Literacy	District assessment Grade 1 & 2
Foundational Skills Reading & Writing	FSA results Grade 4,7, & 10
Foundation Skills: Numeracy	FSA results Grade 4,7, & 10
Numeracy	District-wide assessment Grade 3, 6, & 9
Mathematics	Provincial Exam & school marks grade 11 & 12
Increased Retention	Grade to grade transition
Increased Graduation	Dogwood and BC School Completion Certificate rates
Social Responsibility	District Surveys and BC Performance Standards Measures

The 2010 Enhancement Agreement approaches the question of measurement with different language. The objective is to describe how educators and the community will know if what they have planned for this five year period is working or not. The term “Indicators of Success” is used in place of “Measurement”. For comparison to 2003, Table 7.8 shows the goals and indicators used in 2010.

Table 7.8 Indicators of Success Riverbend Enhancement Agreement 2010

Goal	Indicator of Success
Emotional	Improved school attendance Survey results (children, parents/guardians & staff)
Spiritual	Improved school attendance Participation in school (Cultural enrichment programs, participation records and anecdotal feedback) Participation in School District (registration in: Carving Class, First Nations Kindergarten, First Peoples English 10, 11, & 12, First Nations 12, transition conferences, transition activities, Aboriginal post secondary prep programs, family gatherings, traditional circles & cultural presentation bookings in classrooms. Youth participation in regional leadership conferences (Grade 6-8 & 9-12) Participation in community (First Salmon Ceremony, Aboriginal family gatherings, photos and media coverage of community events) School based initiatives (Aboriginal Awareness Days)
Physical	Participation in physical activities (individual or group sports) Portfolio in grade 12 transition School attendance
Intellectual	Grade to grade transitions School completion rate Early literacy performance Number of students transitioning to post secondary education, trades or employment

Indicators in the 2010 Enhancement Agreement text specifically address programs and activities that support student well-being, in sharp contrast to the 2003 Agreement, where universal measures are based on province-wide and district-wide testing. These supports contribute to a child's sense of belonging in the school setting, and answer the frequently stated concerns of Aboriginal participant: a child who feels a sense of belonging in school is far more likely to attend. The emotional, spiritual and physical goals use school attendance as a measure to determine whether students feel that sense of belonging. Each indicator of success is chosen to help establish a safe environment where Aboriginal children feel protected, valued and loved. These measures address emotional, spiritual and physical elements as critical aspects of learning. The appearance of these specific concerns in the Enhancement Agreement text brings Aboriginal voices directly into the policy statement.

When School District officials attempted to write the first draft of the 2010 EA, they prioritized the Intellectual Goal. The primarily Aboriginal Writing Committee places the Intellectual Goal fourth in final text. The change demonstrates the Aboriginal community's priorities for emotional, spiritual, and physical development as important precursors for intellectual success. The 2010 Enhancement Agreement does specify standardized measures to track progress in intellectual quadrant: grade to grade transitions; school completion rate; early literacy performance; and the number of students transitioning to post secondary education, trades or employment. This is the only goal that does not track "school attendance", presumably because when the other conditions are met, and students are attending school, the necessary conditions for intellectual success will be met.

Community Commitment Statements ensure that the necessary conditions will be in place to support the goals. These statements support practical actions and the personal commitments of community members. Each statement begins with an action word. For example: support, respect, acknowledge, award, share, provide, involve, assist, hear, honour, build, promote, review and enhance, guide, include, encourage, understand, liaise, commit to, raise, celebrate, facilitate.

Contributing Voices

The Contributing Voices statements that follow each Goal Statement in the 2010 Enhancement Agreement bring the lived experience of those who created this text into a living aspect of the document. Each page includes an image of the medicine wheel quadrant representing the goal the statement supports, or colourful photographs of children, elders, teachers, supporters involved in cultural or learning activities. There are lots of smiles in the photos. In the stories, parents and support workers describe the learning experiences in the Aboriginal Program. For example: learning more about their own culture, learning about other Aboriginal cultures, and the pleasure of working together. They mention specific experiences with the children, happy moments, learning moments, and moments of growth and support, many of which were described as epiphanies. People expressed appreciation for specific Elders, community members, program staff and family members who supported them in their learning and their work.

Former students of the Aboriginal Program wrote of their own success, some of them are now educators. One former student credited the program with showing her that she had an Aboriginal heritage. Several stories from students and contributors describe how their cultural learning in the Aboriginal program led to personal processes of self-

discovery. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers marvelled at the process: sharing culture, learning the different cultures of the many Aboriginal groups; each with “unique culture, language and gifts to share (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 24).

These stories often mention the profound impact of residential schools. People describe real difficulty associated with owning one’s identity as an Aboriginal person in the predominantly white Canadian social milieu. They talk about how important it is to discover that identity, and to have it accepted by others. Several writers noted that the loss of Aboriginal traditions have hurt peoples’ health. They saw the Aboriginal Program and Enhancement Agreement as necessary to the healing process.

The *Contributing Voices* statements include non-Aboriginal participants’ stories about how experience of developing the agreement changed them. They wrote that being involved touched their soul, and left them feeling humbled and renewed. One stated “I am truly a better person for having been allowed the privilege of joining you all on this journey” (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 35).

There is a strong sense of belonging in all the *Contributing Voices* stories. Families, parents, grandparents, support workers, and Aboriginal Program staff are interconnected. Many of these statements refer to the ‘Aboriginal family’ that supports the programs—this group embraces people of all cultures who are involved in the family like relationship of supporting Aboriginal students in the schools.

Writers communicated a shared sense of hope and appreciation as participants in the Enhancement Agreement process. One residential school survivor wrote “I never thought I’d see the day that we, as Aboriginal people, would ever be asked for our opinion on how we’d like to see things done in our school district, and actually be heard!

I am so proud, grateful and humbled to be part of this process once again” (Riverbend Enhancement Agreement, 2010, p. 31).

Terms

The Memorandum of both Agreements state that the terms will “form the basis of Aboriginal Education funding for programs and services” (Riverbend EA 2003, Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 37). The 2003 Enhancement Agreement stated purpose is “to enhance the education of Aboriginal learners and ensure the collection of data which measures student achievement in the selected performance areas where there is assurance that the data can be: tracked with integrity; tracked over time; effectively used to implement intervention; and related to the School District’s Accountability Agreement” (Riverbend EA, 2003).

In 2010, the agreement contains an additional proviso: “any changes that may take place affecting the use of Ministry Targeted Funding by [Riverbend] School district, or otherwise impacting the intent of this Agreement must be done in consultation with [The Aboriginal Advisory Committee]” (Riverbend EA, 2010, p. 7). Following this all the communities and First Nations represented on the committee are listed. An Appendix details the committee’s terms of reference.

The Aboriginal Education Committee’s terms of reference outline their purpose and mandate to work with First Nations and the school board in a collaborative process to plan, develop and implement the District’s Aboriginal Programs. The Committee is responsible to provide informed consent for the expenditure of the targeted funds for Aboriginal education. The decision making process stated as one that “shall occur through respectful consensus” (Riverbend AE, 2010, p. 36).

These terms openly hold all parties responsible to continue their engagement and involvement in the implementation of the agreement. The *Decision Making* statement requires that the process be carried out with respect, and that all parties come to agreement before moving forward with any decision. Further, it explicitly states that this group has a significant voice in the expenditure of funds related to their work to support the education of Aboriginal students. The terms of reference outline the composition of the group to include: Elders; representatives from each of the three local First Nations; the Métis society; the Urban Aboriginal Society; Aboriginal parents; School Trustees; and the Aboriginal Program. This measure holds both the communities represented on the Aboriginal Education Committee and the School District accountable to uphold the spirit of the Agreement in the implementation stage.

Conclusion

Processes of relationship-building are reproduced in this text of an Enhancement Agreement. In Riverbend School District, the first Enhancement Agreement showed no representation of Aboriginal voices in relationship or story. There is a considerable shift in the text of the 2010 agreement: participation formally appears in stories, in the lists of participants, and detailed affiliations with local First Nations and diverse urban organizations and population of Aboriginal, Métis, Inuit peoples and the school district. We see lived experiences represented in these stories.

The 2003 agreement set goals based on standardized institutional norms. The 2010 agreement highlights Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, and Intellectual goals with supports that will nurture, guide, strengthen, improve the well-being of, and empower Aboriginal children in the schools. The goals connect to traditional teachings, each

supported by a rationale statement that emerges from the community's collective concern for and commitment to children's well-being. Indigenous ways of knowing are represented in the graphic presentation of the text, the inclusion of the medicine wheel, in the Seven Laws as guiding principles, in the constant acknowledgement of Elders, ancestors, land and the need for balance.

Chapter 8 Broader Context: Enhancement Agreement Developments in BC

Enhancement Agreement texts across British Columbia over the past decade show a dynamic shift in relationships between School Districts and Aboriginal communities in their catchments. The first agreements, called Improvement Agreements, focussed on literacy, and numeracy. They were embedded in Ministry of Education objectives, benchmarked on FSA scores with results linked to financial rewards and penalties. The Improvement Agreements' primary goal to achieve 'parity' constituted an assimilative objective that was designed to eventually eliminate further funding for Aboriginal Education (once Aboriginal students 'achievement' reached 'par' with the majority student population). This particular goal carries the relevancies of the Ministry of Education into the agreement. It does not recognize Aboriginal people's particular concerns about their children's education. The approach assumed that, at some point, Aboriginal students would just blend into the whole and disappear. As the process developed, local School Districts and Aboriginal communities began to collaborate to identify locally relevant goals that give voice to Indigenous concerns, processes and priorities.

I examine the textual development of the Agreements, trace language related to goals, definitions of success and collaborative processes to show how the process has translates into the production of the texts over time. I select a few Enhancement Agreements to trace features in the text that indicate whether a dialogue may be developing. I am also alert to signs of struggle to maintain dialogue as the text enters the institutional structures of School Districts and the Ministry of Education.

This analysis of Enhancement Agreements uses texts archived on the Aboriginal Education Branch website (<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/agreements.htm>). To begin this analysis I downloaded and read all of the Enhancement Agreements completed in BC between 1999 and 2010. I looked for indications of Aboriginal voices in the text, in the language and in the presentation of the Agreement. I paid particular attention to Agreement renewals in School Districts that entered the process in the first few years. There were many opportunities for analysis, far beyond the scope of this project. I chose to focus the first part of this discussion on the developments that can be traced from the early Improvement Agreements. The second part of this textual analysis traces the language of the Goals of every Agreement (1999-2010) as further evidence of the dialogue that is developing through this process.

Improvement Agreements

I begin the analysis with the early *Improvement Agreements*. Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch coordinators reported that these early agreements developed in school districts where relationships with Aboriginal communities existed already. This provided an foundation for the process to begin, though initially the process was not grounded in dialogue. The earliest *Improvement Agreement* texts follow a standard format, used standardized education measures. Within two years, the process showed visible changes: the title *Improvement Agreements* was dropped in favour of *Enhancement Agreements*. This change in title signalled other changes in forms of engagement, purpose, goals and presentation of the text. The following section examines the Improvement Agreements.

The first six *Improvement Agreements* were signed between June 30, 1999 and 2001. Based on a uniform template, each includes the phrase “to narrow the gap (in performance) between all First Nations/and Métis/Aboriginal students and the general school population until parity is reached” under its statement of purpose. These statements are consistent with an agenda to absorb Aboriginal students into general populations. In Table 8.1 demonstrates the nearly uniform purpose and goal statements in the early agreements are obvious. Language common to all Improvement Agreements is shown in bold.

Table 8.1 Improvement Agreements: Statement of Purpose

School District	Date	Purpose
72 Campbell River	1999	To narrow the gap in the performance between all First Nations and Métis students and the general school population until parity is reached in all academic areas, and to honour and support the histories, cultures and languages of the First Nations whose traditional territories are served by School District No. 72.
73 Kamloops/Thompson	1999	The purpose of the Improvement Agreement is to narrow the gap between First Nations students and the general school population until parity is reached in the six areas identified.
42 Maple Ridge	2000	The purpose of this Improvement Agreement is to improve the quality of education achieved by Aboriginal students. Specifically, the Agreement will attempt to narrow the gap between Aboriginal students and the general student population until parity is reached in the areas identified below.
68 Nanaimo/Ladysmith	2001	To narrow the gap in performance between Aboriginal students and the general school population until parity is reached in all academic areas, To honour and support the histories, cultures and languages of the First Nations communities whose traditional territories are served by School District 68; and further more, to respect and affirm the diverse histories and cultures represented in our Aboriginal student population
71 Comox Valley	2001	To improve the quality of education achieved by Aboriginal students. Specifically, this agreement will strive to narrow the gap between Aboriginal students and the general student population until parity is reached in the areas identified below. This includes Aboriginal students having a good understanding of their own history, language and culture.
79 Cowichan Valley	2001	To narrow the gap in performance between all Aboriginal students and the general school population until parity is reached in the five areas identified, and to honour and support the histories, cultures and languages of the Aboriginal people whose [text ends here, something is missing]

The preamble for Nanaimo, Maple Ridge, Campbell River and Cowichan Valley are all nearly the same: they state the Aboriginal Education Advisory group or council, “acknowledge and honours the (SD) special relationship with [First Nations in the territory]”, and acknowledge the group’s “collective responsibility for the educational success of all Aboriginal learners in the District. Each preamble also recognizes each First Nation group’s commitment to the preservation of their language and culture.

Common to all six Improvement agreements is the phrase: “to narrow the gap in performance between [First Nations students, all First Nations and Métis students, or Aboriginal students] and the general school population until parity is reached in [all or the identified number of] academic areas. Three include the specific phrase “to honour and support the histories, cultures and languages of the Aboriginal people”, whose traditional territories are served by the school district. The Nanaimo agreement is the only of these to recognize the diverse Aboriginal histories and cultures represented in the student population. The first two Agreements in 1999 (Campbell River and Kamloops/Thompson) refer to First Nations, or First Nations and Métis students. In 2000 and later, the term Aboriginal replaces First Nations, presumably in recognition of this diversity.

The principles of each agreement state, without exception: “The performance areas selected for improvement are those where there is assurance that the data can be: tracked with integrity; tracked over time; and effectively used to implement interventions”. In addition, the Campbell River, Kamloops, Maple Ridge and Cowichan Valley Agreements all specify a 2 percent reduction in the gap comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The Campbell River Agreement benchmarked each

performance goal to a percentage of funding. The agreement states (p. 6) that meeting the target will result in 110 percent funding, lower than baseline will result in 90 percent funding, and exceeding the target would increase funding to 120, for the given area.

Eliminating ‘parity’ is one visible change.

The early agreements follow a fairly standard template, with some variations. In these we can see the initial opening of minds, relationship and approach. For example, under “Purpose”, the Comox Valley agreement recognizes the need for Aboriginal students to understand their own history, language and culture. Other nodal points in the text indicate that there is a movement toward inclusiveness.

The Nanaimo Improvement agreement established new ground in a few areas. It is the only Improvement Agreement to recognize Aboriginal students’ diversity within the territories served by the School district. It was the first agreement to expand goal statements beyond “improvements” in benchmarked performance areas: “School District 68 will develop a policy that will provide a framework for improving the school experience and academic achievement of Aboriginal students” (Nanaimo Improvement Agreement, 2001). This was the first acknowledgement that school experience must be considered as an important element of school success. This Nanaimo Improvement Agreement was also the only one to include courses specific to First Nations culture and language in the Performance Goals. In addition, this agreement identifies “increased participation by all School District 68 personnel in cultural awareness and diversity training in-service” as a Performance Goal. Nanaimo, Campbell River and Maple Ridge identify improving family involvement, or building and maintaining relationships with adult family members of First Nations students as a Performance Goal.

The first Improvement Agreements became Enhancement Agreements when they were renewed. For example, the Nanaimo/Ladysmith Agreement commits to change school culture. The Qualicum agreement purpose aims to enhance First Nations students' understanding of their heritage, sense of belonging, and personal belief that they can be successful in BC's public education system. The Kamloops Agreement commits to enhance all student's understanding of First Nations culture, history, and language. These statements demonstrate a shift to including all students in the goal of understanding First Nations culture. The following section traces out some of the shifts in relations to make visible how these new understandings are expressed in the text through the goal statements.

Enhancement Agreement Goals

The process and funding arrangements changed with Enhancement Agreements. Outcomes were no longer tied to funding arrangements. Through time Enhancement Agreement texts show significant shifts in the definition and expression of goals and purposes. In this section I discuss some notable features of the analysis. Appendix B provides details of the shifting goals in Table form.

Each of the early agreements was based on one common template, traces of which are retained by varying degrees in new agreements. Some of the stock phrases begin to disappear. Over time, the parity language is dropped. Victoria school district was the first Enhancement Agreement to drop the stock phrase about data tracking that was part of the original template. Yet that section does persists in a few agreements today.

Aboriginal voices grow in strength as new Enhancement Agreements are developed. For example, in 2006, the Medicine Wheel concept first appeared in Okanagan school district. This is illustrated through art work, photographs, and quotes from Elders and community leaders. The purpose statement in the New Westminster agreement includes recognition of history, and its impact, along with the need for relationship building.

Measurability continues to be a contentious concept. As discussed in Chapter 6, participants in the Riverbend District argued that, you cannot measure the things that children need for learning. Their voices led to changes that are now visible in more recent Enhancement Agreements. For example, statements about “culturally appropriate collection of data” and respectful presentation”, never used in Improvement Agreements have begun to appear. Specifically, the Gulf Islands School District EA states that targets will be “meaningful, reasonable and attainable”. Measurement is to “account adequately for changing populations”, and will be “linked to strategies and structures that will be reviewed annually”. And, in New Westminster, the principles broaden the criteria for data tracking, and specify cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of progress. The word “intervention” is replaced with “effectively used to design, coordinate and implement programs.

“Commitment Statements” are a recent addition to Enhancement Agreement texts. They bring community involvement into the document in concrete ways. For example the second agreement in Comox includes commitment statements from a number of groups: K’omoks First Nation, the Wachiay Friendship Centre, the Upper Island Women of Native Ancestry, The MIKI-SIW Métis Community the Comox Valley Board of

Education, the Comox Valley Aboriginal Head Start Program, and the North Island College. The following excerpt exemplifies the extent to which an Indigenous approach has been embraced in the creation of this document:

Although contemporary Aboriginal Education has focused on the skills necessary to be productive in the post industrial society this Enhancement Agreement recognizes that the collective cultural and ecological health of Aboriginal peoples encompasses a broader mandate. It is an awakening of the spirit of Indigenous culture that was reflected in the process of developing this Enhancement Agreement. Within the circle of understanding is an education conscious of the nature of relationships with other people, other life, and the natural world as reflected through Aboriginal culture.

This Education Enhancement Agreement is a guide to enhance the learning experience and to provide a sense of direction for our youth as expressed by our community. It would make my heart soar to know that our children will hear the cadence of the language of their ancestors, to know and explore the nature of living energy and to develop a relationship that integrates the social and natural environments with reciprocity and respect. It has been our path to provide guidance as a Council and recognize that education is learning with the heart as well as learning with the mind.

Kukstsemc
Sharon Niscak
Secwepemc

Comox Enhancement Agreement 2008 Retrieved June 29, 2011 from
http://sd71.bc.ca/ab_ed/documents/2008_Enhancement_Agreement_Final.pdf

Conclusion

The process of transformation is made visible in the text of the Agreements.

Where the original template for Improvement Agreements emerged from an institutional perspective, the more recent Enhancement Agreements give voice to Indigenous peoples concerns.

I anticipated that this analysis of Enhancement Agreements through time would find the progressive trend toward inclusion, collaboration and a broader application of holistic principles across districts. Surprisingly, the effect is most apparent in new Agreements. Some renewed Improvement Agreements retain significant artifacts of the original institutional template. These texts in some do not indicate a new relationship is developing, though ethnographic data from these locations might provide some clues to the reason for this stasis. In contrast, the renewals of earliest Enhancement Agreements show more open dialogue in their renewals. Riverbend School District is one example of a second Enhancement Agreement that shifted considerably toward a more inclusive approach and text. Why these and not the earlier ones is a question that would be worth pursuing in future research.

Chapter 9: Interspace: Finding Ways for Two World Views to Co-exist

Introduction

In this chapter I revisit the major themes explored in this thesis, and review the key findings. The Enhancement Agreement process brings people from two different world views into collaborative relationships. The success of their work together holds promise to address the unequal social relations of education in British Columbia.

Indigenous Methodology and Institutional Ethnography are paired in this study as a framework to make sense of the intersection of two world views. Indigenous methodology grounds the research in the standpoint of Aboriginal peoples. Institutional Ethnography makes it possible to examine the organizational practices that shape Aboriginal students' and families' experiences in school. The two approaches share a commitment to situate research within the terrain of lived experience, and to produce results that will be useful to participants. The productive tension inherent in this methodological pairing created a space in which the question of relationship could be examined within a policy environment.

Within institutions such as education, text organize peoples orientation toward specific information. As an organizational form, texts determine what people will focus on in a work setting. Assessments based on standardized tests direct teachers focus on particular teaching and learning outcomes, that may not be relevant to students' learning needs. Enhancement Agreements shift educators' orientation toward relevant ways of improving their relationships with the Aboriginal students in their classrooms. The process of creating Enhancement Agreements brings Aboriginal people into a setting

where they can speak with authority about their lived experience in schools, and how they would like to see these issues addressed from within the system.

A significant finding of this study is that Aboriginal communities look beyond academic achievement to find adequate measures of success. Standardized measures commonly used to assess academic achievement in schools fall far short of the scope we need to understand how well Aboriginal students are doing. These measures have an added disadvantage when they are used to fuel assumptions about Aboriginal student abilities. Inappropriate measures of assessment have led to a high representation of Aboriginal students in Special Education categories: more than half of the Aboriginal student population is in special classrooms at some point in their school years (Williams, 2004). In British Columbia's provincial schools, numbers of Aboriginal students in all Special Education categories occur at an average of four times the rate of non-Aboriginal students. The only exception is the gifted category, where Aboriginal students are underrepresented by a ratio of 2 to 1 (BC Ministry of Education, 2005).

The texts of the Aboriginal Education Agreements translate peoples' actions and words into a specialized frameworks for action within the institutional settings of schools. The document ties people in local settings (parents, students, community members, education workers) together with extra local institutional arrangements in school boards, and the Ministry of Education. The process is powerful and significant because it extends the effects of local action into extra-locally organized relations, with new forms of goals and measures. Here lies the transformative potential of these agreements to shift ruling relations.

The history of Aboriginal education in Canada is linked with the history of colonization. First churches, and then successive Canadian governments used education as a tool of assimilation. Legislation empowered governments to remove Aboriginal people's decision making capacity in almost every aspect of colonial life. They lost the right to decide about their children's education, and with the residential schools, they also lost their children. The legacy of these policies continue to the present day. In 1973, the Federal Government recognized the National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations' *Indian Control of Indian Education* as policy, providing First Nations peoples the right to make decisions about their children's education under Canadian law for the first time. This was a right which they enjoyed prior to colonial encroachment, and one which non-Aboriginal Canadians take for granted.

Since *Indian Control of Indian Education* was adopted, all the residential schools have closed. First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Aboriginal students now attend provincial schools in large numbers. During this time the Aboriginal Education policy environment has grown ever more complicated: with overlapping jurisdictions and agreements between First Nations, School Boards, Provinces and the Federal Government. Aboriginal students in provincial schools face multiple challenges that shape their school experience and outcomes.

Schools are interconnected with other political and economic institutions that dominate the social relations. Schools act, often unquestioningly, to distribute knowledge and values through both the overt and hidden curriculum that perpetuates the social organization of these institutions. One of the greatest challenges of Aboriginal education is the clash in cultural approaches. Given the history of education in Canada, and the

different approaches to teaching and learning, any attempt to reshape the future requires a significant shift in understanding. Public education systems are a primary form of the legitimation and empowerment of dominating knowledges (Apple, 2004; Fine 2004). Within public education systems, dominating knowledges are defined as both normative and ideal, making it apparently unnecessary to include or involve other frames of reference or cultural perspective in the learning journey.

Through Canadian history, Aboriginal voices were systematically excluded from the institutional processes that identified and set the markers for the measurement of successful learning. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements connect Aboriginal communities to the decision making process that determines and measures educational outcomes for their children. Aboriginal communities involved in developing Enhancement Agreements have an opportunity to identify characteristics of success from their own point of view.

“It is not a question of choosing one pedagogical perspective over the other. Rather it is finding a way to make space for both—and to be enriched by both. This is a discourse that requires the dominant academic discourse to pause, listen, and make room for a discourse that may seem incongruous and dissonant at times. (Williams and Tanaka, 2007, p. 13)

Productive and respectful dialogue is critical to making change, especially if policy-makers are keen to avoid the disastrous outcomes of past policies. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements offer a unique opportunity to open up the assumptions of educational institutions, and inject new perspective on student capacity and student support. Though Aboriginal peoples won the legal right to have a voice in

their children's education nearly 40 years ago, it is only now that there is an actual policy instrument that ensures that those voices are heard, and acted upon. This study of the Enhancement Agreements finds that people from these two very different world views and social structures can and do work collaboratively to develop policy relationships aimed at transforming social relations.

A fresh and novel kind of dialogue is developing within these new relationships. That dialogue is producing new ways to define success and establish goals that are relevant to Aboriginal student needs. An inherent contradiction emerges in the Ministry of Education's requirement that the new goals be 'measurable'. This may be antithetical to the spirit of and values inherent within the holistic nature of those goals. The iterative process of implementing the agreement may allow some room for this contradiction to creatively dealt with during the course of the Agreement.

This research set out to ask three central questions:

- a) *Did the nature of relationships between Aboriginal and policy communities change during the process of developing these consensus-based agreements? If so, how did they change?*
- b) *Did the process bring a shift in established practices of power in the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and education policy makers?*
- c) *What dysfunction or disjuncture is visible, or invisible, within the process of creating and implementing the agreements?*

This study of the process in Riverbend school district demonstrates that the nature of relationships between Aboriginal and policy communities in the School District and Ministry of Education were transformed in the process of developing the Enhancement Agreement. Participants at every level: Aboriginal communities, school district employees, and the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch noted remarked on the

degree of change in the way that Riverbend School District's first and second Enhancements Agreements were developed. The initial agreement was essentially a copy of the template developed in the Ministry of Education with standardized goals, and measures. The second agreement demonstrated the broad involvement of the Aboriginal community in every possible way: presentation, voice, story, goals, and measures.

First Nations elder, Lorne observed that after years of antagonistic relationships with federal and provincial governments, the Enhancement Agreement process was like learning a new language. He expressed appreciation for all the people who worked, thought, and changed together and noted the strong sense of community evident in the Riverbend 2010 Enhancement Agreement. A cohesive bond developed. Participants recognized the bond and saw its value in helping the group face struggles that arose in the writing process. They expressed a shared sense of hope and appreciation that came from working together.

Some key changes in the Riverbend 2010 EA include:

- acknowledgement of historical wrongs
- increased participation of Aboriginal peoples
- broader representation of diverse Aboriginal groups
- inclusion of Indigenous traditions and processes in meetings

Power shifted in three key ways in the Riverbend Agreements. First, established practices of power between educators and Aboriginal people shifted when Aboriginal Education Enhancement Branch coordinators accepted participants strong resistance to the concept of measurement, and found new ways to include the community's concerns in the Enhancement Agreement text. To do this they developed the "Commitment Statements".

A second significant shift in power occurred when the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee reclaimed the first draft of the Agreement from School Board staff and undertook the writing process themselves. The struggle to regain and retain control of the writing process is an example of disjuncture revealed in the ethnographic data, as was the struggle to include statements about historical injustice. Disjunctures such as these are invisible in the text.

Finally, the Ministry of Education accepted the community's version of the text that outlined the history of First Nations people on the territory, including details of the historical wrongs they endured with the arrival of Europeans.

In the Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch, staff both experienced and facilitated change as school boards learned to engage in a collaborative dialogic relationships with all the Aboriginal communities in their catchments. The Branch evolved their own processes as they learned from communities, and the Advisory Board of Aboriginal people from across the province who supported their work. Recognizing the challenges of harmonizing Aboriginal communities' governance structures and with provincial policies, they advocate for the necessary space and time to achieve consensus.

They coordinate 'shared learning' practices between the province's school districts; adapt their own processes each time they learn something new about the process; and change the language they use, when necessary to reflect new understanding of meaning. New agreements pioneer new processes, that are then passed on the other school districts and communities. For example, one Agreement prioritized 'improved relationships' as an essential goal for student success.

The Branch has a mandate to address the question of measurement; an imperatives of the Ministry of Education. Branch staff work between these two world to support Aboriginal communities' to articulate measurable ways to capture the elements of success that they have identified for their children. Working this interspace, Branch Coordinators are vital to facilitating the presence of Aboriginal voices in the Agreements.

The general analysis of Enhancement Agreements completed between 1999 and 2010 indicate that relationships between Aboriginal peoples and educators are changing in other jurisdictions in the province.

Key changes visible in Enhancement Agreements 1999-2010:

- greater inclusion of Aboriginal communities
- more holistic approaches to goal setting
- a greater acceptance of Indigenous values
- more extensive use of Indigenous language and symbols.

The appearance of these elements in policy documents demonstrate a more open approach to defining and creating success for Aboriginal students on Aboriginal terms. A singular analysis of texts may not reveal the particular struggles people endured to produce the Enhancement Agreement. The ethnographic data from Riverbend school district indicate that these shifts do not come without a determined effort on the part of the Aboriginal communities involved.

To create social change requires educators and policy makers to become aware of how dominant social values and commitments to work unconsciously through them to discredit other knowledge systems and values (Apple, 1990, Battiste 1998). The existence and continuing evolution of Enhancement Agreements is one indication an

inclusive approach is gaining some ground, and is valued and accepted by more educators and policy makers.

Conclusion

Collaborative processes require openness. A key finding of this study is that the dialogue building process and the results of the Enhancement Agreements have a potential role to play in helping to undo the historical wrongs of institutional education. The experience of participants Riverbend School District provides one example of Aboriginal communities, School District officials and the Ministry of Education working together for change. The document they produced solidifies their commitment within the institutional framework.

The Agreements require sustained relationships, constant appreciation, and lasting acceptance. Critical change will require a shift to engage new forms of social relations that embrace, understand and include Indigenous worldviews within institutional frameworks. It is an exchange that Indigenous people have been willing to make for a very long time, as Cardinal wrote:

“From the beginning the Indian accepted the white man in Canada. We allowed him differences. We helped him overcome his weaknesses in trying to make his way in our environment. We taught him to know our world, to avoid the pitfalls and deadfalls, how to trap and hunt and fish, how to live in a strange environment. Is it too much to ask the white man to reciprocate?” (Cardinal, 1969, p. 78).

Indigenous peoples in Canada endure. They maintain their humanity despite the forced dismantling of families through the residential schools system, the sixties scoop

and the child welfare system of today. The teachings, the knowledge, and the connection to lands where families can still trace their roots back thousands of years, are a source of strength. To bring effective social change will require all Canadians to recognize and embrace the gift and opportunity that mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal peoples will bring. Stephen Point (2009) has said that “We need to journey together beyond the colonial hangover, the vestiges of which many of us still suffer from. But, if we are still separate in the end we will have gained little. We have to collectively turn the page, find solutions together and learn to paddle together to the same tune, equals with the world, our environment, even with the smallest beings” .

The historical processes of education shape the social processes occurring in the interface between educators, those responsible for the administration of education, and Aboriginal people. In public education, Enhancement Agreements offer an opportunity to reshape those relations in a positive way. How well these relations take root in the extra local relations of Ministries of Education is a question that will be worth watching closely. The significance of the Enhancement Agreements lie in the actual relationship-building process of developing the goals and markers that are eventually expressed in the text of the Agreement.

The process of developing an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement works *from within* the institutional processes to disrupt the damaging relations that have plagued Aboriginal students in Canadian education systems. This process of engagement between members of diverse Aboriginal communities and administrators who work within institutional power structures in a constructive and respectful dialogue is a welcome step forward. In this process, individuals and communities participate in

organizing the social relations that determine their experiences within the institutional relations of education. After 150 years of exclusion from the organizing processes that imposed damaging and traumatic educational experiences on generations of Aboriginal people, change is required.

To sustain these promising shifts will require attention to how these agreements are put together and the institutional processes that organize the experience of those involved in their production. We must also fully understand the contextual environment of institutional processes that create problems for Indigenous people and/or their communities.

Invitation to topics that could be explored from here

As this process unfolds there will be much more to explore. Is the development process inclusive enough? Where are teachers in the Enhancement Agreement process? What kinds of struggles pose obstacles to Enhancement Agreement development in some school districts? How can these principles apply in other policy development areas? What does the shifting discourse evident in this examination of Enhancement Agreements through time tell us about relations between Aboriginal peoples and communities and School Districts? What can we learn about the particular struggles involved in making Aboriginal voices visible text of Enhancement Agreements, ? There is need for more work to include Aboriginal voices in an authentic way, to express the truth of history, to establish priorities based on Aboriginal values, to resist a singular focus on benchmarking, to recognize and include Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, learning, and sharing knowledge.

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Appendix A

Interview design

The question design uses a focused conversation framework which involves inquiry at four levels:

1. Objective level questions that encourage participants to focus their attention on objective data and facts about the topic.
2. Reflective questions that bring out people's reactions to and internal associations with the facts.
3. Interpretive questions that reach into the meanings and significance that people attach to their lived experience of the situation or process.
4. Decisional questions that allow people to define their relationship and response to the situation. At this level, people have an opportunity to make statements of resolution or recommendations for the future (Stanfield, 2000; ICA Canada, 1998).

Interview conversation guide

Focus statement

Reflect on your experience of participating in the development of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement for your community.

Objective level questions

What images of the process stand out in your memory?
How did you become involved?
What were the first things you remember?
What did you do, what was your role?

Reflective level questions

Was there a turning point for you?
What surprised you about that moment?
When did you feel most at ease with the process?
What experiences were uncomfortable for you?

Interpretive level questions

What is your lasting impression your involvement at the table?
What is most significant about the process in your mind?

Decisional level questions

What was learned?
What challenges are ahead?
What promise does this agreement hold for the future?

Reference:

Stanfield, R. (Ed.) (2000). *The art of focused conversation*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers & Toronto, ON: The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs.

Appendix B

Table B.1 Enhancement Agreement Goals Through Time

School District	Date	Goals
72 Campbell River (Improvement Agreement)	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in Dogwood Completion Rate. (20 percent of Aboriginal education funding) • Improvement in Primary Literacy, based on District Grade 3 Reading assessment and, subject to agreement of all parties, to also include planned Kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2 District assessments. (20 percent of Aboriginal education funding) • Improvement in Intermediate Literacy and Numeracy, as measured by District (Grades 6 and 9) and Provincial (Grades 4, 7 and 10) assessments. (20 percent of Aboriginal education funding) • Improvement in participation and success rates in Mathematics 11 and English 12. (10 percent of Aboriginal Education funding) • Improvement in participation and success rates in First Nations courses, including First Nations Studies 12 and Kwakwala 11. (10 percent of Aboriginal education funding) • Improvement in attendance. (10 percent of Aboriginal Education funding) • Improvement in family Involvement, as measured by one-to-one contacts between educators and adult family members of First Nations students. (10 percent of Aboriginal education funding)
73 Kamloops-Thompson (Improvement Agreement)	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in primary performance, based on District Benchmarks. (30%) • Improvement in basic skills performance, Grades 4 -10. (30%) • Reduction in the number of First Nations students in courses or programs designed for academically weak students. (10%) • Improvement in Dogwood Completion Rate. (15%) • Improvement in performance in meeting Dogwood requirements. (5%) • Improvement in attendance. (10%)
42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in Dogwood completion rates. • Improvement in Government exam results. • Improvement in literacy and numeracy as measured by Performance Assessment Grade 5 and Provincial Assessments (FSA) Grades 4, 7, 10 • Improvement in Participation and Success rates in Mathematics Grade 11 and English Grade 11. • Improvement in Attendance. • Improvement in retention rates. • Improvement in literacy at the kindergarten to Grade 2 level. • Improvement in building and maintaining relationships between school personnel and adult family members / guardians.
68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith	2001	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. School District 68 will develop a policy that will provide a framework for improving the school experience and academic achievement of Aboriginal students. b. Improvement in Dogwood Completion Rate. c. Improvement in primary literacy. d. Improvement in intermediate literacy and numeracy. e. Improvement in secondary literacy. f. Participation and Success in Mathematics 11, Science 11, English 12, or Communications 12. g. Improvement in participation and success rates in First Nations Studies 12 and Hul'qumi'num' Language. h. Improvement in attendance. i. Improvement in family involvement. j. Increased participation by all School District 68 personnel in cultural awareness and diversity training in-service. k. Increased level of student participation in extra curricular/school-based activities. l. Participation and success in fine arts programs. m. Reduce percentage of Aboriginal students placed in a special education behaviour category through early intervention programs. n School District 68 will work towards developing partnerships with the Aboriginal communities to support and enhance pre-school readiness programs. o. Discussions regarding the governance structure of 131 funded programs will take place.
79 Cowichan Valley (Improvement Agreement)	2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Achievement based on the participation and success rates in Math 11 and English 12, and the Dogwood completion rate. • Academic Preparedness based on the results of the Foundation Skills Assessment in Grade 4, 7, and 10. • Attendance based on the average attendance rates district wide at the Elementary, Middle, and Secondary levels.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Culture using measures to be determined including surveys. • Technology using measures to be determined including surveys.
28 Quesnel	2003	<p>Academic Goals (Ac)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement in opportunities to culturally relevant curriculum 2. Improvement in Early Literacy; Kindergarten to Grade 3 level 3. Improvement in Intermediate Literacy and Numeracy; Grades 4 to 7 4. Improvement in grades 9 to 11 successful transition rates. 5. Improvement in Participation and Success rates in Mathematics Grade 11 and English 11 6. Improvement in Dogwood completion rates <p>Social Goals (So)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement in building and maintaining relationships between school personnel and adult family members / guardians / community 2. Enhancement of student self-worth 3. Improved student participation in school and district based extra curricular activities. <p>Reduce student suspension/exclusion rates</p>
35 Langley	2003	<p>Primary literacy Foundational Skills in Reading and Writing Foundational Skills in Numeracy Numeracy Mathematics Increased Retention Increased Graduation Social Responsibility</p>
59 Peace River South	2003	<p>Improve Kindergarten readiness Improve primary literacy and numeracy Improve intermediate literacy and numeracy Improve secondary literacy and numeracy Improve Dogwood completion rate</p>
69 Qualicum	2003	<p>To improve achievement of all Aboriginal students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To improve the sustained enrolment of Aboriginal students in school 2. To improve the literacy achievement at all levels of Aboriginal students 3. To improve the numeracy achievement at all levels of Aboriginal students 4. Increase the percentage of Aboriginal students completing Grade 12 5. Expand the school-to-work options for Aboriginal students 6. Encourage Aboriginal students to expand their post secondary entrance options 7. Enhance First Nations students' understanding of their heritage, sense of belonging and personal belief that they can be successful in British Columbia's public education system.
52 Prince Rupert	2003	<p>Goal #1: To have all children become successful readers and writers. Goal #2: To increase success for all First Nations Learners. Goal #3: Creating Safe and Caring School Communities with Empathetic Students</p>
40 New Westminster	2004	<p>To increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students with Aboriginal culture To improve Aboriginal student performance at the intermediate level in reading and writing as measured by district assessment ...gr 4, 6, & 7 and Provincial FSA gr 4 & 7 To improve grade to grade transition rate at the secondary school level and secondary school completion rates of Aboriginal students To reduce the percentage of Aboriginal students identified in Ministry of Education Behavior categories in NW</p>
35 Nicola-Similkameen	2004	<p>Improve the academic achievement Increase academic preparedness Improve the grade 7-12 transition rates Monitor the students feeling of self-worth</p>
91 Nechako Lakes	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve relationships between School District No. 91, schools, local Aboriginal communities and parents; • Improve literacy for students of Aboriginal ancestry; • Improve numeracy for students of Aboriginal ancestry; • Increase Dogwood completion rates for students of Aboriginal ancestry; and • Increase awareness of Aboriginal languages and cultures for all.
73 Kamloops – Thompson	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • * Improve Primary Performance Based on Benchmarks (Grade 1-3 Reading, Writing, Math) • *Improve Intermediate Foundation Skill Areas (Grades 4-7 Reading, Writing, Math) • *Increase the Percentage of Elementary Students Enrolled in the Regular Academic Program • *Improve the Grade 8 Cohort Dogwood Completion Rate • *Maintain Student Attendance at a minimum of 90% • Improve the Participation Rates in Grade 12 Provincial Examinations • Improve Pass Rates for Grade 10 English and Math and Grade 11 Social Studies,

		<p>Civics, and First Nations Studies Provincial Examinations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Postsecondary Entrance Options and Opportunities for Aboriginal Students (e.g. Academic Programs, Skilled Trades Programs, Technology Programs) • Increase Student Participation in Secwepmec Language Instruction • Increase Cultural Education for All Students • <i>*Indicates a performance goal that is continue from the first Enhancement Agreement</i>
74 Gold Trail	2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literacy 2. Numeracy 3. Graduation
37 Delta	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Achievement: Literacy and numeracy through all grades with 3% and 5% increase targets based on standard assessments • Student Graduation and Retention 5% increase in Graduation rate • Aboriginal Cultural Enhancement: Increase knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history for all students, Aboriginal student sense of belonging to school community, and parent and student satisfaction with the Aboriginal program
47 Powell River	2005	<p>Goal 1 Academic Achievement Goal 2 Social Goal 3 Culture and Language</p>
61 Victoria	2005	<p>Goal 1: To increase Aboriginal students' sense of place, of caring, and of belonging in the public school system. Goal 2: We will honour and improve relationships between the Greater Victoria School District and the Aboriginal community and parents. Goal 3: To increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and culture. Goal 4: To increase success of all Aboriginal students.</p>
70 Alberni	2005	<p>Goal 1: to increase the achievement of all Aboriginal students Goal 2: To increase the number of Aboriginal students completing grade 12 with a Dogwood Certificate that will enable them to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and assets needed to contribute to a healthy society and sustainable economy. Goal 3: To enhance Aboriginal students' understanding of their heritage, sense of belonging, and personal belief that they can be successful in British Columbia in a public education system that is safe, caring, supportive and respectful. Goal 4: To ensure that all students have a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the language of the local First Nations tribes and culture of all Aboriginal groups. Involvement in programs is strongly encouraged</p>
83 North Okanagan – Shuswap	2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Improve Kindergarten readiness B. Improve primary literacy and numeracy C. Improve intermediate literacy and numeracy D. Improve secondary literacy and numeracy E. Increase the Dogwood Completion rate F. Decrease School Leaving Certificate rate
85 Vancouver Island North	2005	<p>GOAL ONE: THE STUDENTS WILL FEEL AN INCREASED SENSE OF BELONGING & RESPECT THROUGH THEIR SCHOOL EXPERIENCE GOAL TWO: INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS WITH ACADEMIC SUCCESS GOAL THREE: ALL STUDENTS WILL EXPERIENCE AN ENHANCED ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT AS A RESULT OF ABORIGINAL CONTENT AT ALL LEVELS OF CURRICULUM</p>
78 Fraser – Cascade	2006	<p>Goal 1: To improve our students' sense of belonging by improving the cultural environment for First Nation/Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students. <i>Objective 1.1: To improve First Nation/Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal student knowledge base regarding local First Nation/Aboriginal culture, history, language, governance, and politics.</i> <i>Objective 1.2: To improve First Nation/Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students' attitudes and practices of acceptance within multicultural teaching and learning environments.</i> <i>Objective 1.3: To enhance First Nation/Aboriginal students' sense of self-worth.</i></p> <p>Goal 2: To increase First Nation/Aboriginal student success in school. <i>Objective 2.1: To increase achievement of our First Nation/Aboriginal students not meeting expectations by focusing resources on them.</i> <i>Objective 2.2: To increase First Nation/Aboriginal student attendance and punctuality.</i></p>
23 Central Okanagan	2006	<p>EMOTIONAL GOAL <i>To increase a sense of belonging, self respect, and pride of heritage for Aboriginal students</i></p> <p>SPIRITUAL GOAL <i>To increase awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal history, traditions, culture and</i></p>

		<p><i>language for Aboriginal students</i></p> <p>PHYSICAL GOAL <i>To increase the awareness of healthy choices that will enhance the physical well being of Aboriginal students</i></p> <p>INTELLECTUAL GOAL <i>To improve Aboriginal student academic achievement from kindergarten to grade 12</i></p>
51 Boundary	2006	<p>1. To improve Aboriginal student achievement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Numeracy <p>2. To increase awareness, knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture in all students. Students with Aboriginal ancestry will have an enhanced sense of belonging and pride in their Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>3. To improve the Secondary School completion rates of Aboriginal students</p>
53 Okanagan Similkameen	2006	<p>Goal #1: To build the Kindergarten readiness skill of all Aboriginal students</p> <p>Goal #2: To improve Aboriginal student academic achievement</p> <p>Goal #3: To improve 98-12) Aboriginal transition rates and retention rates</p> <p>Goal #4: To improve Aboriginal students' social responsibility and feeling of belonging in the schools.</p> <p>Goal #5: To Increase the knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal Culture.</p>
54 Bulkley Valley	2006	<p>Student Success Culture Sense of Belonging Health and Wellness</p>
67 Okanagan Skaha	2006	<p>1. Goal: To improve the literacy of learners of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>2. Goal: To improve the numeracy of learners of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>3. Goal: To improve the grade transition rate for learners of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>4. Goal: To improve the schooling success rate for learners of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>5. Goal: To improve the Dogwood graduation certificate completion rate for learners of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>6. Goal: To increase the awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal history and culture by both the Aboriginal and general populations of students.</p> <p>7. Goal: To increase the number of students of Aboriginal ancestry who are enrolled in and complete post secondary transition programs such as careers exploration, work experience, career preparation, and/or apprenticeship programs.</p>
68 Nanaimo – Ladysmith	2006	<p>Goal: To improve the academic success of Aboriginal students</p> <p>Goal: To improve Aboriginal student knowledge of history, culture and language in order to enhance a sense of pride in Aboriginal heritage</p> <p>Goal: To improve Aboriginal student ability to achieve educational and personal goals</p> <p>Goal: To improve Aboriginal student self concept and sense of belonging</p>
81 Fort Nelson	2006	<p>Measurable indicators will show annual improvement for Aboriginal students in the following agreed upon categories on an annual basis.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve academic achievement 2. Improve school attendance and extra-curricular participation 3. Improve students self-esteem
27 Cariboo – Chilcoten	2006	<p>Goal #1: To increase First Nations students' sense of belonging at school.</p> <p>Goal #2: To increase academic success of all First Nation students.</p> <p>Goal #3: To increase the respect and understanding of history, culture, governance and languages of the First Nation for all students in order to create a better sense of school and community belonging.</p>
64 Gulf Islands	2006	<p>GOAL I ACADEMIC All Aboriginal students will achieve academic excellence.</p> <p>Goal II Social/Emotional (Belonging) All Aboriginal students will demonstrate an increased sense of belonging.</p> <p>GOAL III CULTURAL <i>All students will demonstrate a deeper understanding and appreciation of the histories, languages, and cultures of the Aboriginal communities from an Aboriginal perspective.</i></p>
75 Mission	2007	<p>Theme Academics: To improve academic success of Aboriginal students.</p> <p>Goal: To improve Grade 7 to 8 transition rates for Aboriginal students.</p> <p>Goal: To ensure that Aboriginal students' are successful for Literacy and Numeracy by Grade 3.</p> <p>Theme Culture: To improve the knowledge of culture and history of Aboriginal peoples for all students. Goal: To increase the knowledge for all students to learn about Aboriginal culture.</p> <p>Theme Individual Development: To improve Aboriginal student sense of belonging and pride. Goal: To ensure that Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging to their schools.</p>
34 Abbotsford	2007	<p>Increase the number of Aboriginal students meeting expectations in reading</p> <p>Increase school completion of Aboriginal students</p> <p>Increase cultural pride in Aboriginal students</p>

		Increase sense of belonging of Aboriginal students in school
43 Coquitlam	2007	<p>GOAL 1 Increase knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture and history for all students</p> <p>GOAL 2 Increase the number of Aboriginal students reporting feelings of safety and a sense of belonging</p> <p>GOAL 3 Improve Aboriginal students' achievement</p> <p>GOAL 4 Improve Aboriginal students' Grade-to-Grade Transition Rate and Six-Year Dogwood Completion Rate</p>
48 Howe Sound	2007	<p>Goal One: Improve Successful School Completion for Aboriginal students</p> <p>Goal Two: Improve Performance of Aboriginal Students identified as having Behavioural and Learning Needs according to Ministry of Education criteria</p> <p>Goal Three: Improve Academic Performance of "At Risk" Aboriginal students</p> <p>Goal Four: Improve Literacy for Aboriginal students</p>
71 Comox Valley	2008	<p>Goal 1: To increase Aboriginal student's sense of belonging; including sense of place, identity and self-esteem, in a nurturing and inclusive environment.</p> <p>Goal 2: To improve the achievement of all Aboriginal students</p> <p>Goal 3: To increase the awareness and understanding of First Nation, Métis and Inuit history, traditions and culture for all students.</p> <p>Goal 4: To enhance skills, qualities and confidence in leadership for Aboriginal students.</p>
20 Kootenay – Columbia	2008	<p>Area: Academic Excellence (Student Success)</p> <p>Goal #1: To enhance the achievement of all Aboriginal learners.</p> <p>Area: Language</p> <p>Goal #2: To improve Aboriginal students' knowledge of Aboriginal languages.</p> <p>Area: Culture & History</p> <p>Goal #3: To improve all students' knowledge of culture and history of Aboriginal peoples.</p>
08 Kootenay Lake	2008	<p>Goal #1: Enhance the Aboriginal student's sense of belonging and improve self-esteem.</p> <p>Goal #2: To improve the academic success of all Aboriginal students.</p> <p>Goal #3: Increase the number of Aboriginal students who are making positive lifestyle choices to support and enhance their academic achievement.</p>
49 Central Coast	2008	<p>Goal # 1</p> <p>To increase the number of Aboriginal students who successfully complete a Dogwood Certificate and enable them to develop their individual potential and to be eligible to enrol in a meaningful career, technical, or academic post secondary program.</p> <p>Goal #2</p> <p>To increase the knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal culture, history, and language for all students throughout the School District.</p> <p>Goal #3</p> <p>To increase success for all Aboriginal students in reading and writing</p>
63 Saanich	2008	<p>Goal 1: All students will develop an increased awareness of, and respect for,</p> <p>Goal 2: əSÁNEÇ, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' histories, cultures and traditions.</p> <p>Goal 3: əSÁNEÇ, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit students will develop an increased sense of identity and belonging within the school's learning community.</p> <p>Goal 4: əSÁNEÇ, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit secondary school students will experience successful transitions.</p>
41 Burnaby	2008	<p>Goal: Burnaby Aboriginal students will develop a strong sense of belonging and confidence through pride in their cultural heritage and participation in their community.</p> <p>Goal: All students in Burnaby Schools will increase their knowledge and understanding of the history of Aboriginal peoples of Canada.</p> <p>Goal: Aboriginal students will develop a healthy lifestyle based on the traditional Aboriginal teachings (Mental, Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual).</p> <p>Goal: Aboriginal students will graduate from secondary schools prepared to further their education, realize their career goals and to live out their dreams.</p>
36 Surrey	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advance the literacy achievement of Aboriginal learners from Kindergarten to Grade 12; • To increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and culture for all students; • To enhance Aboriginal students' sense of belonging so they can be successful; • To increase the transition rates and graduation rates for Aboriginal students.
84 Vancouver Island West	2008	<p>Moolith mooms : SENSE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY</p> <p>Goal 1: Caring: All students will feel welcomed, cared for, safe, respected, and valued.</p> <p>Goal 2: Identity: All students will experience Aboriginal traditions lead by Aboriginal people in all aspects of the school.</p>

		<p>Goal 3: Understanding for the Recent Past: All students will have knowledge of the residential school experience and an understanding of the past and present impact that this experience had on individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>Ha houpa: TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE</p> <p>Goal 1: Culture: All students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal heritage and culture.</p> <p>Goal 2: Language: All Aboriginal students will complete an accredited K–8 Nuu-chah-nulth language program and will be able to enrol in a Grade 9-12 Nuu-chah-nulth language program.</p> <p>Haa? akwi: SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN LEARNING</p> <p>Goal 1: Success at Grade Level: The number of Aboriginal students who are successful learners at grade level will increase.</p> <p>Goal 2: Entrance Requirements and Options: The number of Aboriginal students who graduate with a program of studies that includes academic courses required for post secondary programs will increase.</p> <p>Goal 3: Readiness for Learning: All students will enter kindergarten with the skills and knowledge needed for a successful start to school.</p> <p>Hi>%at%i q huu=tiks^ii>at, nana%ic^ii>at, Wa>yu, Wa>ya@as, +iisuwi></p> <p>PLACES OF LEARNING: Home, Community, School</p> <p>Goal 1: Community Teaching: Aboriginal students will successfully complete courses offered in the community setting.</p>
62 Sooke	2009	<p>Sense of Belonging Language Aboriginal Ways of Knowing Achievement</p>
39 Vancouver	2009	<p>Belonging To increase Aboriginal students' sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance and caring in their schools.</p> <p>Mastery To ensure that Aboriginal students achieve increased academic success in Vancouver schools and that they participate fully and successfully from kindergarten through the completion of Grade 12.</p> <p>Culture and Community To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities.</p>
93 Francophone Education Authority	2009	<p>1. Improve the academic success of Aboriginal students in such a way that Aboriginal students graduate with a strong sense of cultural pride (identity) capable of taking on leadership roles in their Francophone and Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>2. Achieve balance between academic and cultural values focusing on the four aspects of the holistic self: spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical. This goal is in harmony with the provincial curriculum for Health and Career Education.</p>
60 Peace River North	2009	<p>Goal 1: Improve the Wellness of all Aboriginal Students Goal 2: All Students will honour the Local Aboriginal Histories and Cultures Goal 3: To Improve the Academic Success and Graduation Rates of all Aboriginal Students</p>
19 Revelstoke	2009	<p>Goal: Increase Aboriginal students' knowledge and pride of their heritage and language. Goal: Increase every students' awareness of the culture and heritage of Aboriginal peoples Goal: Increase Aboriginal students' successful completion of their secondary education Goal: Increase the academic success of Aboriginal students with increased literacy, numeracy and technological competencies</p>
72 Campbell River	2009 3rd EA	<p>1. Year-by-year improvement in literacy and numeracy achievement by all Aboriginal students at the elementary, middle & secondary school levels (K-12). 2. Year-by-year improvement in the transition rates of all Aboriginal students at every grade level. 3. To increase the number of Aboriginal students who graduate with a Dogwood Certificate. All Aboriginal students will be well prepared and knowledgeable about how to achieve their career and life goals. 4. To increase all Aboriginal students' sense of pride and ensure they have opportunities to participate in and learn about their heritage and culture</p>
69 Qualicum	2009 2 nd EA	<p>INTELLECTUAL QUADRANT Goal: To improve the academic achievement of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.</p> <p>EMOTIONAL QUADRANT Goal: To increase sense of belonging, self-respect and pride among First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.</p> <p>SPIRITUAL QUADRANT</p>

		<p>Goal: To increase the awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, culture, traditions and language among all students.</p> <p>PHYSICAL QUADRANT</p> <p>Goal: To maintain and improve the physical well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.</p>
42 Maple Ridge – Pitt Meadows	2010 3 rd EA	<p>GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 42</p> <p>GOAL 2: TO IMPROVE ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING IN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 42</p>
73 Kamloops-Thompson	2010 3 rd EA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Primary Achievement Results in Grades K-3 Reading, Writing and Math. (Note: Kindergarten Achievement has been added to this goal.) 2. Improve Intermediate Foundation Skills in Grades 4-7 Reading, Writing and Math 3. Increase the Percentage/Number of Elementary Students enrolled in the Regular Academic Program 4. Maintain Student Attendance at a Minimum of 90 % 5. Improve the Grade 8 Cohort Dogwood Completion/Graduation Rate 6. Improve Pass Rates for Provincial Exams in Grade 10 English and Math, and Grade 11 Social Studies; and maintain current Pass Rate for Grade 11 B.C. First Nations Studies 7. Increase Student Participation in Secwepemc Language Instruction 8. Expand opportunities in Cultural Education for all Students 9. Increase the number of Aboriginal Grade 12 Graduates Entering Postsecondary Programs through Expanded Access to a Variety of Program Options. 10. Increase the level of Aboriginal Parent Engagement/Involvement at the School Level. [This is the only new goal in this agreement]
33 Chilliwack	2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To increase Aboriginal students' sense of belonging at school.</i> 2. <i>To increase academic success of all Aboriginal students.</i> 3. <i>To increase the respect and understanding of language, culture, governance and history of Stó:lō and Aboriginal people for all students in order to create a better sense of school and community.</i>
35 Langley	2010 2 nd EA	<p>Emotional Goal To nurture, guide, strengthen, and enhance a sense of belonging and strong cultural pride for Aboriginal children – our future leaders</p> <p>Spiritual Goal To strengthen the spiritual connection for our Aboriginal children</p> <p>Physical Goal To improve the physical well-being of Aboriginal children and to empower them to make healthy choices</p> <p>Intellectual Goal To improve the success of our Aboriginal children by building their self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence</p>
10 Arrow Lakes	2010	<p>Goal #1: Enhance the Aboriginal student's sense of belonging and improve self-esteem.</p> <p>Goal #2: To improve Aboriginal student achievement.</p>
87 Stikine	2010	<p>To improve the academic success of all Aboriginal learners</p> <p>To increase awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal history, traditions, culture and language; and to uphold and strengthen the inherent respect for and connection to the land</p> <p>To improve the physical wellbeing of Aboriginal learners</p> <p>To increase the sense of belonging, identity, and self esteem in a caring and inclusive environment for all Aboriginal learners</p>
52 Prince Rupert	2010 2 nd Partnership Agreement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase Aboriginal learner's knowledge of Aboriginal language, culture and history 2. Increase Aboriginal learner's achievement in reading and writing 3. Increase Aboriginal learner's achievement in mathematics 4. Increase Aboriginal learner's successful transitions, school completion rates and graduation rates