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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT STUDENTS
IN ALBERTA PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

By

Wendell Blaine Hogg

B.Ed., University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, 1977

M.Ed., University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, USA, 1986

Dissertation

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Approved by

Dr. David A. Strobel, Dean
Graduate School

Dr. Bill McCaw, Chair
Educational Leadership

Dr. Neldon Hatch
Assistant Superintendent, Westwind School Division

Dr. Francis O'Reilly
Educational Leadership

Dr. Don Robson
Educational Leadership

Dr. Darrell Stolle
Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

Hogg, Wendell Blaine

Education

Perceptions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students in Alberta Public School Classrooms

Chairman: William P. McCaw, Ed. D.

This qualitative inquiry explored a grounded theory of leadership by examining the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding the First Nations students in their schools. The sample came from three schools in Southern Alberta Canada. Included, were 15 teachers of grades one through nine. Data were collected during two interviews. The first interview involved the teachers telling stories involving any of their students. The second interview consisted of the researcher asking specific questions that focused on the First Nations students in that particular teacher's classroom.

Three coding procedures were used in this study: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding and (c) selective coding. The first procedure, open coding, identified the concepts or categories in the data: "family influences," "teacher as rescuer," "academics," "school expectations," and "student attitude." Next, a micro-analysis occurred using an axial coding procedure. This procedure related the categories to their subcategories, linking the categories by describing their properties and dimensions. Finally, the data was subjected to a selective coding process. This stage of analysis revealed a core category, which is related to the other categories. This core category labeled, "Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Faced by FNMI students in Public Schools," is described through a narrative report that forms the basis of the study's findings. This core category also demonstrated the interrelationships between all other categories.

The first of the two major findings from this study recognized that teachers perceived themselves as rescuers of First Nations students and as such believe that First Nations students can succeed only to the degree that they conform to non-First Native expectations. A second finding concluded that non-First Nations teachers are struggling to build a racial identity that values the cultural strengths of First Nations students. This study concluded by proposing that, while we cannot overlook the challenges faced by First Nations students, they also come to school with strengths that we must discover and utilize to bring to reality the vast potential that they possess.

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Next, I must pay tribute to our friend, colleague and mentor, the late Dr. LeRoy "Joker" Walker, whose vision and persistence saw this whole project realized. Without his energy, the Canadian Cohort would have been an unrealized dream. To him and his family I remind them of my love and respect for Joker and thank them for allowing him to give some of his time to others.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Native American students have been attending schools in the Province of Alberta for the past 70 years. The Government of Alberta has identified these aboriginal inhabitants as First Nations, Métis or Inuit (FNMI). The different circumstances in which they have been educated include religious boarding schools, federal reservation schools and in the past 30 years they have attended public or Catholic separate schools in communities adjacent to the reservations where the students live. In the past 10 years First Nations students have begun attending schools in the major urban cities, which are off the Reserve, such as Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton as their families have moved to the cities in search of work. Other students are living at home on the Reserves but attending school in smaller rural towns adjacent to their home. Among these rural communities are Cardston, Pincher Creek, Glenwood, Hill Spring and Fort Macleod. Anecdotal evidence shows that First Nations, Métis or Inuit (FNMI) students in these settings are outnumbered by the non-FNMI population that makes up the typically Anglo-Saxon communities of Alberta.

The Province of Alberta incorporates various educational systems. When Alberta became a province of Canada in 1905, minority education rights were established. For Catholics, this meant that fully funded public education was available to them. Since that time there has been little distinction between public education systems and Catholic education systems. Both are accountable to the provincial Ministry of Education and both receive funding in the same manner. The Province of Alberta funds both of these systems on an equitable basis regardless of the location of the school system. Other schools exist in Alberta. Charter schools approved by the Minister of Education are funded on an equal

basis with public and Catholic schools. Private schools, however receive minimal funding from the province.

The education of FNMI students in Canada is a federal responsibility. All other education is the domain of the province, in this particular case, Alberta. Recently, the province of Alberta has voluntarily taken an interest in the education of FMNI students, especially those attending provincial schools off reserve. The provincial government department responsible for K-12 schools is called Alberta Education. The name, Alberta Education reflects a recent restructuring. Previously, the department was called Alberta Learning and was responsible for post-secondary education as well. Alberta Education established a First Nations, Métis and Inuit branch to oversee the disbursement of funds to provincial schools specifically earmarked for FNMI students.

The serious issue of an achievement gap has come to the attention of Alberta Education in recent years and efforts to reverse this trend have been implemented throughout the province. These efforts really began with a national report on the status of aboriginal citizens of Canada. This report was entitled *Looking Forward, Looking Back. Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996). This report examined the education of aboriginal peoples in Canada along with a host of other factors in their lives. Then in 2002, Terry Fortin and his committee submitted *The FNMI Policy Framework*, a document specific to the education of First Nations students in the province of Alberta. The Policy Framework outlined a plan to guide the development of policy for the future education of First Nations' students in Alberta schools. The committee responsible for this consulted with parents, students, and native elders.

This research study examined one of the facets of educational practice that contributes to the achievement of Aboriginal students, specifically the perception that the classroom teacher has of First Nations students. An educational axiom is that the teacher has an influence on students' behavior and academic achievement. By asking teachers to talk about the students, including FNMI students, we are able to determine if their perceptions of the abilities of the students are similar or different to their perceptions of students of mainstream cultures.

Statement of the Problem

First Nations' students are failing in our schools. This is a grave concern to society and particularly to the Native community. First nations parents are choosing to send their children to off reserve, non-Native schools and the progress of these students is lagging behind their non-Native peers. The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework (2002) reports that students in Grades 3,6 and 9 achieve as much as 12.7% lower than their non-FNMI peers. Chapter Two of this dissertation describes in more detail this achievement gap. As discovered during the review of the literature, educators have not written much about FNMI achievement. Reasons for the achievement gap have not yet been articulated. Therefore, educators don't know exactly why FNMI students fail at school. They don't know why FNMI students drop out in higher numbers. But the evidence is clear that FNMI students are indeed failing in our schools.

As FNMI students come from their homes on the reserves, these students are coming into contact with non-Native teachers and students, some for the first time. This cultural collision sets up an environment that can result in prejudice and racism on the part of the teachers and the dominant non-FNMI culture of the students in these schools.

This study sought to examine the issues emanating from these serious cultural and educational issues.

In choosing to examine the perceptions of the teacher, this study focused on the classroom teacher, the person in the school that has the most contact with FNMI students. It cannot be assumed that teachers in public schools have a knowledge of FNMI culture since most Alberta teacher training programs and professional development opportunities do not specifically address the FNMI culture. There is a perceived similarity of the educational environment for both non-Native and Native students. Nonetheless, the outcome of the experience for non-FNMI and FNMI students may not be the same.

In an Alberta Education publication entitled *Safe and Caring Schools for Aboriginal Students* (Tailfeathers, 2004), two important documents are summarized. The federal government's Report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Dussault, 1996) and *Alberta Learning's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (Fortin, 2002) revealed some general descriptions of FNMI educational students that show them at risk: "The high school graduation rate of Aboriginal students in Alberta (1996) is 15 per cent less than that of non-Aboriginal students. About 4 per cent of Aboriginal learners complete university compared to about 14% of non-Aboriginal people" (p. 11).

The 2002-2003 *Results Report* of Alberta Learning showed that 58% of Alberta's FNMI students completed some form of post-secondary education including university, college, and trade school (p. 24). This is much higher than the previous indicators of Aboriginal completion rates. Nonetheless, this level of completion is still considerably below the mainstream completion rate of non-FNMI students.

Aboriginal people have lower educational achievement levels than non-Aboriginal people. One measure that was used came from the province of Ontario. In 1998 an Ontario literacy coalition stated the following:

Presently, there are no statistics on literacy levels for First Nations adults. In the meantime, First Nations use educational attainment levels to identify trends in First Nations literacy. The 1991 Aboriginal Post-Censal Survey indicated that 26.9% of adults, aged 15-49, who self-identified as Northern American Indian on-reserve in Ontario, reported no formal schooling or less than grade 9 as their highest level of education [as compared to the Canadian total of 6%] (p. 5).

Since the federal government of Canada is responsible for all First Nations education regardless of which province they live in, it is reasonable to view Ontario First Nations education in the same light as Alberta First Nations education. Thus, we see that FNMI literacy is not a new problem, but one that has been recently been pushed to the forefront. Native students are not succeeding in Alberta schools to the same extent as their non-FNMI peers.

Specific research studies into the Alberta situation are few. The provincial department of education has initiated a growing number initiatives focusing on FNMI education. Given this heightened interest in FNMI students and their educational achievement, it would be reasonable to find considerable data to support the new FNMI initiatives. This has not proven to be the case. Alberta Education officials have been reluctant to release specific data to justify their interest and subsequent expenditures. When schools and school authorities have requested segregated data, officials at Alberta Education state that the release of this data would be 'insensitive'. This is the term used

in direct discussions with the Aboriginal Branch of Alberta Education. They further explained that to release the data would be prejudicial and racist. Repeated requests for specific achievement data relating to FNMI students have continued to be met with negative responses.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study, utilizing grounded theory research methods, examined how teachers perceive Native students as compared with how the same teachers perceive non-FNMI students in the same classroom. This study generated a substantive theory regarding the role of teacher perceptions in the education of FNMI and non-FNMI students. It was intended that the results of this study would give greater understanding of teacher's perceptions of their students as well as examining the teacher's espoused theory of equal treatment of all students.

The education process is complex with a myriad of factors having an effect on the achievement of students. This study accepted that there were many such factors impacting the FNMI students and therefore their academic achievement. These other factors included socio-economic status and family dynamics. Crnic and Lamberty (1994) reported that socio-economic issues reduce student readiness to learn. Cavanaugh, Schiller and Reigle-Crumb (2006) reported that family dynamic issues can be predictors of future academic success. While acknowledging that these are influential and significant factors, this study focused on the influence of the relationship between the teacher and the student and specifically the perception of the teacher toward FNMI students.

One of the factors that we can examine and perhaps influence within the education community is the teacher/student interaction. The purpose of this study was to listen to the story of teachers who have FNMI students in their class in order to gain a deeper understanding of the teachers' perception of their FNMI students. This new understanding led to the development of a theory upon which future action can be based. The researcher provided an opportunity for the teacher to describe their perceptions of both First Nations and non First Nations students, thereby providing a glimpse into their unique view of the Native student as compared to the teacher's view of the non First Nations student.

Research Questions

According to Creswell (2003), "Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. The qualitative researcher tends to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views" (p. 9). According to Creswell, the focus of the study moves outward from a single, overarching question or perhaps two questions and several important sub questions. This study was guided by one central question:

Central Question

1. What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students?

Sub-questions

The central question of a qualitative study is general in nature. In order to fully define the study, more specific sub-questions were asked. These sub-questions according

to Creswell (1998) follow the central question and “might be posed as aspects of the coding steps such as open, axial and selective coding and the development of propositions” (p. 102).

The central question guiding this study was supported by the following six sub-questions:

1. How are FNMI students represented in classroom stories as told by their teacher?
2. How do teachers describe FNMI students when prompted to focus on these students?
3. How do teachers describe their interaction with FNMI students as compared to non-FNMI students?
4. In what ways is the teacher’s self-description of their interactions with FNMI students, in phase two of the data collection, consistent with the stories they tell about the FNMI student in the first phase of the data collection?
5. What standards of achievement are expected of FNMI students by their teachers as compared to non-FNMI students?
6. What standards of behavior do teachers describe for their FNMI students?

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were used.

Aboriginal. The descendents of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution (Constitution Act, 1982, s. 35) recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people – Indian, Métis people and Inuit.

Axial Coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe axial coding as: “A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between categories” (p. 96).

Band. A term used to refer to a specific group of First Nations people. Often this term refers to the governing body of that particular group. The bands comprising the FNMI students in this study are the Peigan, Blackfoot and Blackfeet bands.

Category. Category is used in reference to qualitative analysis. It refers to a classification of concepts. From Strauss and Corbin (1990) we note: “This classification is discovered when concepts are compared one against another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category” (p. 61).

Coding. Coding is “the process of analyzing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

Core Category. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the core category as “The central category around which all the other categories are integrated” (p. 116).

First Nations. The term First Nations is preferred by many Aboriginal peoples and is used to refer to the various governments of the first peoples of Canada. The term came into common usage in the 1970’s to replace the word “Indian”.

FNMI. This is a relatively new acronym used by Alberta Education to describe Native American students. The acronym stands for First Nations, Métis and Inuit. The terminology and acronym were introduced in a document published in the *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework* (2002). When used in this study, FNMI will refer to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada and Alberta.

Gatekeepers. Creswell (1998) describes gatekeepers as the individuals in authority “who can provide access to the research site” (p. 60). In most instances this will be the superintendent of schools and the building principal.

Federal School. This refers to any school funded and administered by the federal government in Canada. Examples of these schools include military bases and First Nations schools located on federal native reservations.

Grounded Theory. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) “The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (p. 24).

Native American. This term is used interchangeably with First Nations, FNMI, Indian or Aboriginal in the province of Alberta. The term is also used frequently in the United States to describe the Aboriginal people. This term appears in the literature emanating from the United States.

Open coding. Open coding is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as “...the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61).

Phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin defined phenomenon as “the central idea, event happening, incident about which a set of actions or interactions are directed at managing, handling, or to which the set of actions is related” (p. 96).

Public School. This refers to schools funded and administered by the provincial governments throughout Canada. The provision of education is a provincial responsibility except for military bases, native reserves and territorial governments in the far north of Canada.

Selective Coding. Selective coding is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (p. 116)

Semi-structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews are defined by Merton, Fiske & Kendall (1956) as relatively open-ended interviews focused around a specific topic and guided by general questions.

Delimitations

There are two delimiting factors of this study. The first is that public school classrooms, grades 1-9, with at least 25% FNMI students will be included in this study. The second delimitation is that only schools located in communities near the Peigan Reserve and the Blood reserve located in Southern Alberta, Canada were included. These delimiting factors mean that all FNMI students described by the teachers were members of the Peigan, Blood or Blackfoot tribes.

Limitations

This study was limited to the perceived teacher interaction between the classroom teacher and the FNMI student. While this provided rich descriptions of an important aspect of the educational process, it would have been irresponsible from a research perspective to suggest that all Native student failures are solely the result of teacher/student interaction. Another limitation considered was the ability of the teacher to correctly portray their perceptions of FNMI students. In addition to the aforementioned limitations was the lack of generalizability of the findings.

Significance of the Study

Alberta Learning (2002) has identified a significant difference in the graduation rate, attendance and classroom success between FNMI students and other students in the public school system. While Alberta Learning was reluctant to release the exact data, they made the following statements in a 2002 document entitled *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*: “The long term expected outcomes of the Review are to: Improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner success in Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 and in post-secondary education” (p. 5). The *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* went on to give a more complete picture of the FNMI condition:

...in 1996, the high school graduation rate for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners was 15% less than those individuals who did not report Aboriginal ancestry on the Census. About 4% of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners completed university compared to about 14% of individuals who did not report Aboriginal ancestry on the Census. (p. 11)

This evidence clearly showed that First Nations students experienced a much lower level of success despite the recent efforts of the federal government and the provincial department of education. Even with these efforts Native students continued to lag behind other students when academic achievement was analyzed.

William Demmert and John Towner analyzed similar issues in a review of research literature published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2003). In this review they identified cultural issues that affected Native American students in U.S. public schools. They also indicated a lagging achievement level and explored a

myriad of important concepts such as language, self-esteem, cognitive issues and cultural based education interventions that supported this research being undertaken.

The Native population in the provincial schools is growing and will continue to grow for two reasons. First of all, more Native families are choosing “non-FNMI” schools as an alternative to the Federal schools on the reserves. Secondly, the native population is increasing in the Province at an accelerated pace. The Alberta Commission on Learning reported this in 2003. “Alberta has a rapidly increasing population of Aboriginal people. That includes First Nations people living on reserves and whose children attend schools operated by provincial school boards” (p. 82).

This study provided an important window into the perceptions of FNMI students by their teachers. The researcher listened to the teacher’s thoughts and perceptions concerning their FNMI students. It was anticipated that teachers telling their own stories would help the education community better understand the importance of teacher perceptions regarding the FNMI students and to meet their needs in a way that will eventually lead to increased success of FNMI students across Canada. A significant Alberta Learning document, *Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners*, (2004) pointed out that the teacher-students relationship was crucial to learning, particularly with the Aboriginal student.

The teacher’s relationship with the student is at the heart of Aboriginal approaches to education. Traditionally, teachers would know each student as an individual, with unique gifts and needs. In this environment, they would tailor the learning process to the student’s needs as a matter of course. (p. 67)

This recognition of the teacher's influence on the student pointed out the importance of understanding the perception that the teacher has. It also showed us that the teacher must know the student, must value the student and must see the student's uniqueness in order to meet their needs. This study added to the understanding of how the teachers meet these criteria. The next chapter, the Review of the Literature explored the existing knowledge base related to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature forms the foundation of the research for this study. First of all it will set the broad context of the study. According to Boote and Beile (2005) this broad context should “clearly demarcate what is and what is not within the scope of the investigation” (p. 4). Then the review would “situate the existing literature in a broader scholarly and historical context” (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 4). Thus the review of literature begins broadly and gradually narrows to specific references to the purpose of this study. This review of literature does not intend to present a case for the differences among Native groups, but rather to look for common observations that centre on the Native student in the classroom.

Introduction

It is the intent of this study and therefore this review of literature, to look at the body of research that can be related to the achievement of Native students in the setting of a classroom in a non-Native school. This study recognized the differences in culture but at the same time sought to find similarities in learning that would enrich the scarce existing literature and discover avenues of study to promote higher achievement among Native American students.

The body of research regarding the achievement levels of FNMI students is not large. The focus of this proposed study is a small corner of Alberta Canada. But in order to present an appropriate review of reading and research, it is necessary to examine works about Native American groups throughout Canada and the United States. While recognizing the differences between various Native groups, the readings shared a number

of commonalities that relate to all the native groups. This review of the literature proceeded with the above understanding.

The first section of the review examined the broad context of the field including issues of teacher's perceptions, teacher prejudice and the student teacher relationship. The second section addressed the minority student in the classroom. The next section examined in some detail the Native American and the FNMI student from a historical point of view. The fourth section narrowed the literature down to a scholarly approach to FNMI students' achievement. The last section looked at the idea of border town phenomenon.

Teacher's Perceptions of their Students

Teacher prejudice and minority students concerns have been at the forefront of educational research for many years. An electronic ERIC search of "teacher prejudice" resulted in over 200,000 articles as far back as 1966. Prejudice was described in varying degrees ranging from lack of knowledge to deliberate profiled mistreatment of students according to gender, culture, religion or ethnic origin. The following review showed that teacher prejudice exists in schools. Some of the prejudice described is inadvertent. The teacher did not realize that they are portraying prejudice, but nonetheless, the student perceives a racist attitude. Consider the story of a first year teacher who described her own prejudicial behavior.

Amy Croston (2003) described her own experiences as a teacher in Arizona. She mentioned the different subtle ways in which she was "racist" without meaning to be, nonetheless isolating her students. Coming from Illinois, Ms. Croston accepted her first teaching assignment in Arizona, where for the first time she came into contact with

Native American students. She related asking the students to sit “Indian style” on the floor and receiving blank looks from a classroom filled with Native American students (p. 16). Realizing how politically incorrect her reference to “Indian style” was, she corrected herself by asking the students to sit criss-cross on the floor.

Deirdre Almeida’s article (1996) on Countering Prejudice against American Indians and Alaska Natives found three obstacles to better instruction: (a) lack of training provided by teacher-training programs, (b) ongoing racist portrayals of Native Americans in the larger society and (c) difficulties in locating sources of trustworthy materials. The focus of this portion of the literature review is related to obstacle b), the racist portrayals of Native Americans in the larger society.

Betsinger, Garcia and Guerra (2004) reported that even after decades of civil rights progress, many educators continued to see Latino students as disadvantaged because of their language and culture. The following comments by teacher participants in their study were quoted anonymously:

I’m here because they need somebody on the journey through childhood, which is not always easy – someone stable.

I’m hoping that we can find a home in our building for him where his needs will be met the way I’ve met them. But, you know, it’s just like cats and dogs. I can’t save them all.

Some of those kids, their connections were never made when they were little and they can’t be. If those neurons don’t start firing at 8 months or 9 months, it’s never going to happen. So we’ve got some connections that weren’t made and they can’t be made up.

America is non-FNMI, middle class society, and children need to learn those rules in order to be successful. (p. 25)

These statements are frightening. Even if well meaning, the inherent prejudice of statements such as these gives cause to seriously reflect on our teaching practices. The possibility this type of prejudice lends credence to the importance of this study.

Changing the prejudices and perceptions of non-FNMI teachers is by no means an easy task. Teachers, having many years of excellent experience need to be convinced of the need to change. They need to have their prejudices laid out so they can see for themselves. This is not a task to be taken lightly. Jayme Huff (1998), an American researcher, examined the difficulty of reducing prejudice because of the reluctance of teachers and students to disclose racial attitudes. He found that Native Americans were one of the most reluctant cultural groups to disclose their feelings and attitudes about racism when given the opportunity either in an interview setting or on a paper and pencil questionnaire.

In order to better understand this connection between attitude and achievement Pamela Sue Gates-Duffield (1993) examined a teaching unit intended to help sixth grade students understand racism and prejudice by comparing modern circumstances with the Holocaust of World War II, the Civil Rights movements of the 1950's and 1960's and racism and prejudice in relation to Native American experiences. This study uncovered the importance of "providing students with an historical context by which they come to understand the global implications of racism and prejudice and the importance of cooperative learning versus a lecture format" (p. 1). The study also spoke to the importance of reflection time for teachers when teaching in a culturally diverse setting.

The Gates-Duffield study helped us to understand the complexity of changing perceptions. Her work underscored the importance of understanding the historical context referred to by FNMI researchers such as Leona Makokis (2001) and Patricia Makokis (2002) who emphasized the role of history in the education of FNMI students. Both of these writers have described that the past traditions need to be acknowledged in order for the FNMI student to be able to succeed in the modern classroom.

Irvine (1990) spoke to the concern of non-FNMI teachers dealing with the cultural diversity in classrooms. He criticized teacher training programs for continuing "...training future educators in the pedagogy of decades past and pretending that their graduates will teach in schools with non-FNMI, highly motivated, achievement oriented, suburban, middle class students from two parent families" (p. 18). His work referred to the cultural disconnect that can exist in classrooms where the teacher is a product of training programs that persist in assuming that all students are the same. This does not reflect the current reality of the classroom. Today's classrooms are diverse in culture, ethnicity and student family origin. This can also be said of the classrooms of the teachers selected for this study.

Judith Larkin and Harvey Pines (2003) found that one of the most common teacher behaviors, "calling on behavior" is not only disliked by all students, but is particularly harmful to the Native student. They noted that when there is pressure for an aboriginal student to come up with the right answer, they were likely to try to remain in the background. Larkin and Pines described a "top five" behaviors that students used to avoid being called on. These included "avoiding eye contact, looking like you are

thinking of the answer, acting like you are looking for the answer in your notes, acting like you are writing in your notes and pretending to read something course related” (p. 2).

The prejudice found in teachers’ practices is not always deliberate. It is nonetheless real. Chris Argyris (1999) gave insight to this phenomenon. He described, in his theory of action, how teachers can be prejudiced in ignorance. The theory of action proposes that all people have an espoused theory and a theory in use. The espoused theory is what the individual believes about himself or herself. Espoused theories are “... how we believe we act. They are the ideal way in which we see ourselves” (p. 127). The individual’s theory in use is how they actually behave. Argyris stated that the individual does not have a realistic view of their theory in use. Karen Horney (1992) further described an example of theory in use: “Conscious or unconscious, the image is always in large degree removed from reality, though the influence it exerts on the person’s life is very real indeed” (p. 96). This research was designed to expose the teachers’ espoused theory from their descriptions of students. At the same time, by asking for general descriptions, we also gained insight into the theory in use as we compare the descriptions of different students.

According to Calabrese (2002),

Espoused theories may differ widely from theories-in-use. A person, for example may believe that he is kind, although his theory-in-use demonstrates an arrogant, manipulative person. When confronted with his behavior, he reacts defensively because he recognizes only espoused theory and not his theory-in- use. (p. 38)

Argyris (1999) notes that

...we cannot learn someone's theory-in-use by asking. We must construct his theory-in-use from observations of his behavior. In this sense, constructs of theories-in-use are like scientific hypotheses; the constructs may be inaccurate representations of the behavior they claim to describe" (p. 7).

This idea of Argyris and Calabrese, is that individuals have difficulty seeing themselves and their actions accurately. They have a self-interest in presenting themselves in a favorable light. This leads to defensive posturing. This presents a dilemma in ascertaining the true perceptions that the teachers have towards their own prejudices.

Student/Teacher Relationships

The teacher student dynamic is an important facet of education. While specific research on FNMI student/non-FNMI teacher relationships appears to not exist, the issues at the heart of the relationship between students and teachers have been studied. There are some important lessons that can have application to all students and particularly minority students.

One such study, by Dale K. Lumpa (1997) pointed out that school climate and teacher satisfaction were the best predictors of student satisfaction. He stated that these two factors along with effective leadership have a direct impact on student achievement, student motivation and student satisfaction. Another study by Natasha Warikoo (2004) has looked specifically at cultural differences and similarities between minority students and their teachers. Using the research of Hedges and Nowell (1998) and Phillips (1998), Warikoo noted the racial inequality that "plagues the American education system. Black students start with lower skills upon arrival to first grade and the gap between black and white students increases during the schooling years:" (p. 138). Warikoo said that the

interpersonal connection does seem to increase student achievement. She cited Bernieri (1991) who found teachers' interpersonal sensitivity levels were strongly correlated to their degree of success in teaching interactions. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) "showed that students responded to teachers' beliefs about their abilities by performing to those expectations in the style of a self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 136).

According to Jussim, Eccles and Madon (1996) the teachers' perception has a definite influence on achievement, especially for a minority student.

The effect of teachers' October perceptions on students' mathematics scores in May is almost three times larger for blacks than for non-FNMIs. Further, the effect is also larger for females than for males, and larger for both black and non-FNMI students from low-income households. (p. 312)

This shows that the teacher's expectations of the student, which presumably are based on their perception of that student, have a major impact on the students' achievement levels. This reinforces what Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) have found previously when they stated, "after one year, and after two years, those boys who looked more Mexican benefited more from their teachers' positive prophecies" (p. 177). These findings regarding minority children warrant further study.

The Minority Student in the Classroom

The issues facing minority students have been of interest for decades. Throughout Canada and the United States, students from Latino, African-American, Asian and Aboriginal backgrounds have been a particular focus of research and concern for educators and politicians. According to Robert Evans (2005) "the achievement gap, the persistent disparity between the performance of African-American and Hispanic students

and that of non-FNMI and Asian students is perhaps the most stubborn, perplexing issue confronting American schools today” (p. 582).

As recently as 2003, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that the average 8th grade minority student performs at about the level of the average 4th grade non-FNMI student. This data supports the concern of many educators that minority students are not achieving to the same level as non-FNMI students. This is in spite of persistent efforts since the landmark *Brown v Board of Education* decision of 50 years ago. Paul Barton (2004) says this of the lack of progress in the past 50 years.

The basic right to equal school access eventually became a reality. But on the whole, equal access has not led to equal achievement. Local communities, state policymakers and the federal government have kept equal achievement on their agendas...but like prosperity in an earlier period, equal achievement has remained just around the corner. (p. 9)

Barton (2004) further discussed factors that seem to be tied to student achievement. He identified such factors as birth weight, nutrition, and parent availability in the home. He also pointed out that the school has factors under their influence that can impact student achievement. These factors are rigor of the curriculum, teacher experience, teacher preparation, class size, use of technology and school safety. Two of these factors, teacher experience and preparation have particular connection to this study. Barton (2004) stated: “having experienced teachers...makes a difference in student achievement. Unfortunately, minority and low income students are more likely to be taught by teachers with three or less years of experience” (p. 12).

Other writers such as Farkas and Wax (2004) referred to the achievement gap and criticized the response of modern educators. Aronson (2004) says that according Farkas and Wax, the achievement gap problem “begins and ends with poor, uneducated black families as the sole culprits in black students’ lagging test scores and grades” (p. 18).

As this review has shown, the minority student is disadvantaged in school. Ines Marquez Chisholm (1994) noted that while nearly a third of students come from minority backgrounds, including Native American, less than 12 percent of teachers and 15 percent of school administrators in the United States come from minority backgrounds. She stated that:

Our nation, the United States, is not a melting pot wherein human diversity fuses into a uniform America. On the contrary, ours is a mosaic of vibrant, diverse colors in which a cultural medley forms a variegated whole called the American culture. (p. 44)

Marquez Chisholm is telling us that as long as the teachers in our classrooms are from the dominant non-FNMI culture there will be difficulties for minority students in receiving an equal understanding by that teacher. This was a compelling reason to pursue this study. Even though there are as many as 40% FNMI students in the schools in southern Alberta, the teachers are predominantly non-FNMI.

The plight of the minority student in the public classroom is being defined more specifically as the research focuses on this issue. The number of studies regarding Hispanic, African-American, Asian and American Indian students shows that the education community is starting to recognize a need for focused strategies specifically aimed at the minority student. The Native student is one that seems to have come only

recently to the attention of the research community. One researcher, Cornel Pewewardy, (1998) pointed out a need for “culturally responsive teachers for American Indian children in American schools today” (p. 1). He feels that there is a cultural mismatch that is the cause of failing American Indian learners. This research uncovered important data about the non-FNMI teachers who teach Alberta’s FNMI children. This data was in the words of the teachers and thus were significant and powerful.

This literature review, so far, has been general in nature and encompasses the area of minority education issues. These issues relate to Hispanic, Asian, African-American and Native American. Common themes have been examined and areas of focus have been identified. The proceeding section will now focus more specifically on the Native American student and finally on the FNMI student of Alberta.

Native Americans and the FNMI Student of Alberta

The Native Americans of North America are widely diverse. Their cultures are distinct, their languages are varied and their history is unique from one another in many ways. Unfortunately, the non-Native often views all of them as being similar. While their treatment through history shares some common tragedies, they see themselves as distinct nations. This review honored that distinction. It begins with an overview of education for all Native American students and then narrows its focus to the First Nations of Canada and Alberta.

The Native American student

Lee Little Soldier (1997) has written several articles and books about the nature of Native American students. She described the unique challenges Native American students face as they enter the main stream urban and rural schools dominated by non-

Native students and staff. According to Little Soldier, students often feel isolated from their culture. The expectations of parents and school are at odds with one another. They respond differently to being singled out in class for responses. These and other challenges have a negative affect on the education of native students. Little Soldier described the challenges Native American families encounter as they move from their traditional reserve home to the mainstream culture of the North America.

Life in the city offers Native Americans more opportunities for participation in the dominant society and a chance to become part of the mainstream. However, families may not be prepared for the hostility that they often face when they try to take their place within the dominant society. (p. 651)

The use of timed tests, according to Little Soldier, places the First Nations student at a great disadvantage due to the lack of a competitive nature, the influence of an egalitarian lifestyle they live on the reserve. Finally, Little Soldier emphasized that there are many different Native cultures and that educators must become familiar with the particular group they work with.

She noted, “many Americans are surprised to learn that more than half of the approximately two million Native Americans in this country do not live on reservations. They live either in rural areas and towns near reservations or in our nation’s cities” (1997, p. 650).

Thus the school might play a smaller role in the life of the family and might even be regarded negatively. This could be partly because of the legacy of earlier times, when schools were used as instrument for the forced assimilation of Native Americans into the dominant culture. (Little Soldier, 1997, p. 655)

Little Soldier also stressed a need to have the classroom teacher understand the background of the Native student and “to gain a perspective on the contrast between rural/reservation living and urban life for these students and their families” (p. 656). She continued:

Teachers need to be aware of the social dynamics within the classroom and to validate the worth of all students. We all have a need to belong. Careful observation on the part of the teacher, combined with such techniques as the use of sociograms to determine the classroom ‘stars’ and ‘isolates’ can give the teacher clues as to how to organize the classroom to promote acceptance of culturally different students. (p. 657)

Lee Little Soldier (1989, 1992) promoted different teaching practices to meet the needs of First Nations students. Her suggested pedagogies included open, informal classes and freedom of movement. This is a contrast to the rigid seating and controlled discussion that is evident in many of today’s classrooms.

The FNMI Student of Alberta

Reviewing the classroom context of minority students, it can be safely assumed that the FNMI student brings to the classroom, an often-confusing background of tradition and expectation. From the previously reviewed works, it would be wrong to assume that these students can simply appear in a predominately non-FNMI school and successfully make the adjustment. The presence of the FNMI student in the classroom must be examined in light of their cultural background and the expectations of their parents.

Marie McAndrew (2003) discussed the function of the Canadian school in light of two social functions of ethnicity: selection and cultural reproduction. In the modern Canadian society, the diversification of the population brings different ethnic groups into contact in public institutions such as schools. While there is some mutual influence between the groups, increasingly the ethnic minorities are demanding that the schools promote their cultural preservation and continuation. The governing agencies have recognized this right, thus placing the school in an often-dichotomous role of meeting the provincial curriculum and preserving the culture of the FNMI student.

Since the early 1970's FNMI and Native American parents have been increasingly involved in the education of their children. Today's FNMI parent is increasingly aware of their rights. The government of Alberta, for instance, has included parent rights in the legislation. The modern Native American has been calling for a voice in the education of their children. The Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL, 2003) reflects this in recommendation 29: "Ensure that, where significant numbers of First Nations parents send their children to provincial schools off reserve, they have a role in the governance of those schools and the school jurisdictions responsible for the schools their children attend" (p. 10). Unfortunately, the ACOL gives a mandate without a solution.

Judith Hendry (2004) states: "Even when Native Americans are given a voice...in a decision making process, the highly quantifiable nature of risk assessments often fails to adequately account for their concern. Here again, the Western dualistic framework subordinates Native American concerns" (p. 8). This statement along with the actions of the ACOL showed that assumptions made about FNMI and Native American

parents that are not true. It is assumed that the parents of our FNMI children understand the mechanisms to facilitate parent input, when in reality, these parents often have not had the experience that would prepare them.

As previously stated, the body of literature relating to First Nations or American Indian people in education is not large. While research to other minority groups is found, it is difficult to find specifically pertinent research relating to First Nations students. This is particularly true regarding FNMI students of Canada. There is more research on American Indian students than Canadian native students. While acknowledging that each aboriginal group has unique characteristics that distinguish them from one another, one must also acknowledge that a scarcity of information establishes a need to find commonalities that can be used in research. That was the intent of research used in this review. You see references to Native American studies in the United States as well as First Nations studies in Canada. You see references to different aboriginal groups within both countries. While respecting the differences between them, the literature reviewed focused on general educational commonalities.

In 2003, the Alberta Government released a landmark document entitled *Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds. Report and Recommendations: Alberta's Commission on Learning*. Out of 95 recommendations, 15 were directed specifically at improving education outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth. Alberta's classrooms include a rich and diverse mix of students with a wide range of abilities, interests, backgrounds languages cultures and religions. "Deliberate actions are needed to ensure that this diversity is embraced and every child has a chance for success in school" (p. 10). While this statement spoke to the diversity of students in the province, the subsequent 15

recommendations (p. 10) were specifically aimed at Aboriginal students. No other ethnic, cultural, religious or language groups were specifically mentioned. Since the release of the *Commission on Learning (ACOL)*, Alberta Learning has continued to encourage provincial schools to improve education for Aboriginal students.

The cultural history of Native American Indians is not easy to describe. This general term is often used as if there were just one single group. In fact there are many different groups of Native American citizens. Each group has a distinct culture, language and societal structure. The Blood Indians of Southern Alberta in Canada are as different from the Mohawk of eastern Canada and United States as they are from the Anglo Saxon inhabitants who came from Europe.

The Native peoples of Canada are diverse in language, culture and lifestyle. Over the years the terminology used to identify the different Native cultures has evolved. The Native people themselves have struggled to agree on a nomenclature. Some of the terms used in the past were offensive. Some of the terms used were confusing. In recent years, the Native groups and the various government agencies have tried to bring some conformity to nomenclature.

Canada's constitution is relatively new. Adopted in 1982 after years of debate, the constitution was finally repatriated from Great Britain. One of the important results of this Constitution Act was to formally identify the aboriginal people of Canada and place in legislation who they were and what protections they were entitled to under the law. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: "in this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada" (sec. 35).

Since about 2000, the Alberta government started to use the phrase First Nations,

Métis and Inuit (FNMI) to refer to the three different groups of Native people in Alberta. The FNMI Policy Framework (2002) further identified the First Nations people of Alberta. This document states that: “There are 46 First Nations in Alberta with many different cultures and languages. Traditions and protocols vary from community to community. Approximately 117,470 people in Alberta identified themselves as North American Indian in the 1996 Canada Census” (p. 2).

First Nations refers to Native groups such as the Cree, Blood, Peigan, Siksika, and others. Métis refers to groups of mixed Indian and European ancestry. The Inuit live in the North and are distinct in language and culture from the First Nations or the Métis. In accordance with official government nomenclature the term FNMI referred specifically to the inhabitants of the province of Alberta in this study. The phrase Native American was an inclusive indicator of all aboriginal groups in North America, including the FNMI of Alberta.

First Nations students have been attending schools in the Province of Alberta for the past 70 years. The different circumstances in which they have been educated include religious boarding schools, federal reservation schools and in the past 30 years they have attended public or separate schools in communities adjacent to the reservations where the students live. In the past 10 years First Nations students have begun attending schools in the major centers such as Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton as their families have moved to the cities in search of work. Other students live at home on the Reserves but attending school in smaller towns adjacent to their home. Blood and Pikaani students are able to be bussed from home, which is on the reserve, to school and back each day. Among these rural communities providing education to the Blood and Pikaani are

Cardston, Hill Spring, Glenwood, Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod and Claresholm. While there is no official census showing the proportion of FNMI schools, anecdotal evidence from personal observation and contact with administrators in these schools shows that in these settings the FNMI student is generally greatly outnumbered by the non-FNMI population that makes up the typically Anglo-Saxon communities of Alberta. This lack of available information shows yet another gap in the research about FNMI students in Alberta schools.

As FNMI students came off the reserve to attend schools in nearby communities, both they and their parents were unfamiliar with the customs, expectations, standards and study habits that are expected in the public system (Aboriginal Services Branch, 2004). In *Our Words, Our Ways; Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners*, (Aboriginal Services Branch, 2004) the contributors referred to this feeling of alienation. They reported that traditional Aboriginal education is based on their worldview. That worldview is holistic where learning takes place “in all four spheres of human experience: spiritual, physical, emotional and mental” (p. 6). Further, the authors pointed out “Western education often focuses on verbal thinking and an analytic approach to learning” (p. 7). Students also experienced racism. In this report the authors stated “they often say they don’t feel safe in their schools or their classrooms. Other students report that while students and teachers make an effort to welcome them into the school, they still often feel uncomfortable and like they don’t belong” (p. 32)

As the Native students tried to cope with the circumstances of their education, they experienced challenges that resulted in increased discipline problems, low academic achievement scores and eventually high dropout rates. Dr. Patricia Makokis (2000)

described an example of these challenges from a first person perspective as a member of the Cree nation.

Imagine, if you can, this historical era; a time when First Nations children, who more than likely had never left the reserve, would now board big yellow busses daily to leave the comfortable and familiar, to venture out into the strange unknown... The bus ride itself would be all right since all the children knew one another and could converse in Cree freely. However, once the children exited the bus and entered provincial schools the story differed. All the children dispersed. No longer are there only little brown faces but the odd brown face... what does the child do? How does he/she cope? (p. 48)

Dr. Makokis describes a situation that not only occurred on the Cree reserves, but was repeated daily throughout the province. Children from Cree, Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan and other FNMI groups rode the bus from their reserve to the non-FNMI schools off reserve. This was a common occurrence among all indigenous groups who choose to attend the public schools. While some Cree customs are different from Blackfoot, their experience in the non-FNMI man's schools was similar and allowed comparisons.

It is acknowledged that education for any student is a complex process. A child's life is filled with varying influences that can affect education for better or for worse. Many of these experiences are in and of themselves educational. For many students, the family is the primary educational setting in a child's life. Admittedly there are some for whom the family is a negative or non-influence. Whatever the level of influence, the formative influence of the family continues long after the child enters school. Once in school the child begins to be influenced by their relationships with teachers, other

students, bus drivers, friends, bullies and whomever else they come into contact with. Mixed in with these influences are programs, strategies, procedures, curricula and resources. The multitude of combinations of people, programs and places all contribute to the complexity of modern education. The Native American student, entering a strange world of school, has extra adjustments to make. But the adjustment is not the sole responsibility of the student. The school, having a legal responsibility in the partnership of education, has greater need to anticipate the needs of the students and make appropriate adjustments. The teacher is one of the prime agents for change and adjustment within the school system.

Goodlad (1990) told us that “the school is the only institution in our society specifically charged with enculturating the young into a political democracy... Schools are major players in developing educated persons who acquire an understanding of truth, beauty and justice” (pp. 48-49). Goodlad then narrowed the focus onto the teacher in this process. “The moral responsibility of educators takes on its most obvious significance where the lives of the teachers and their students intersect” (49). Goodlad obviously feels that the teacher, at the intersection of school and student, is where change in education will and must occur.

Another reason that the FNMI students are unique is that they are the only ethnic groups in Canada that the federal government is legally obliged to support with finances in the educational system. All other education is the responsibility of the provincial government. The Canadian government signed nation to nation treaties with various First Nations across Canada. The Blood, Blackfoot and Peigan are guaranteed education in Treaty 7, signed in September 1877. In this treaty the government promised to provide

free education in return for the First Nations agreeing to give up their claim to land in Alberta. This is spelled out in both the Treaty 7 document of 1877 and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) of 1996.

The Historical Context of FNMI education in Canada and Alberta

Pre confederation (before 1867)

The traditional purpose of Native education is vastly different from the modern reading and math emphasis on education today. Young children were educated in the skills necessary for survival. Hunting and gathering were predominant pastimes of the Native cultures of the day. The present-day obsession with tests, skills and performance are foreign to the view of Native parents and grandparents. Joe Couture (2004), a Cree elder from Northern Alberta describes the traditional purpose of education:

The objective of Aboriginal education is to develop knowledge, skills and values rooted in the centuries old tradition. We must always remember that culture is something that does not keep still; it develops through challenges and interactions of people and events or it becomes distorted and dies. It the continuity of living culture that is important... (p. 12)

Thus we see that the traditional purpose of Native education is to maintain the culture. The Native lifestyle was not divided into school, home, and work. Rather it was an inclusive lifestyle without artificial separations of purpose. Couture says that the educational institution, the school, had a traditional purpose of maintaining cultural knowledge. The modern curriculum of Alberta does not include specifically cultural topics or knowledge. Wes Fineday, a Native elder from Saskatchewan is quoted in the

Western Canadian Protocol Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs
(2000). He said this of education:

In our system of education, knowledge is earned. One learns to listen, like a human being who has the gift to hear what is said. We don't put knowledge in a person's head or hand. We give directions, not answers. We don't trap people into thinking answers are given from the outside. Answers come from the inside. (p. 7)

Fineday described a philosophy of education that doesn't necessarily fit the practice of modern educators.

Yet, today's parents, although wanting to see their children exceed in the modern world, do not want to give up the culture of past generations. Many Native parents see the non-FNMI view of education as separate from culture. They believe that the non-FNMI society has robbed them of their culture and therefore has a responsibility to restore a wholeness. The idea of cultural continuity is a high priority to the Native society. Dr. Terry Tafoya (1995) explains this connection between restoration and education.

...if we go back to the origin of the word heal...it is structurally related to the word whole, which is in itself related to the word holy. And this is something I understand we are all trying to do together. The healing process is a way of recapturing our wholeness.

I would suggest not only to Native people, but to many people in both Canada and the United States, there has been a history of people being told to amputate a part of themselves to be able to fit something that's rigid and built for them in the first place. Amputate...your language, your spirituality...With the idea of realizing

you...did not have to cut off a part of self in the first place...you really can be whole.

The healing process is a way of recapturing our wholeness....What we are doing...is a sacred thing, and I cannot emphasize that enough. It is not about academic credits....It is a sacred work to reclaim wholeness. (pp. 7-27)

This traditional view of education includes a sacred component, a desire to achieve wholeness, mentally, physically, spiritually as well as academically. The hope of Native parents when they sent their children to non-FNMI schools was that the children would learn to read, but would retain their culture. This is a strong desire that has persisted from the education of children in the traditions of the society. This strong desire of parents for education in the non-FNMI world without a loss of cultural identity contrasts strongly with the next historical phase in Native education—the residential school. The residential school would be a sharp odds with the parents view of an appropriate education for their children.

Pre 1970 - The Residential Schools Era

Dr. Leona Makokis (2001), a Cree elder wrote in her doctoral dissertation “The results (of the residential schools) have been the devastation of proud Nations” (p. 13). She discusses Geoffrey York (1992) who wrote that Indian residential schools, operated by Catholic and Protestant missionaries, were a dominant institution in controlling First Nations people across Canada from 1887 to 1969. From Dr. Makokis’ writing it is still evident that the feelings about the residential era are passionate and fresh in the minds of the native peoples who experienced it. In a speech given during a conference in 2004, Dr. Makokis said that you could not understand Indian education without a knowledge and

understanding of the historical context of that education, especially the context of the residential school era.

The history of FNMI education throughout Canada and including Alberta contains a tragic period of residential schooling. This period beginning in 1928 lasted until the 1970's. The federal method of administering First Nations peoples was through Indian agents given legal authority over the people. These agents, in turn, delegated their power to the churches. Dehyle and Swisher (1997) describe both the federal government and the churches speaking of the Native peoples as the "Indian problem" (p. 115). Dehyle and Swisher summarize assimilation strategies in the following way:

The idea was the best way for Indians to become American was to remove the children as far as possible from the influences of their homes, families and culture. The use of native languages by children was forbidden under threats of corporal punishment; semiskilled vocational training was encouraged for Indians; students were placed as laborers and domestics in Non-FNMI families' homes during vacation time; and native religions were suppressed. In a very real sense, the schooling package that provided literacy for Indians also required becoming "Non-FNMI". While the structure has changed somewhat, this practice has changed very little in the past 100 years. (p. 115)

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pauls (1984) stated that: "the church-run schools were all in the business for just one reason – to drive a wedge between the students and their culture, to turn Indians into budding young Christians trained in the work ethic"(p. 90). A statement made by Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Department, in the early 1900's, gives an insight to the attitudes of the

Canadian government at that time. Geoffroy York (1990), in his work *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada* quotes Campbell as saying, “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and therein no Indian question” (p. 23). This type of language is certain to create resentment in the hearts of the Native people.

It would seem difficult for a non-FNMI individual to conceptualize the impact that the residential school experience has had on FNMI families. A modern First Nations individual, Patricia Makokis (2000) said:

Although the residential school era thrived from the late 1800’s until the 1960’s and 1970’s, the impact on the lives of First Nations communities will continue to be felt for generations yet to be born. Clearly, this was a time of attempted cultural genocide as government sponsored atrocities included forced abandonment of children through segregation and separation, physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuses, blatant attempts at extinguishing the language and culture, the use of mental, emotional, and physical torture, coupled with severe forms of fear and guilt. (p. 39)

According to Dr. Makokis, this period of history defined, in a large measure, the attitude of FNMI parents towards schools and non-FNMI staff. The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996) listened to and recorded story after story of the lasting effect of the residential school. The following statement was approved for inclusion in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* by the leaders of the British Columbia First Nations Chiefs and Elders:

The federal government established the system of Indian residential schools, which was operated by various religious denominations. Therefore, both the federal government and the churches must be held accountable for the pain inflicted on our people. We are hurt, devastated and outraged. The effect of the Indian residential school system is like a disease ripping through our communities. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, p. 376)

Prior to this period, FNMI students were not educated in the Western sense, that is, they did not attend a school, they did not learn to read and write. Their cultural heritage was not one of written history. The Catholic and Anglican missionaries were the first to attempt to create a written form for their language. Donald Frantz from the University of Lethbridge explains:

Some of the earliest attempts to represent Blackfoot speech so that it could be read by Blackfoot speakers were probably made by missionaries. Copies of prayers and creeds produced by Roman Catholic priests are still in existence. While an occasional individual may have learned to read the Lord's Prayer or other of these short portions, there is no evidence that any greater measure of success was ever attained ...but perhaps no serious effort was actually made by the Roman Catholic missionaries to teach Blackfoot speakers to read. (1991, ¶ 4)

Initially the energies for developing a written language were for the express purpose of Christianizing the Natives. The Church of England (Anglican) was very involved in this process as well and according to Frantz, more successful. "Somewhat more successful in this regard were the efforts of Church of England missionaries. In 1890 a translation of the Gospel of Matthew by Archdeacon Tims was published" (1991, ¶ 5).

This evangelical effort led to the establishment of religious school located on the reservations. These schools, in addition to educating the children, also took primary responsibility for their upbringing. Dormitories were built adjacent to the schools and the children lived there for the entire school year. They were cared for by members of the various religious orders associated with their schools. The first efforts at residential education began as early as 1874. The Government of Canada gave responsibility for the education of FNMI children to the Catholic, Presbyterian and Anglican churches. The following is taken from the Government of Canada website:

The Government of Canada operated nearly every school as a "joint venture" with various religious organizations. On April 1st, 1969, the Government assumed total responsibility for the school system, although churches remained involved for some years in many instances. Most residential schools ceased to operate by the mid-1970s; the last federally run residential school in Canada closed in 1996. (Government of Canada, 2005, ¶ 4)

FNMI students were taken from their homes and forced into residential schools. There, they were forbidden to speak their native language and dress in the traditional manner. They were not allowed to visit their families during the long school year. The Canadian government is presently settling thousands of claims of physical and sexual abuse suffered by the children while they were students in the schools. As reported by Weber in the Globe and Mail: "The federal government announced Wednesday a \$2-billion package aimed at compensating tens of thousands of aboriginal people who were forced into residential schools, where many endured years of physical and sexual abuse" (2005).

The residential schools era ended gradually, with schools being closed down one at a time as the residents of the reserves made deliberate choices to take their children out of the church schools. The next era in FNMI education also began gradually with a few children at a time being courageous enough to leave the reserve and go into the neighboring towns. The federal government also began to take direct responsibility in providing non-religious education on the reserves.

Post-1970

During the 1970's, as the stories of the abuses at residential schools in Canada began to emerge, parents and grandparents began to voice their outrage at the treatment of their children. The Indian Act was amended in 1951 to use provincial school integration as another approach to assimilation. This allowed Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to enter into tuition agreements with provincial school boards to provide education to FNMI children. This process was very gradual. Although a few FNMI students attended provincial schools in the 1950's and 1960's there was still a period of nearly 20 years until the provinces actually began to admit large numbers of FNMI students. Pauls (1984) describes how the amendment allowed the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to enter into agreements with provincial school jurisdictions for the education of First Nations children. But many in the national and provincial Native communities saw little difference in the intent of the provincial schools.

Patricia Makokis (2000) noted in her dissertation "for many First Nations children, this era was a trying and painful time, too. At least in residential schools, they were totally surrounded by other Indians" (p. 47). As quoted earlier, once the children

arrived at school they were an odd “brown face” (p. 48). Most First Nations children began their schooling with limited or no English language.

According to York (1990), some non-FNMI teachers labeled the FNMI children as uneducable. York stated that little was known about the lives of the First Nations children. He reported that the standardized tests designed for non-FNMI, middle class, English speaking urban students did not accurately reflect the real abilities of the FNMI students. According to the test, the teachers concluded, “164 of 189 Indians students were not trainable” (York, 1990, p. 31).

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood published *Indian Control of Indian Education*, in which they condemned provincial school integration. This position paper stated: “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” (p. 18). Once again, the Native people are demanding a place in education for the retention of their culture. Alberta Education has recognized this as a right and has taken steps to accomplish the task of integrating FNMI culture into the curriculum. Evidence of this is seen in Recommendation # 39 of the “*Everyone Learns, Everyone Succeeds*” report (2003). This recommendation stated that the government must: “Ensure that First Nations and Métis are directly involved in the development of curriculum and learning resources for and about Aboriginal people in all subject areas.” (p. 10).

Today, in Canada there are choices of education for FNMI students. On-reserve schools are administered by the Federal Government or in a few cases by a locally elected Board of Trustees from the FNMI community. The other choice is provincially

administered schools located off reserve. Even given the choices, the concerns of the 1970's have not gone away. As reported by the Alberta Commission on Learning and by the *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2002) parents have a distrust of the government, both federal and provincial. The parents' goals for education are different than the provincial curriculum in many cases. Parents have a worry that their children are not treated equal to the non-FNMI students and at the same time are not treated in a way that is acceptable to native customs and traditions.

Student Achievement

Although there is still substantial debate about the emphasis on testing, student academic achievement remains the standard of measuring educational success. The American program of *No Child Left Behind* is mirrored in Canada by provincial academic tests of achievement. Then, there is the comparison testing of countries measured against other countries. This emphasis on achievement testing is foreign to traditional Native American. As we have shown, the traditional focus of Native education measured much more than academics. Nonetheless, the issue of student academic achievement is one that must be considered when looking at the Native American student in the modern context.

Native American Achievement

The research dealing specifically with Native American achievement is difficult to find. As previously mentioned, the Province of Alberta refuses to release achievement results describing FNMI students as a separate category. Therefore, most of the references to achievement are general rather than specific. Although they lack hard data

about specific achievement levels, they do reveal a pattern of under-achievement by Native students throughout North America.

Diane Gallagher (2004), a British Columbia educator, described the state of Native student achievement in British Columbia and Washington State. She pointed out the lower graduation rates, lower achievement test scores than the non-Aboriginal student. In her conclusions, Gallagher suggested possible connections between the low achievement and the residential school experiences. Although Gallagher does not show a clear connection between current low achievement and residential history, she is one of many who believe that this experience, either by the student or their parents accounts for difficulties in Native student education. Other authors holding similar opinions include Pauls (1984), Patricia Makokis (2000) and Leona Makokis (2001).

Jeanne Mather (1994) also wrote about the concern for low achievement among minority students including Native American students. Her findings pointed out the difficulty of assessing minority students in regard to achievement and linking that achievement level to a particular component or facet of education. Mather acknowledges that minority achievement is low but reports that there is a:

...clear relationship between mathematics achievement and mathematics attitudes, yet research investigating mathematics attitudes and ethnic/racial student background is virtually nonexistent. Her findings show that while the minority student may have the same attitudes as non-FNMI or dominant cultural groups, significant differences existed in terms of perceptions of role models and teacher practices. (p. 2)

Alice Byrne (1989) looked at factors affecting the academic success of Native American students attending a public high school in Southern California. She looked at factors of (a) gender, (b) residency on or off the reservation, (c) parent's level of education and (d) participation in Indian cultural activities. "Statistically significant relations were found in the areas of education of parents, socioeconomic status, attendance and perceived prejudice" (p. 1). Her findings pointed again to a generally accepted belief that Native students achievement and overall performance in school lags behind the majority of students in those schools.

FNMI Achievement in Alberta

The main measure of achievement in Alberta is the Provincial Achievement Test. This is a series of curriculum specific tests developed in Alberta. The tests are constantly being rewritten to reflect curriculum changes. At the end of Grade 3, tests in reading, writing, and mathematics are administered to all students registered in provincial schools. Grades 6 and 9 students take reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies achievement tests. The results for these tests form a basis for measuring the achievement levels within a school district and between school districts. The tests are standardized throughout the province of Alberta but are not norm referenced.

One of the important measures that Alberta Education uses to compare school districts is the simple participation rate. This is determined as a percentage of enrolled students compared to how many students actually write the test. This measure shows how many students actually participate in the test. Some students may be exempted if their ability to write is documented to be too low. Other students are exempted if it is deemed that taking the test might be harmful to the student. Parents are also given the right to

exempt their child for any reason that they deem appropriate. The participation rate is a measure of validity according to Alberta Education.

The existing measurement data from Alberta Learning indicates that the percentage of Alberta students with registered Indian status who participated in the Achievement Testing Program in a band-operated school in 2000 was approximately 75% in grades 3 and 6, and approximately 60% in grade 9. The participation of students with registered Indian status in other school systems, especially at the grade 9 level, was greater than the participation of students in band-operated schools but was still below the overall participation rate in the province [approximately 90%]. (Government of Alberta, FNMI Policy Framework, 2002, p. 21)

Another indicator of achievement, the actual score on the test, is reported in one of three ways; Standard of Excellence, Acceptable Standard, and Below Acceptable Standard. The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework (2002) reports the following achievement standards for FNMI students:

The strongest performance by students with registered Indian status who wrote the Achievement Test was in grade 3. Over the past two years approximately 40% of grade 3 students in band-operated schools and 50-70% of students in other school systems met the Acceptable Standard in English language arts and mathematics. The weakest performance was in grade 9. In the past three years, fewer than 15% of grade 9 students in band-operated schools and fewer than 50% of students in other school systems met the Acceptable Standard in mathematics, science and social studies (p. 71). These results compare with over 90% of non-

FNMI Grade 3 students achieving the acceptable standard and 70% of non-FNMI grade 6 students achieving the acceptable standard.

In grade 3 Language Arts the mean average of FNMI students was 69.2% while the non-FNMI students mean average was 77.8%. This disparity increased with grade 6 students: FNMI students in grade 6 scored a mean average of 53.4% contrasted with non-FNMI students mean average of 66.1%. Again, the grade 9 students showed an increasing disparity. FNMI students mean average was 51% and the non-FNMI students mean average was 75.6%. The range of mean differences was 8.6% in grade 3, 12.7% in grade 6 and 14.2% in grade 9.

The differences were even more pronounced in Mathematics. Again, the Provincial Achievement Test in Mathematics was the measure used. The range of mean differences was 7.7% in grade 3, 19.3% in grade 6 and 24.6% in grade 9. These differences indicate that FNMI students do not achieve as well on provincial curriculum tests as do non-FNMI students.

Table 1 describes the difference in achievement of FNMI and non-FNMI students.

Table 1

Mean Differences between FNMI and non-FNMI Student Achievement on Provincial Achievement Tests *Language Arts and Mathematics*

	Language Arts	Mathematics
Grade 3	8.6%	7.7%
Grade 6	12.7%	19.3%
Grade 9	24.6%	24.6%

It is interesting to note that the gap between FNMI and non-FMNI students widens the longer they are in the public school system. This could speak to the issue being studied, that the school and the teacher have an influence on the FNMI student that is not necessarily positive.

Border Town Phenomenon

One of the issues facing FNMI children who attend schools off reserve is the cultural disconnect they face on a daily basis. They leave homes where Blackfoot is spoken. These homes have a large extended family under one roof. There may be more than one significant adult in their lives. The Alberta Learning document *Our Words, Our Ways* (2004) has this to say about the lives of FNMI students.

Many aboriginal students have a large extended family. Their ‘close’ relatives may include people who in other cultures may be considered ‘distant’ relatives. It’s not at all unusual for adults, other than the students’ parents – grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and older siblings – to take on the role of involved adult with the school. (p. 21)

As the students arrive at school, they connect with a different world, a non-FNMI world where the majority of students are Caucasian, having home circumstances different from that of the FNMI students. Using information from Statistics Canada, *Our Words, Our Ways* (2004) describes more situations of this cultural disconnect that occurs when the student crosses the line that separates their reserve from the non-FNMI communities where they attend school.

Sixty-five percent of Aboriginal children on reserve and 50 percent of children in urban settings live with two parents. In comparison 85 percent of non-Aboriginal

children live with two parents (Statistics Canada 2001). Individuals in these families, including both the children and the parent, may experience the isolation and stress that's common to many single-parent homes.

Because of cultural disruption and misunderstanding between cultures, about 5 per cent of Aboriginal children no longer live their parents but live with other relatives or non-relatives, compared to 0.5% of non-Aboriginal children.

There are a growing number of Aboriginal families living in urban settings. Many parents move from a reserve or small community to an urban centre for work or education, leaving their extended families behind. Moving often means leaving behind the friends and family that support them and adapting to a different way of life. (p. 21)

This cultural phenomenon has been identified by others who have examined the clash of cultures that occurs with migration of proximate groups. Cline and Necochea (2006) examined what they call the borderlands in researching students “who frequently need to negotiate two cultures, two languages and two worlds” (p. 268). While Cline and Necochea spoke directly to the students living on both sides of the U.S. - Mexico border, some of their issues are valid in a discussion of students who live on an Aboriginal reservation and travel to the non-FNMI schools nearby. It is not an exact duplicate of the situation in this study, but the issues of language, culture and way of life being different are certainly comparable and therefore pertinent to this review.

Cline and Necochea (2006) addressed the abilities of effective teachers of multicultural classrooms. They state “Teachers who are effective in the borderlands appear to be culturally sensitive to students who have backgrounds different from their

own. This sensitivity allows a teacher to work with a multitude of students without passing judgment on cultural differences” (p. 277). Further, they said, “An effective borderland teacher has to understand the dynamics of how the communities in the border area work and the needs they have” (p. 277). Finally, they pointed out that “The notion that the border is confluent and requires a particular disposition in some that borderland teachers need to be aware of and make a fundamental part of their training” (p. 277).

These researchers provided validity for the line of inquiry of the present study. They stressed that the teachers of culturally different students need an understanding of the cultures and more importantly need to adapt their teaching to accommodate those differences.

Chapter Summary

This review of the literature has explored the teacher’s perception of their students. It has shown that there is evidence to strongly suggest that teachers see minority students different than majority Caucasian students. These prejudices range from naive ignorance to blatant racist attitudes and actions in the extreme. Children are influenced by this treatment, regardless of the intent. The review has also examined teacher and student behavior in the face of prejudice.

The minority student has been a significant focus of this review. The literature showed that all minority students share some common issues such as cultural mismatch, limited participation among dominant cultures and a lack of understanding of needs and learning styles. While these issues are common, the literature showed that Native American and FNMI students have specific learning issues that are a result of their unique culture and history.

The common themes of the literature suggested that FNMI children and all Native children experience a cultural shock, even today, as they attend the public schools. The literature also strongly suggested that the non-FMNI teachers are not adequately prepared to adjust for the differences. In many cases, the teacher is not even aware of the need to compensate for differences and continues to teach all the students in the same manner and expects all students to respond in a similar manner.

The review of the literature revealed a need for further investigation and study. There are many stories left unsaid and the time to listen to them is now. The design of this study was meant to specifically explore one aspect of FNMI education. That aspect is summed up in the Central Question of this study: What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Creswell (1998) tells us that the “type or tradition of qualitative inquiry shapes the design of a study” (p. 2). He defined research design as “the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing the narrative, not simply the methods, such as data collection, analysis, and report writing” (p. 2). Yin (1989) commented, “The design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions” (p. 28). Both of these authors emphasized how important the design of a research study is to the success of the study. This chapter describes the methodology of this proposed study and describes the qualitative tradition of grounded theory.

Methodology

Choosing the most appropriate research paradigm for a study is a crucial decision. It is important to choose the research paradigm that best lends itself to answering the research question, which for this study is called the central question. The two major research paradigms are quantitative and qualitative. According to Creswell (2003):

The choice of methods by a researcher turns on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from participants in the project. Also, the type of data may be numeric information gathered on scales of instruments or more text information, recording and reporting the voice of the participants. (p. 17)

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research has been described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as “a nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory scheme” (p. 11). Creswell (1998) further described the use of a qualitative tradition with the following statement:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

A compelling reason to choose a qualitative design given by Strauss and Corbin (1998) is the following: “...qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (p. 11).

The phenomenon at the heart of this Grounded Theory study is the perception the classroom teacher has regarding the FNMI students in their class. This is a solid social and human phenomenon that fits the criteria of qualitative research. In addition, the best place to gather appropriate data is in the natural setting of the school. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to delve deeply into meaning, to explore the human factor of a phenomenon. As Eisner (1998) stated, the purpose of qualitative research is to provide a “vivid portrait...of a prototype” (p. 199). This is accomplished by listening to the participants, letting them express their thoughts and describe their own experiences through stories of real situations.

Grounded Theory Tradition

Creswell (1998) suggested that there are five major traditions in qualitative study. He refers to them as (a) case study, (b) biography, (c) phenomenology, (d) grounded theory and (e) ethnography. Each of these traditions has advantages and limitations that must be considered before selecting one to use in conducting research.

In selecting the most appropriate tradition, the researcher begins with the central question. Then the intentions of the researcher must be considered. These intentions include both the method of data collection being proposed and the intended analysis of that data. The choice of tradition should be determined by the focus of the central question and how well the chosen tradition will provide data to answer this question.

The Central Question in this study is: What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students? This question suggests an inquiry into the human experience, the interactions between students and teachers. The intention of the study is to explore this perception, building a theory based upon empirical data that will lead to a better understanding of how the FNMI students are perceived by the teachers participating in this study.

Grounded theory, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) means ...a theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process....A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the 'reality' than is theory derived by putting together a series

of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things out to work). Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action. (p. 12)

Strauss and Corbin delineated two key characteristics of grounded theory. First, the collection of data begins without a preconceived end in mind. Secondly, the theory emerges from the data collected. Creswell (1998) adds to Strauss and Corbin's definition of grounded theory. Creswell described the human element, particularly the human interaction that is important in educational research.

...the intent of a grounded theory study is to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation. This situation is one in which individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon. (pp. 55-56)

Applying the characteristics of the grounded theory tradition to the Central Question demonstrated the appropriateness of this tradition for the proposed study. Using Creswell, Strauss and Corbin for comparison, the Central Question and the intention of this proposed research were examined.

While based on a thorough review of the literature, this study sought to find a new theory grounded in data from the classroom teacher. This researcher did not have a preconceived notion, but a curiosity about the perceptions that teachers have about their FNMI students. A grounded theory tradition involves several visits to the field, several opportunities to gather data from the same participants as well as adding other participants. This method of data collection provided the researcher with evolving

theories that arise out of the descriptions of the participants. It was expected that these multiple visits would indicate directions of action that are not readily apparent at the outset of the study.

A second quality of grounded theory is that a theory derived from data is more valid than when the researcher's own experiences lead to speculation about the outcome. Although this researcher had experience in a public school setting with FNMI students, he had never asked the questions being considered in this study. The researcher's experiences led to a curiosity about teachers perceptions and therefore to a desire to find out more, to discover a new theory.

A third characteristic of grounded theory is the likelihood that new insights, new understandings will provide a direction for applied action. Research should lead to action for the improvement of education. As stated earlier, FNMI students face immense challenges. The Alberta Provincial Department of Education recognizes this, but does not seem to have a research based plan of action. It is therefore left to the school divisions and the schools themselves to carry out the mandates of the province. By employing the grounded theory tradition, it was anticipated that recommendations for schools and practitioners would emanate from the emerging theory.

A final argument for the use of grounded theory in this study is that by its nature of emergent themes, categories and evolving theories, grounded theory allows the researcher to change the line of questioning to follow the data, rather than being restricted to a preconceived area of inquiry which is the case in quantitative research. Thus, while acknowledging that this study could employ other traditions based upon other types of

central questions, the grounded theory tradition is best suited to answer the central question of this study.

Research Questions

The rich complexity of educational issues creates a dilemma for any serious researcher. For clarity, this research focused on one single issue as defined by the research question. The challenge for the researcher was to find a way to bring the issue into clear focus. One method of focusing is to use questions to guide the study. Creswell recommended “a researcher reduce his entire study to a single, overarching question and several sub-questions” (p. 99). He further explained that the sub-questions will guide the researcher in subsequent interviews. This study focused on the following Central Question.

Central Question

What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students?

Sub-questions

Once the central question has been formulated, the grounded theory tradition follows with several sub-questions. Their purpose is to “narrow the focus of the study but leave open the questioning” (Creswell, 2003). Given the discovery nature of grounded theory, the sub-questions might change during the study as the developing theory emerges. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe how a researcher using grounded theory does not begin with the end in mind. Rather, as the data is gathered a theory begins to emerge. The emergence of the theory is not predictable and might go in a different direction than the researcher imagined. In this case, the sub-questions articulated in the

beginning might very well need to change in order to follow the direction that the data takes. In this sense the sub-questions are important tools to uncovering information relating to the central question. This central question must remain constant, but the ability of the sub-questions to change becomes a valuable and powerful tool in the hands of the researcher.

These sub-questions guided the interviews, observations and help focus the research on specific documents and other material. Creswell (1998) commented that the grounded theory tradition “typically presents a small number of sub-questions that follow the central question” (p. 101).

The following sub-questions were used to support the central question:

1. How are FNMI students represented in classroom stories as told by their teacher?
2. How do teachers describe their interaction with FNMI students as compared to non-FNMI students?
3. In what ways is the teacher’s espoused theory of their interactions with FNMI students, in the follow-up interview, consistent with the theory in use about the FNMI student in the first phase of the data collection?
4. What standards of achievement are expected of FNMI students by their teachers as compared to non-FNMI students?
5. What standards of behavior do teachers describe for their FNMI students?

Study Participants

The selection of participants is a key issue in qualitative research. Creswell (1998) discussed some important considerations for selection. The participants “need to be

individuals who have taken an action or participated in a process that is central to the grounded theory study” (p. 114). Creswell emphasized that they do not need to be located at the same site but must have participated in the process, in this case, the process of teaching FNMI students.

The participants for this study were theoretically chosen to “help the researcher best form the theory” (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). This means that the participants were purposefully chosen according to their “ability to contribute to an evolving theory” (p. 118). In this study, their ability was determined by having a minimum of 25% of FNMI students in their class. Thus, teachers who did not have FNMI students were excluded from selection.

Selection rationale

The population for this study consisted of teachers working in public and Catholic separate schools adjacent to two Alberta Indian reserves; The Blood reserve and the Peigan reserve in Southern Alberta, Canada. Both of these First Nations belong to the group of Aboriginals called Treaty 7. They speak the same language, Blackfoot, and have been members of the Blackfoot Confederacy for over one hundred years. In addition to the common culture and language, they share a similar history of education both on reserve schools and sending their children to public and Catholic schools in communities adjacent to the reserve.

This inclusion of teachers of students from the Blood and Peigan reserves is appropriate due to the students’ common experiences in public schools, their common language and culture. Additionally, the Blood reserve is the largest First Nations reserve

in Canada both in geography and population. This provides a large student population that has interacted with teachers in public schools.

The communities where these students attend school are Cardston, Glenwood, Hill Spring, Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod and Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. In visiting with administrators and teachers in these schools a general profile has emerged. Glenwood and Hill Spring are small K-9 schools with a total student population of around 100. Hill Spring is located west of the blood reserve. Glenwood is located just north of the Blood reserve. Both schools are less than five miles from the reserve boundary. Glenwood has an FNMI population that makes up 66% of the school. Hill Spring has about 25% FNMI students. Cardston is separated from the Blood reserve by a highway. The three schools in Cardston have an FNMI population that constitutes about one third of the total student population. Pincher Creek is about 20 miles from the Peigan reserve and its classrooms have about 25% FNMI students. Fort Macleod is about 20 miles east of the Peigan reserve and 15 miles north of the Blood reserve. Students from both reserves attend school in Fort Macleod. In all, classrooms in Fort Macleod have at least 25% FNMI students. Lethbridge is the largest center of the study. The city has 65,000 residents and numerous schools. Only those schools in Lethbridge with at least 25% FNMI students will participate. Not all the schools have FNMI students attending. The FNMI students mostly attend the Catholic schools in Lethbridge.

Teachers of grades one through nine were identified as potential participants of the study. Ideally from 15 to 20 participants would provide a depth of information that would enhance this study further, however a minimum of 12 teachers were sought for this study. Only those teachers who have classrooms with at least 25% FNMI makeup were

included. This is to provide a range of information from teachers of younger native students as well as those students about to enter high school. Alberta high schools generally begin with Grade 10.

Selecting participants. The superintendent of schools was the first contact, and therefore the primary gatekeeper, for the researcher. Creswell (2003) emphasized the importance of gaining “access to researcher archival sites by seeking the approval of “gatekeepers” (p. 184). Permission was requested by direct communication in a telephone contact followed by a letter of request to conduct research in specific schools. The superintendent was asked to give permission to contact principals and teachers to seek their respective approval to conduct the research.

Once the superintendent granted permission, the principal was contacted by letter and telephone to gain permission and to explain the process. The principal was informed of the superintendent’s permission to conduct research in that particular school. The principal was then asked if he/she would grant permission for the researcher to extend an invitation to participate in this study to the teachers in that school that meet the selection criteria. The principal was also asked if they were willing to assist the researcher in specific activities. These activities would be explained by phone and followed up with a written letter of instruction.

These instructions would include the following steps:

1. The principal was asked to provide a list of all teachers having a minimum of 25% FNMI students in their class.
2. The principal was asked to provide school e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of all teachers.

3. The researcher then contacted all teachers in the school to determine their willingness to participate. This contact was in a brief staff meeting or by telephone with individual teachers. At the conclusion of this contact a participation packet was given to each teacher. This letter contained an explanation of their proposed participation and a letter of consent to participate. Teachers were asked to return the consent indicating whether they wished to participate or not by mail. A self addressed and stamped envelope was provided to all teachers. If teachers did not respond within two weeks, the researcher sent a reminder letter or made a personal contact.
4. After the teachers returned the letter of Consent to Participate, the researcher delivered to those who meet the criteria, a package containing specific instructions explaining the proposed research process. The principal was asked to facilitate this delivery by designating an educational assistant or a secretary, but was not involved in the selection of the teachers in any way.

Withholding Information in Research

One of the issues to be dealt with at this point in the research is how much information to give the participants. Gay and Airasian referred to this; “Another ethical dilemma occurs when a researcher poses a topic that, if given complete information to potential participants, would likely influence or change their responses” (p. 84). While not desiring to mislead the participants, it was necessary to limit the details of the research in order to have an unbiased response. The intent of the research was to

examine teachers' perception about FNMI students. Yet, in order to get an unbiased response from the participants it was necessary to withhold the exact purpose of this study until Phase Two of the data collection. While this procedure is a form of deception, it has been viewed as acceptable when the participant is debriefed and informed of the full purpose of the study (Cozby, 2007). Several authors even went as far to state that withholding information is not a form of deception. Ortmann and Hertwig (1998) have stated: "To us, not telling participants the purpose of an experiment is not necessarily deception; telling participants things that are not true necessarily is" (p. 807). During the course of research, the question of deception comes up frequently. The ethical considerations range from the potential for harm to the participants to the validity of information gained through deceptive practices. The actual deception used can also range from simple, incomplete disclosure to outright deception.

To successfully acquire useful information, this study proposed to withhold information about FNMI students from the participants. As stated before, this study examined the classroom teacher's perception of FNMI students as compared to their perceptions of non-FNMI students. In order to obtain unbiased information, the teacher was not advised of this real purpose. Instead, the teacher was asked to tell the stories of any five students without prompts that would focus them solely on FNMI students. By leading the teacher to believe that the purpose is simply to explore the stories of students, the teacher was more likely to provide unbiased information.

Coszby (2007) said that it "is generally acceptable to withhold information when the information would not affect the decision to participate and when the information will later be provided usually in a debriefing session when the study is completed" (p. 44). He

went on to explain that most voluntary participants in psychological study don't really expect to have all the information disclosed to them. It can be assumed that teachers, being university educated, might also be knowledgeable enough to understand that the research being undertaken would have some information withheld.

Withholding information, according to Coszby (2007) is necessary since "it is also possible that the informed consent procedure may bias the sample" (p. 45). It was felt that the participants in this study would very likely give a biased response if they were informed that their perceptions of FNMI students were the true focus of the study. By trying to appear unbiased and therefore non-racist, the participants would have a difficult time giving accurate information.

Coszby further differentiated between deception and withholding information in defining deception as "active misrepresentation of information" (p. 44). There are certainly arguments about the nature of withholding information. The intent of this research was clearly to withhold only the information necessary to gain an unbiased response from the participants. There was no attempt to deceive the participant.

If the participants had concerns about the information that was withheld from them in Phase One of the data collection, they were reassured in Phase Two that they could withdraw their information at any time. It was explained again to them that their identity was protected by the coding system in effect. The researcher explained to all participants how important their information was in helping others to recognize possible biases of their own.

Creswell (1998) also talked about deception in research. When deception is necessary he recommended that the researcher handle this “by presenting *general* information, not specific information about the study” (p. 133).

Data Collection Procedures

The collection of data occurred in two distinct phases. These phases are described in the next sections.

Phase One

The teacher was asked to provide a tape-recorded narration describing 5 stories or experiences of children in their class. They were encouraged to use the children’s real names, as the coding system employed in this study, prevented identification by the researcher. The researcher used a tape recorder during the first phase of the interview process. The teacher chose any experiences to describe and they included as many students as they desire. A prompt was given to each teacher to guide them in the storytelling. These prompts included general questions about attendance habits, general achievement, attitudes towards school, work habits, relationships with other students and relationship to adults in the school.

The format for this recording was simple and straightforward. Then the teacher told the story of 5 experiences about students in their class. The researcher recorded these stories using a cassette tape-recorder. This process took place in a face-to-face meeting with the researcher.

Phase Two

In a follow-up interview by the researcher with the teacher, the full intent of the research was made known to the participant and at that time they were given the choice to

have their data removed from the study even though it is confidential. In addition, one of two lines of interview questions were followed depending on whether or not the teacher told stories involving FNMI students. By masking the real intent of the research, it could not be predicted that the teacher would select FNMI students. This presented a problem for the researcher as information was needed regarding FNMI students but in order to avoid bias, the teacher could be directly asked to provide FNMI examples. Therefore the researcher chose to provide these two lines of questions.

Interview questions

If the teacher did not choose a Native student for their stories they were asked the following questions:

1. Why did you choose these particular students for this study?
2. Did you realize that you did not choose any FNMI students?
3. Why do you think that happened?
4. How do you feel non-FNMI students participate in your classroom?
5. How would you describe the participation of FNMI students in your classroom?
6. If you were to tell a story of one of the FNMI students, what would that story be?

If the teacher chose FNMI students as part of their response, then the researcher asked these questions:

1. Why did you choose these particular students for this study?
2. I noticed that you chose (1,2,3 FNMI students). Why did you choose those particular students?

3. How would you describe the participation of non-FNMI students in your classroom?
4. How would you describe the participation of FNMI students in your classroom?

This data was collected by the researcher in a semi-structured interview. This interview occurred at the school in a face-to-face situation. Both written notes as well as tape recording of the interview were used to ensure accuracy of the data collection. The tapes were then transcribed by a typist. The typist was instructed concerning the confidentiality of this information and using a code, protected the identity of the participants and students.

Verification

In order for the data to be useful it was necessary to verify its trustworthiness. This study used three of the procedures described by Creswell (1998). First of all, there was prolonged engagement in the field. In order to saturate the data the researcher conducted interviews with each participant in *Phase II* of the data collection. The researcher also pursued member checks with the participants if any clarification was needed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered this to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). In this verification procedure, the original participants were shown “data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions” (Creswell 1998, p. 203). They were asked to make “critical observations or interpretations” to guide the researcher (p. 203). This verification technique occurred at the conclusion of the interview in *Phase II*. Ultimately, the participants were asked if the examples provided accurately reflected what they wanted to say.

Finally, rich, thick descriptions were used in the analysis. According to Creswell, “the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and determine whether the findings can be transferred ‘because of shared characteristics’” (1998, p. 203). Creswell (2003) also explained that rich, thick description “may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. In addition to the preceding forms of verification, the researcher enlisted the participation of one or two FNMI individuals involved in education to read the study results and to comment on the appropriateness of the information related.

Data Saturation

In determining the number of participants for a grounded theory study, there is no consensus on how many participants should be included in a grounded theory study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasized that: “There is, to underscore the main point, no end to the options, choices and decisions that we face” (p. 29). Strauss and Corbin suggested that the researcher do whatever is necessary. As the researcher collects the data, analysis begins. The collection and analysis of data leads the researcher back to the field to gather more information. Data saturation can be a lifelong process. It was not expected that this study will fully saturate the data concerning teachers’ perceptions of FNMI students. It was hoped that at least 12 and as many as 20 participants would be included. Nonetheless, it is intended to add knowledge to the area of understanding by being complete and thorough.

Role of the Researcher

One of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is the closeness between the researcher and the participants. The qualitative researcher does not rely on

anonymous surveys and distant queries. Creswell (2003) described qualitative research as “interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (p. 184). This closeness brings with it possible biases and perspectives that, if not carefully managed, could affect the validity of the research.

By its very nature, Creswell (2003) said that qualitative research means that the “researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment. One cannot escape the personal interpretation brought to qualitative data analysis” (p. 182). Rather than try to totally objective the data, the researcher views the phenomena holistically. Creswell said that the qualitative researcher “systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study” (p. 182).

The researcher of this study is a principal whose entire career of 30 years has been in schools with a significant FNMI population. He has developed biases and formed opinions about teachers’ interactions with Native students from his own experience. In his experience, many teachers are both unconsciously and consciously prejudiced in their treatment of and expectations for FNMI students. It was essential to analyze the data according to strictly adhered to procedures for qualitative study while at the same time keeping the researcher’s bias in check through peer review and debriefing meetings. Normal human observations can be biased or even tainted by the extreme examples one is confronted with. It was the intention of this study that a general unbiased study would result in useful, transferable information leading to solutions to a real problem that exists in Alberta schools; that problem being, the lack of success by First Nations student. The

researcher reserved judgment until the data had all been collected. The aforementioned procedures mitigated the effects of possible personal bias.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed using the grounded theory procedure articulated by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The data was coded using open, axial and selective coding strategies until a substantive-level theory emerged.

Coding in a Grounded Theory Study

One of the advantages of a grounded theory study, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), is that the theory is drawn from the data and is “likely to offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action” (p. 12). Strauss and Corbin also pointed out that this tradition of research requires a balance between data and the creativity of the researcher. The analysis of the data is “the interplay between the researchers and the data” (p. 13). They stated that this analysis is both a science as well as an art.

It is science in the sense of maintaining a certain degree of rigor and by grounding analysis in data. Creativity manifests itself in the ability of the researchers to aptly name categories, ask stimulating questions, make comparisons and extract an innovative, integrated, realistic scheme from masses of unorganized raw data. (p. 13)

According to Strauss and Corbin, some of the significant purposes of coding are to:

1. Build rather than test theory.
2. Provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data.
3. Help analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena.

4. Be systematic and creative simultaneously.
5. Identify, develop and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory.

(p. 13)

The coding process of grounded theory follows a basic three-step procedure. In the first step, called open coding, the data is broken into initial categories by segmentation. Creswell (1998) described this step: “Within each category, the investigator finds several properties, or subcategories, and looks for data to dimensionalize” (p. 57).

Creswell (1998) described the second step called axial coding. In this step the: ...investigator assembles the data in new ways...using a coding paradigm or logic diagram in which the researcher identifies a central phenomenon, explores causal conditions, specifies strategies, identifies the context and intervening conditions and delineates the consequences. (p. 57)

Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that the “purpose of axial coding is to relate categories and to continue developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 230). These authors stress that axial coding evolves as the research progresses.

In the final stage of the coding process, selective coding, Creswell (1998) said, “the researcher identifies a ‘story line’ that integrates the categories in the axial coding model. In this phase conditional propositions (or hypotheses) are typically presented” (p. 57). Strauss and Corbin (1998) described this as “the integration of concepts around a core category and the filling in of categories in need of further development and refinement” (pp. 236-237).

Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1998) stressed the need for fluid and skillful application of the coding process. This requires a process that alternates between data collection and data analysis. By doing this, the data is validated at the same time as the theory is developing. This fluidity complements the strength of qualitative research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

This study was guided by one central research question: What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students? This chapter reports the findings from data pertaining to this question and the analysis of that data obtained from participants who agreed to be interviewed. Fifteen participants were purposefully selected and interviewed over a five-month period from June through October 2007. Each participant worked in a rural school in southwest Alberta. All of the participants were Caucasian. Invitations to participate were extended to teachers in seven schools. Teachers at three schools agreed to be interviewed. All participants are teachers in public schools having at least 25% First Nations, Métis or Inuit (FNMI) students in their classrooms. Each participant was interviewed in two phases by the researcher.

In the first phase the participant recited four or five stories describing interactions between themselves and their students. The participants chose the students to talk about without specific direction from the researcher. As a result, during the first phase of the data collection, stories about both FNMI and non-FNMI students were related. Since the focus of this study was the teachers' perceptions of the FNMI student, the data relating to the non-FNMI student was not analyzed.

During the second phase of data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The questions during this phase were focused on FNMI students. Six specific questions were then asked to further clarify the participants' perceptions of their FNMI

students. All of the participants were interviewed in their schools before or after the school day.

Participants were contacted by telephone or in person by the researcher for the purpose of scheduling interviews. The teachers were able to ask a few general questions to put them at ease or to help them in the selection of the students they wished to tell about. Then the actual first interview took place a few days later, giving them time to select students and think about the stories they would relate.

During the initial interviews in Phase I of the data collection, the participants were eager to talk about their students. Nearly all the participants expressed that they had enjoyed telling these stories. At times, the stories focused on the teachers themselves as they described what they did as much and sometimes more so than what the students did. It was clear to the researcher that the teachers cared for their students and sincerely wanted them to succeed. When asked why they chose the particular students that were selected, the participants gave a variety of reasons, each personal and meaningful to themselves.

The teachers' responses were varied in detail and length. Some teachers were very eager to share stories with the researcher, while others were more guarded. Most of the participants were comfortable and relaxed during the initial storytelling. Many of the participants expressed difficulty in choosing which students they would talk about. They mentioned that they had many stories that would be worth telling. The teachers would show appropriate emotions as they related stories of fun, tragedy, worry, achievement and failure on the part of FNMI students.

However, as the interview in phase II began and the participant realized that the focus was turning to FNMI students, most of their responses became more guarded and defensive. About half of the participants showed more care in their responses to ensure that they would not be seen as prejudiced or racist. Even though the teachers had not made especially racist remarks, they still felt like they needed to defend themselves, or at the very least convince the researcher that they were not prejudiced or racist. Two of the participants adamantly stated that they were not racist and did not see any difference between FNMI and non-FNMI students. This common reaction is more fully developed and described as the data analysis is described.

As the interviews in phase II developed the interviewer adjusted the questions to elicit further information revealed by the participant. These adjustments were minor and allowed the interview to remain focused on the perceptions of the teacher. This form of adjustment is referred to by Strauss and Corbin (1998); “during actual interviews...because of increasing sensitivity on the part of the researcher, he or she often adjusts the interviews or observations on the basis of relevant concepts” (p. 207).

The qualitative data is reported in narrative format with specific direct quotes from the participants. The names and identities of the participants are confidential as are the locations of their schools. Pseudonyms are used to protect their privacy and any references to their schools also include a fictitious name. The student’s names have also been changed, but the gender has not been disguised. Where more than one participant of this study referred to the same student, that student’s pseudonym remained the same. Table 2 represents the years teaching, grade level taught and the gender of the participants.

Table 2

Participant Information

Participant Pseudonym	Years Teaching	Grade Level Taught	Gender
Kathy	25+	Gr. 1-3	Female
Myrna	25+	Gr. 1-3	Female
Betty	0-5	Gr. 1-3	Female
Mark	5-10	Gr. 4-6	Male
Brian	0-5	Gr. 4-6	Male
Keith	25+	Gr. 4-6	Male
Sheila	0-5	Gr. 7-9	Female
Alan	25+	Gr. 7-9	Male
Ted	11-15	Gr. 7-9	Male
Darla	11-15	Gr. 7-9	Female
Karen	16-20	Gr. 7-9	Female
Ryan	21-25	Gr. 7-9	Male
Amanda	25+	Gr. 7-9	Female
Dennis	16-20	Gr. 7-9	Male
Patty	5-10	Gr. 7-9	Male

Coding Strategies

The following sections reveal the results of the coding strategies used to analyze the data. Following the qualitative model of Strauss and Corbin (1998), three specific coding strategies were implemented. The first strategy, open coding, exposed the concepts identified in the data. The second strategy, axial coding, re-contextualized the data that was broken apart during the open coding process. Finally, the third strategy, selective coding, integrated and refined the categories that evolved during open and axial coding to reveal a central category around which a theory grounded in the data was described.

Open Coding

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), open coding is the process whereby concepts are identified in the data. The properties and dimensions of those concepts are discovered within the data and then “broken down into discrete parts, closely examined and compared for similarities and differences” (p. 102). The initial coding of the data from the stories revealed six categories: (a) family influences, (b) teacher as rescuer, (c) academics, (d) school procedures, (e) student attitude and (f) class participation.

Family Influences

Table 3 represents the category of family influences, and the dimensional properties related to family influences.

Table 3

Properties and Dimensional Ranges of the Family Influences Category.

Category	Property	Dimensional Range
Family Influences	Alcohol and Drugs	Present in the home→→→Student user
	Violence	Witness of→→→Victim of
	Home support for school	Supportive parents→→→Unsupportive
	Foster child	Desirable placement→→→Undesirable placement

The following descriptive narratives support and clarify the category of Family Influences and the subsequent dimensional range of this category. The different properties were presented in the order that they appear in Table 2.

Alcohol and Drugs. Many of the participants described alcohol and drugs in their depiction of FNMI students. In each case where alcohol and drugs were described, they were given as a reason for difficulties at school for the student. In most cases, the problems were associated with abuse by the adults in the students' homes. Sometimes the

problem involved the student consuming alcohol. The dimensions of alcohol and drug abuse ranged from substance abuse in the home to substance abuse by the student. The teachers described homes where several generations of the student's family lived. Aunts and uncles, cousins, both distant and near, would live in the same home. The teachers explained that often, the grandparents were the actual guardians of the students and their other children would live in the home for varying lengths of time.

One participant, Kathy, tells about her student Colt. He had tremendous difficulties following class routines such as sitting at his desk, taking turns and respecting the teacher. The mother admitted to having used alcohol when Colt was a baby. The mother recognized the connection between her drinking and his behavior. Kathy relates that the mother told her "I am so sorry I was a drunk when he was a little boy." Another teacher, Myrna, relates how alcohol affected one of her FNMI students in a different manner. According to Myrna, Teneil's mother was not known to have a drinking problem but was possibly abusing prescription medication. During a party, the mom drank some alcohol and the combination of her medication and the alcohol killed her. As a result of this tragedy, Teneil was taken to live with a relative.

Alan, another participant, proposed a more direct connection between alcohol and poor school performance. He tells about Shawn, an incredibly bright FNMI student who was immersed in the Native culture. Shawn's attendance started to taper off and Alan made a deal with him. Shawn's attendance started to improve, but suddenly dropped off again. Making inquiries, Alan found out that there were several days of binge drinking at Shawn's house and that Shawn's mother had gone back to drinking, resulting in Shawn not coming to school. Another student in the same class, Marnie, has also stopped

coming to school as a result of the drinking taking place at Shawn's house. Marnie lived next door to Shawn and the families were related. Alan articulated a theme that will appear over and over in these stories. He said, "I mean it is a tragedy and it just breaks my heart. With parental support, with support from the home, these kids could be very successful, but they're not going to be and the cycle is going to continue and continue."

Ryan, described a student who excelled academically while in the Junior High school but in later years fell into the abyss of drug abuse. This teacher kept track of students who excelled on Provincial Achievement tests. Over a period of several years, very few FNMI students were noted. In one year only this one student, Bodee, achieved an excellent standard on the Provincial Achievement Test. When asked why there might be so few FNMI students achieving excellence, Ryan said that very few FNMI students take his class; they are enrolled instead in the modified program. This pattern made Bodee stand out as an exceptional student. Ryan told of meeting Bodee's mother about 6 years after Bodee left the Junior High school. She told Ryan that Bodee got involved with drugs after High School and as a result was in a Supervised Care Facility. On one of Bodee's day passes, his mother brought him back to the school to see Ryan, his former teacher. Bodee was overweight and poorly dressed, but he was pleased to be back where some good memories remained.

Patty was another teacher to describe the effects of alcohol or drugs on her FNMI students. She talked about a young man named Jim. He had been abandoned as a baby and spent time in various foster homes. Jim was quite disruptive in class, choosing to entertain the others rather than concentrate on his studies. Jim was quite bright and managed to accomplish very 'decent grades' in spite of his misbehavior. Jim became

more and more explosive, even violent at times. Eventually he started to use drugs and was suspended from school. In Patty's words, Jim "wasted it all."

These participants noted alcohol and drugs as negative influences in the lives of their students. Participants teaching in the elementary grades tended to indicate that substance abuse by adults in their homes was deleterious to the student, while the teachers of Junior High students noted the effects of adult abuse on the students who then become users themselves. In approximately one third of the participants' stories, alcohol and drugs were cited as contributory factors in student problems.

Violence. Another negative influence from the student's home described by the participants was violence. These harmful acts were perpetrated by family members or other adults in a position of trust to the student, or in some cases, the students themselves. The dimensions of the violence ranged from the student witnessing the violent acts to being a victim of the violence. In a few cases, the student was the individual committing the violence.

Kathy described Colt as a young first grader filled with anger. He even stated his anger aloud. When he was re-directed away from something he wanted to do he would say, "You are making me angry." Then he would react in an agitated manner. Colt's mother was in jail for assaulting his father. Colt had witnessed this assault. Once, when Colt hit a little girl and was reprimanded, he said, "Why is it OK for girls to hit boys, but its not OK for boys to hit girls?" His teacher stated that Colt understood that his mom was in jail for hitting his father but he couldn't make the connection to his own behavior.

This same teacher, Kathy, told the story of Johnny, another young student who was in foster care because his mother had killed his father. The boy had not actually

witnessed the act, but was very aware that it had happened. Kathy described his poor social behavior but noted, “He had social behaviors, but then again, knowing his background, you could see why he had poor social behaviors.” This teacher was stating her expectations for the behavior of this student based on the home situation. This predicting behavior was common with the participants in this study.

Another tragic case of violence is related by Myrna. Teneil, one of Myrna's FNMI students, had witnessed her mother's death by drinking in the home and was subsequently placed in the care of an aunt and uncle. When Teneil was a little older, she was reported to have been raped by the uncle. This was a child that the teacher had grown fond of and even wanted to adopt but couldn't. The teacher draws a contrast in her description. First, she described Teneil as a cute and sweet little girl. Teneil had worked very hard and was making real progress when the tragedy of her mother's death occurred. Then Myrna stated her own despair as she describes this sweet innocent little girl being raped by her caregiver.

Alan describes violence in the case of two of his students. One of the male students in the class, Edward, was outwardly a friendly, humorous and well-liked student. But reports came to the teacher's attention that Edward was bullying other students. Edward denied any involvement. Although he was caught on the school video slapping another student, Edward continued in his denial. This participant also talked about Kent, another kind student who is caught committing vandalism on tape. Alan expressed surprise since he had previously viewed Kent as a softhearted student. The participant related that when confronted, Kent began to cry.

Lack of Home Support. Each of the participants referred to the home environment, but some of them specifically referred to a lack of support from the home and parents as a factor in the success or lack of success of the student. The dimensions of home support ranged from supportive parents to parents who did not possess the skills to be supportive. Mark, a participant, talked about Necia and Dexter, a brother and sister. Their attendance was irregular and Mark looked to the home for reasons. He made an interesting comment, “I don’t know if they still liked school or their mom still had some control of them.” These two students were in Grade 4 or 5 and their teacher wondered if their parent had any control over their behaviors! Mark questioned the support that the children have at home and what connection that had to their attendance. During a conference with the mother, the mother stated that she wanted Necia to be in school all the time. Improved attendance lasted for one month and then Necia stopped coming altogether. Mark commented that even though the mother stated a desire to have her daughter in school, she was unable to influence her to achieve that outcome.

Even when the teacher was not sure of the home situation, they often made assumptions. In referring to another student, Mark said, “I don’t know anything about her home life before. I just know that in the foster care that she is in; she is in a very strong home right now.” Alan was a bit more direct in making the connection between success at school and support at home. When talking about Marnie, Alan said, “With parental support from home, these kids could be very successful, but they’re not going to be and the cycle is going to continue and everything.” This broad, general statement reflected what most of the participants felt about home support for FNMI students. According to

Alan and other participants, the FNMI student was in a downward cycle and the homes they come from exacerbated that cycle.

Alan made another striking statement about FNMI home support when telling the story of Thomas. Thomas was fourteen years of age but only in Grade 6 because of lack of attendance. This is Alan's description of his student, Thomas: "Very, very bright. This kid could do anything he wanted, but then again, family situations. His parents didn't make him go and weren't interested in it [school]." When using the phrase "then again, family situations" Alan portrayed Thomas' situation as an example of his perception of other FNMI families.

One of the female teachers, Darla, was more subtle in her criticism of FNMI family support. As she described the lack of imagination among FNMI students, Darla attributed this to something missing in the family support system. According to Darla:

They [FNMI students] tend to write what they know because the imagination just isn't there. I don't know why that is, if it is a cultural thing or if it just the fact that maybe it hasn't been a part of their lives. You know, they haven't been exposed to the reading of fiction.

This statement was once again an assumption about the home life of FNMI children. As a contrast, Darla told the story of Renee, whose father was First Nations and whose stepmother was Greek. Darla described the step-mom as very supportive and involved in Renee's education. Renee struggled with reading comprehension, but made great progress once the step-mom began working at home on a program devised in cooperation with the teacher. Darla said, "So it is really a joy to the actual effort put forth

by all stakeholders. The family, the student and school working together really benefited that girl.”

Family Influences and the Literature Review. Nearly all of the participants suggested that family influences were detrimental to the success of FNMI children in the public school system. The perceptions of the participants regarding family influences were supported by the literature. Farkas and Wax (2004) stated that achievement problems with minority students are directly influenced by their poor home situations. Barton (2004) also pointed to family and home influences such as mobility and parental availability.

Even in those families where the families desire a greater role there is an inability to support the children in a meaningful way. P. Makokis (2000) and L. Makokis (2001) both mirrored the participants in this regard and placed some of the reason on the residential schools era and its lingering effects on the caregivers of today’s children. They both stated that as a result of the residential schools era, parents were distrustful of the schools; at the same time, they look to the schools as a means of progress for their children and grand-children. This is echoed by the Alberta Commission on Learning (2003) where the need for greater parent involvement was outlined but the way to provide this was left unanswered.

Teacher as Rescuer

Table 4 represents the category of teacher as rescuer, and the dimensional properties related to teacher as rescuer.

Table 4

Properties and Dimensional Range of the Teacher as Rescuer Category

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
Teacher as Rescuer	New school as Rescuer	High perception→→→Low perception
	Teacher credit for Rescuing student	High credit→→→Low credit
	Personal involvement	Extra attention→→→Desire to adopt
	Teacher/student Relationship	No relationship→→→Lasting relationship

An interesting perspective noted by the participants concerned their view of themselves and the school as an agent of rescue for the FNMI student. Each property and dimensional range was supported by descriptive narratives and direct quotations from the participants. The properties were presented in the order they appear in Table 3.

One of the participants, Kathy, described the foundation of the teacher as rescuer. After describing Colt’s initial misbehavior, Kathy went on to explain a theme common to most of the teachers: “...he really struggled in school, but we started to develop a relationship. He learned that he could trust me and after two or three weeks he learned that I really cared about him.” Every participant referred to the building of a personal relationship with the FNMI student. In the some cases, however, the relationship was more than simply than that of a teacher facilitating instruction. The relationship took on a more intense desire to rescue the FNMI student from their home life, their prior school, or the perceived dangers that the student’s life placed them in.

New school as rescuer. The dimensions of this category ranged from a high perception of the school as a rescuing agent to a low perception. Alan talked about Thomas, a new student to the school. Thomas had not attended school for two years,

because his family did not want him to attend a reserve school. According to Alan “they pled and pled and pled (to the principal) because he wouldn’t go to a reserve school, so we finally let him in.” Thomas was a bright student, but had missed so much school that he was two years behind. According to Alan, the school made a difference in Thomas’ life by accepting him and bringing him into an environment where he felt safe.

Ted also refers to the reserve school vs. public school issue. His student, Teresa, had attended a school located on the Blood Reserve the previous year. Reserve schools are federally funded and federally supervised. The reserve schools only accept FNMI students. Teresa's school records showed that she was in a modified educational program in her last school. Now she was in the public system and her marks were incredibly high. Ted reported:

I gave her a math test, the hardest math test I give all the students, the same one I have given for ten years. I have never had a student get 100% on it yet and I mean I’ve had some bright students go through. She got 100% on it, but she was in a modified program the year before (in her last school).

Ted asked her about the change and she told him of gang activity and the distractions that held her back. She said that she came to the new school because she wanted to be good, she wanted to do better. Ted summarized the school as rescuer by saying. “Just a different environment. Same kid, different environment.”

Another participant viewed her school as saving a student, but not from a reserve school. Darla related the story of Shantana. “I was talking about Shantana and she came from another larger school in our school district. She had some problems there ...and the reputation was that she was going to be a problem student.” Darla stated that Shantana

came to their school and her behavior and attendance were “impeccable.” Darla went on to relate how Shantana’s grades were at the top of her class and how she was nearly the valedictorian in grade 9.

The participants in this study made direct reference to the perception that their school was superior to other schools and that by changing schools the students previous poor performance was changed for the positive. It is interesting to note that none of the participants related any personal knowledge of the other school, but based their perceptions on assumptions.

Teacher credit for rescuing student. In addition to the teachers who felt that their schools were rescuing agencies, a theme emerged where participants related a personal role in the rescue of FNMI students. The teachers’ descriptions of their involvement varied from taking high credit to being more modest and seeing their role in a less direct manner.

Kathy told about teaching Colt to respect girls. “I’ve always had the philosophy of, well, let’s give him a chance and see where they can go because I believe in children.” She then described the process of overcoming his aggressive behavior towards girls.

Kathy then said that Colt didn’t hit anymore but “he always wanted to.” Kathy described her intervention as a major factor that saved him from further discipline troubles at school. Kathy related the foundation of this change as being a relationship with her. “He really struggled in school, but we started to develop a relationship. He learned that he could trust me and after two or three weeks he learned that I really cared about him.”

Another of Kathy's students, Johnny, began his relationship with her the year prior to being in her class. He was in kindergarten in the same school, and would wander to her classroom frequently and tell her, "Well, I'm Johnny and you're going to be my teacher next year." Johnny's mother had murdered his father and Johnny was aware of this so his family background was tragic. Kathy told us that he always felt safe at school and with her. "I tried to develop a relationship right at the start of the year where they know they are safe with me and they can let me know." Johnny and his brother were in a good foster home but the foster parents decided to adopt just the little brother. Kathy knew the foster parents and tried to convince them to adopt both boys. They were firm in their decision, however, so Kathy briefly considered adopting Johnny herself. Johnny in fact tried to facilitate this. He would come to her each day at school, "Mrs. A. do you love me"? "Yeah, I do Johnny." "Well, do you want to adopt me"? A family in a nearby city eventually adopted Johnny. Kathy and her class made a book for him to remind him of their class. The adoptive mother reported back to Kathy that Johnny would open the book every night. Kathy said, "It just really touched him because he knew that we really cared about him." Kathy's rescue instincts to take care of Johnny continued after he left the school.

Myrna was another participant who demonstrated a strong impulse to rescue an FNMI student. Teneil was a grade 2 student who came to the school from a reserve school. Myrna described Teneil in a heartfelt manner: "Her skills were low. She couldn't spell any words, she couldn't do anything." Despite her low skills, Myrna was attracted to Teneil. She was "so cute and so sweet and she worked so hard." Myrna reported that Teneil gained two years in the first year in her classroom. Myrna related that every night

before going home, Teneil would wrap her arms around the teacher and “give her a big hug with her arms just open to squeeze me tight and just gave me a big hug.” Teneil’s mother passed away tragically and Myrna had a strong urge to adopt her. She even went as far as to look up the number for Social Services and start to dial. But self-doubts took over and she did not complete the call. Myrna felt that no one would give an FNMI child to a non-FNMI parent so she did not complete the call. Myrna expressed her feelings of guilt, “I was very sad about that...things didn’t work out very well for [Teneil].” This tragic turn of events described Myrna’s feelings of guilt at her failure to rescue Teneil. In Myrna’s mind, her early rescue success in the classroom was wiped out by her later failure to rescue her from tragedy.

Patty, a junior high teacher, described Jim as unforgettable. She was impressed by his “magnetic” personality, his “flamboyant” persona. Patty suspected that Jim was half FNMI and had some African American progenitors. She described a student who really made a strong impression on her. She stated, “Jim, he is one I want to save. He is one that I would love to bring back.”

One of the students who was described in rescue terms was in the stories of two different participants. Colt was a topic in Kathy and Mark’s stories. Although Kathy did not describe Colt in rescue terms, Mark did. Mark’s story about Colt showed an angry young man. He had been transferred to the school because of discipline problems in the last school. Colt was on medication for behavior and the teacher was expected to give him the medication each day. The student would still get very angry but not act on the anger. Nonetheless, the anger was apparent to Mark. The two of them came up with a plan to keep Colt’s anger from distracting him from his work. The teacher would time

Colt's off task time and an equivalent amount of time would be deducted from Colt's recess breaks to give him time to make up the work. Mark was very excited about the success of this. He said: "I know now that he has had problems outside the school with the law and other things because of his anger problem, but he never brought it into the class because we were able to have that relationship of consistency." This is another example of the participants describing how the teacher's influence can rescue the student from problems that the student faces outside of the school.

Betty talked about rescuing a child, but this time from another class in the same school. This student, Megan, was in a higher grade at the same school where Betty was teaching. Megan was failing in her studies. Betty agreed to take the child into her class mid-year. "She came into Grade 1 and she was no longer struggling." Betty described her starting to learn and becoming excited about school. Megan even started to help other children. Betty did not blatantly claim a high degree of credit for rescuing Megan, but in a matter of fact statement, explained her role in the success of this child. Betty summed up the description by saying: "So that was one of the better things we felt like went really well this year." This theme of rescue was offered again and again by the participants.

Thomas is another student described as being rescued by the school. Alan, one of the participants, described himself as fulfilling a rescue role in Thomas' life. Thomas was fifteen years old and living with his girlfriend. She became pregnant and Thomas decided to remain in the relationship and care for the child and the mother. School board policy frowns on fathers as students in the elementary grades. Thomas was only in grade six! Alan, being in a position of authority as well as being Thomas' teacher offered him a deal. If Thomas would attend school regularly, Alan would promote him to the next

grade, which would put him in the junior high. Thomas agreed to this deal, one that was not entirely according to policy. Alan described going out on a limb for the boy.

Thomas's story is not a total success. He missed some school due to the baby keeping him awake at night. Alan related that Thomas was also suffering from depression and in fact was on a suicide watch at times. He was still enrolled in school at the time of the interviews and attending enough to be promoted to the next grade.

Teacher as Rescuer and the Literature Review. This research indicated that the public schools teachers who participated in this study, believed that they and their school are the best, if not the only, setting for the success of FNMI children. There is existing literature to support this finding. Betsinger, Garcia and Guerra (2004) revealed educator attitudes of rescue in their research. Irvine (1990) points out that teacher-training programs have largely ignored the differences in students leading to an assumption that all students can be rescued if they are taught in the mainstream way. And finally, Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) as well as Jussim, Eccles and Madon (1996) support this idea. They all came to the conclusion that teachers' beliefs are correlated with student performance. If the teacher believes that the student comes from a background that is deficient in preparing them for education, then that teacher will likely see school not only as a source of education, but also as a refuge from a negative background.

Academic Performance

Table 5 represents the category of academic performance, and the dimensional properties related to academic performance.

Table 5

Properties and Dimensional Range of the Academic Performance Category

Category	Property	Dimensional Range
Academics	Achievement	Low achievement→→→High Achievement
	Potential	Unfulfilled→→→Fulfilled

The participants all addressed academics in their stories. With a few exceptions, the FNMI students described were academically challenged and for the most part, achieving below grade level. The most significant deficiencies were described as being in reading with a few references to mathematics.

Achievement. The range of the category of achievement was from high achievement to low achievement. Most of the students described were low achievers. Myrna, in her description of Teneil, says that she could not spell any words and her skills were really low. Another participant, Betty, talks about a student who repeated grade 1. She told of Megan who was actually moved back to grade one from grade two in February because “she was just not doing well or keeping up.”

Dennis describes how Jenny was well below grade level. He said, “She was reading pre-grade one level in grade four and so she was very, very, low, struggling and basic facts to math weren’t there. [Jenny] just didn’t have it.” Dennis had prefaced his description by relating Jenny's poor attendance. Since she missed so much school year after year, she had fallen behind. This reasoning was given by most of the participants who described low academic achievement among the FNMI students.

Speaking in general, Darla, describes her expectations of low writing performance with FNMI students:

Our First Nations kids, generally speaking, have a hard time trying to write, trying to write fiction. Even in the Provincial Achievement Tests and I've marked them. I know that generally a fictional story is going to get a better mark than non-fiction. So I always encourage my kids to write fiction.

In contrast, other participants talked about the high achievement of FNMI students. Sheila described Wyatt, a grade four student, as "very bright in math." Sheila told the story of Wyatt and another girl in the class doing paired work in math with flash cards. Wyatt liked to go very fast and his partner, Tessie wanted him to slow down. Tessie had to tell him again and again to slow down, but he just wanted to forge ahead.

Alan gave a picture of another FNMI student with high achievement. Bethany was the foster daughter of a high school guidance counselor. This student pressured her foster parents to let her attend an off-reserve public school even though it meant getting up much earlier to catch the school bus. According to Alan, she was a wonderful student. He credited her achievement to dedication and great attendance.

Another participant that described high achievement for an FNMI student also inferred a relationship between attendance and achievement. Darla, described Shantana as a student transfer from another school. Although Darla had described her expectation that Shantana would have poor attendance, when Shantana's attendance proved to be above average, Darla made the connection between Shantana's attendance and her achievement. Shantana obtained very good marks at her new school.

Potential. The participants in this study were very concerned about the potential of the FNMI students. Their descriptions ranged from unfilled potential to fulfilled potential. The teachers wanted to believe that the FNMI student could succeed

academically if the correct conditions were in place. They often referred to the students' potential, but usually in reference to not meeting that potential. Patty gave a seemingly contradictory story about Jim. "He did very poorly on work assignments, but tests he would be successful on because he never forgets anything he has been told." Patty opened up another issue regarding achievement as she describes Jim, that of unfulfilled potential. She told about Jim's charismatic personality and his ability to "get anyone to do anything." She talked about his self-confidence as he ran for student office, something that FNMI students rarely do. According to Patty, Jim

...ran for office in grade 7, which is very rare, so his self-esteem was very healthy. He lost, but had a fun time with that. He had an interesting way of controlling the class dynamic, that if Jim was in a good mood, then the class was in a good mood. If Jim was mad, then things would go wrong. [He was] so very charismatic to get anyone to do anything.

Other participants also talked about unfulfilled potential. This theme was stated directly by several and hinted at by most participants. For example, Dennis described Brenda, a student who had a tremendous potential. Brenda had transferred into the school from a reserve school. Her special talent was in Language Arts, especially poetry. She wrote mature, powerful and striking poetry for a 14 year old. Her work really attracted the attention of her teachers. But this potential is described in stark contrast to her eventual life story. After two instances of being the victim of abuse, she dropped out of school and was not heard from again.

A case described earlier offers another example of unfulfilled potential. Bodee was the only FNMI student in his school to achieve an excellence standard above 80% on

the grade 9 provincial mathematics test. The teacher had great hopes for Bodee. He was described as a bright student, interested in school and life. Bodee fell short of his potential by getting involved with alcohol and drugs.

Sheila, one of the participants teaching in the junior high, gave an interesting view of potential when talking about Madison. Madison struggled to get her work done. The teacher explained that it was difficult to motivate Madison, yet she got the second highest mark on a test. This was a case of unexpected potential. Sheila described this phenomenon:

So it's nice when you have those students, you don't know if they are listening, you don't know if you are getting through to them, you don't know if they are doing any work, and they surprise you at the end.

Alan, a teacher and an administrator, described the unfulfilled potential of two FNMI students. He began by talking about a boy with huge potential. Shawn was "incredibly bright." He was very strong in the sciences in particular. But Shawn failed to live up to his potential because of poor attendance and family problems. Marnie, a cousin of Shawn's also failed to achieve to her potential.

Academic Performance and the Literature Review. The literature regarding academics was directed at all minority groups. However, there was not a lot of material specifically written about North American Native students in the United States or FNMI students in Canada. What literature was available substantiated the observations of the participants that FNMI achievement is lower than the mainstream non-FNMI student. Hedges (1998) and Phillips (1998) stated that minority students start school with lower skills and the gap widens during the schooling years. Byrne (1989) pointed to the

generally accepted belief that Native student achievement lags behind the majority of students in their schools. Gallagher (2004) not only stated that FNMI students have lower achievement than the majority students, but also suggested a connection between that reality and the residential school experience. This belief, that the residential school experience of two generations ago is still affecting today's students is supported by Pauls (1984), P Makokis (2000) and L. Makokis (2001). Little Soldier (1997) has written much about the testing methods of schools and the disadvantages these practices put upon Native American students. And finally, the results of the Alberta Provincial Achievement Tests reported in the Government of Alberta, FNMI Policy Framework (2002) shows that FNMI achievement lags at least 15% behind the provincial average of other students.

School Procedures

Table 6 represents the category of school procedures, and the dimensional properties related to the category of school procedures.

Table 6

Properties and Dimensional Range of the School Procedures Category

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
School Procedures	Work Habits	High Focus→→→Low Focus
	Attendance	Satisfactory→→→Unsatisfactory

This category derives its name, school procedures, from the work of Dr. Harry Wong (2004), who described procedures as the rules, protocols and behaviors that student need to follow for the orderly function of school.

Work Habits. The participants that mentioned work habits either described poor work habits or else showed surprise at FNMI students who displayed good work habits.

There is an expectation that most FNMI students do not know how to focus on school tasks and homework. Thus the dimensions of the work habits category are described as high focus to low focus. For example, Betty's story about Megan describes a little girl whose work habits became very good. This is related to the school as rescuer, as Betty described the positive influence of the school on Megan. Mark told about Colt, who was frequently off task. Mark also expressed frustration and guilt regarding Necia. This FNMI student was bright but couldn't keep up because of her work habits and attendance. Mark said, "It's hard, it kills me, cause, [I would] like to see her [succeed]."

Sheila's story about Dakota was telling in regards to expectations and results. Dakota was a student who did not complete very much in the way of assignments. For example, Sheila said, "He would maybe get a few sentences down on the worksheet but hardly do any of the worksheet. And it is kind of frustrating trying to get him to work." Sheila continues: "...he just doesn't want to do work." Then she expressed surprise as Dakota obtained a really good mark. Sheila said: "So it was kind of exciting for me to mark his test and see that he was actually paying attention, even though he didn't do any work." Sheila also told about a girl, Madison. Sheila "struggled to get her to work." Then Madison also received a very good mark. The teacher's surprise was reflected when she stated,

So it's nice when you have those students, you don't know if they are listening, you don't know if you are getting through to them, you don't know if they are doing any work and they surprise you at the end.

Attendance. The one area of school procedures that was mentioned by nearly every participant was attendance. The dimensional range of attendance varied from high

attendance to low attendance. A high number of participants took notice of students' attendance, and in most cases this was reported as poor attendance. Mark, in his story about Necia and Dexter, told of these students missing at least 30% of the school days during good times! He said, "Most times they missed a lot, a lot of school." Mark commented that Necia and Dexter were bright and physically attractive students, but he then focused on their poor attendance.

Alan talked about Shawn who came to school infrequently. Alan described Shawn as being "incredibly bright" and very strong in the sciences. But this description was followed immediately with a disclaimer that Shawn would "come infrequently, about once every two months." Alan also related the story of Thomas, whose family troubles led to infrequent attendance.

Dennis mentioned Brenda's frequent attendance gaps as a contrast to her potential as a poet. Brenda had transferred to Dennis' school in grade 9. When she was present, her work in class showed promise. Unfortunately, she would miss school for weeks at a time. Dennis noted that Brenda could have been successful had she only continued to attend school.

The participants, with few exceptions, either described poor attendance or did not mention attendance. Darla's story of Shantana, earlier described as being rescued by the new school, also demonstrated the expectations of the teachers regarding FNMI attendance. When she described Shantana, Darla stated that she expected to see poor attendance because Shantana was FNMI. To her surprise, Shantana had not only good attendance, but also exemplary attendance. So even though Darla described impeccable

attendance, her story reflected the expectation of poor attendance for FNMI students, a theme that many participants shared in their stories.

Karen, another participant who commented on an FNMI student's good attendance, did so in the context of surprise. Karen told the story of Rebecca who had "significant behavior difficulties. Low academically, [but] has good attendance." Once again, this participant described several factors of behavior, but coupled it with the comment on attendance. The final participant to mention good attendance, related this with an interesting opinion as to why the boy attends so regularly. Patty talked about Jim, a bright student with some serious behavior problems. She described his poor home life and tragic life story. His attendance was a surprise to her also. "Oddly, he had very good attendance, but that also could be because things weren't awesome at home."

School Procedures and the Literature Review. The literature addressing school procedures for FNMI students is sparse. One researcher who has written frequently over a period of time about Native American student performance is Little Soldier. In 1997 she addressed the issues of urban Native students and their adjustment to the public classroom. She described difficulties that arose from the cultural differences that were evident in the classroom environment. In 1989, Little Soldier described the cooperative nature of traditional Native education and how that differed from the typical mainstream classroom. Little Soldier stated that Native American traditional education is non-competitive and that Native students are at a disadvantage as a result of this. She felt that the Native student's egalitarian lifestyle was more comfortable with open, informal classes and that the student would benefit from freedom to move about. These are some differences that she found in the public school setting. She suggested the difference

between their traditional culture and the culture of the modern classroom was a reason for Native children’s difficulty in focusing on the tasks of the classroom.

Student Attitude

Table 7 represents the category of student attitude, and the dimensional properties related to student attitude.

Table 7

Properties and Dimensional Range of the Student Attitude Category

Category	Properties	Dimensional Range
Student Attitude	Respect	Lack of respect→→→High degree of respect
	Feelings of Persecution	Insignificant→→→Significant

Respect. Only a few of the participants referred to a lack of respect. The range of this category ran from a lack of respect to a high degree of respect for the teacher and the school. One of the teachers, Kathy’s story of Colt telling her that she was making him angry showed how the students respected their teachers even when they were being corrected. Kathy said that this student “was always challenging me.” But when he saw that he was too short to reach the pencil sharpener, he became respectful. Another participant, Mark, told the story of his “Hell Class.” In this class, the FNMI students, as well as the other students, wouldn’t be quiet and the teacher stated that he had to constantly come up with strategies to get them to be quiet. These two examples typify the kinds of moderate lack of respect that was described by the other participants of this study.

While these teachers told stories of minor issues with respect, Brian told of an experience with Dakota. Dakota was in the class with a student teacher and became “lippy.” The student teacher did not know what to do so Brian was called back into the room. Brian said that Dakota dug his heels in and “...just called me out.” In other words, the student became verbally aggressive with the homeroom teacher. In the end Dakota was so disrespectful that he had to be sent to the principal’s office where he was suspended for two days.

Another participant offered a more positive perspective of FNMI students in her junior high classes. She referred to these students as “very polite, very respectful of elders, authority...which I think is a cultural thing.”

Feelings of Persecution. Another area of student attitude relates to their feelings of persecution or racism. Participant stories related that some FNMI students felt persecuted and others did not feel any persecution. Amanda, a junior high teacher, referred to Markie in her stories. Markie had been a student at the junior high and then gone on to high school and college where she excelled at basketball. Once, when visiting with her former junior high teacher, she told Amanda that when she came to grade 7 she was scared “to death.” “First of all I didn’t trust non-FNMI people. I didn’t know I could do anything.” Another participant talked about Shawn, who has showed such confidence and pride in his FNMI heritage that he experienced few feelings of persecution. Shawn was in grade 6 and according to Alan, was extremely proud of his heritage. Alan described Shawn in this way: “Loves his first nations culture and he tells us about it [FNMI culture] all the time.” These participants provided the only references to persecution in the stories. However, during the interview phase of data collection,

Amanda told about an FNMI girl who was playing goal in a soccer game. She complained to the teacher that one of the non-FNMI girls had deliberately kicked the ball at her. Amanda laughed as she explained to the girl that she was the goalie and the other girl was just trying to score a goal.

Student Attitude and the Literature Review. Lumpa's (1997) writing described a correlation between teacher satisfaction and the motivation of the student, an important factor in student attitude. Marquez Chisholm (1994) also noted a connection between the predominantly non-FNMI teacher and the minority student. Chisholm pointed out that as long as teachers are from the dominant non-FNMI culture, the minority student would have difficulty receiving an equal understanding by that teacher. This failure to understand can lead to attitudinal issues on the part of the student. Little Soldier (1997) wrote about the hostility faced by Native American students when they tried to integrate into the dominant society. Huff (1998) described a dilemma in determining student attitude. He found that Native Americans were one of the most reluctant cultural groups to disclose their feelings and attitudes whether given the opportunity in an interview or on a paper and pencil questionnaire.

Class Participation

Table 8 represents the category of class participation, and the dimensional properties related to class participation.

Table 8

Properties and Dimensional Ranges of the Class Participation category.

Category	Property	Dimensional Range
Class Participation	Student to Class/ Teacher	High participation→→→Low participation
	Student to Student	High participation→→→Low Participation

During the Phase Two interviews, the participants were asked directly to describe the participation of FNMI and non-FNMI students in their class. Their responses provide insight into the perceptions that participants have regarding the difference between FNMI and non-FNMI students. These responses also reveal some perceptions that were not as evident from the stories told by each participant during these interviews. Some of the participants became defensive or self-protective. The dimensions of both categories, student to class/teacher and student to student ranged from high participation to low participation.

Student to Class/Teacher. Data from the interviews revealed a common perception that FNMI students were not as willing to participate in class, as were the non-FNMI students. Kathy reported that the FNMI students wouldn't raise their hands. They all wanted to take their turns at the same time. She thought that the non-FNMI students, "who had a common church background," had learned to wait for turns and to share at the children's programs of their church. "The native students aren't quite used to that environment yet." Kathy also thought that the Native students were shyer in comparison to non-FNMI students.

Mark also mentioned that the FNMI students would not raise their hands, and were reluctant to participate. According to him this improved somewhat over the course

of the school year. Mark reported that the non-FNMI students were “very keen and are there with me all the time and will answer questions.” He pointed out that many FNMI students, being more transient, are new to the school and therefore more hesitant to raise their hand and to offer a response. Mark reported another interesting perspective. In his school there are actually more FNMI students than non-FNMI students. In some classes there might only be four to six non-FNMI students and maybe 20 FNMI students. Regardless of this, the non-FNMI students still saw themselves as the majority and acted in a more confident manner.

Sheila also reported this anomaly. In her response to the question of differences between FNMI students and the other students, she said that, “I think the difference that I have noticed is that I have a lot of quiet First Nation students. They are just shy, pretty quiet.” But she also mentioned that even though there were more FNMI students in her class, she got more participation from the non-FNMI students. “All four of them seem to always, you know, participate and come out with things.” Sheila, further related that her FNMI students spoke with quieter voices and were difficult to hear. Sheila supposed that the non-FNMI students were more used to standing in front of people and therefore had good speaking voices.

Other participants reported that their students were shy and quiet as well. Keith related that his FNMI students were hesitant to participate. They were quite shy and didn’t ever offer responses but would eventually respond when called upon. He referred to the fact that many of his FNMI students came from reservation schools and had been dissatisfied there. He suggested that perhaps the students just weren’t used to the new

school yet. Alan also described FNMI students that were less eager to volunteer answers. He said,

Since I've been teaching 25 years, I've noticed in years past, it was very difficult to get First Nations kids to participate in classes. Difficult in raising their hands, difficult in asking them for answers, their answers were shrugs and that kind of stuff.

Alan did say that he thought that FNMI students were getting better but that the non-FNMI students were definitely more eager to volunteer. He said that he had to make an extra effort to not always call on the non-native student.

Another participant, Brian, became defensive when questioned directly about FNMI students participating in class. He was very reluctant to admit that he saw any differences, even though he had described differences in his stories and even pointed out a further difference in the interview. Brian's mother-in-law had been the school board chairperson and his aunt is a teacher in a junior high school. He tried to articulate his neutral point of view by describing a conversation he had with these two educators. They were trying to get him to describe the differences. He related a story about a student named Brenda to them and subsequently described this story to the researcher. Brenda was a very self-motivated student. She deliberately chose the school she was attending even though that meant having to get up at 5:30 in the morning to catch the bus.

Although her name and appearance definitely showed her to be FNMI, Brian said, "I wouldn't say she was Native, but she is, she's First Nation. It's like when I was telling you, I really wasn't thinking First Nation."

Brian then told the researcher about Dakota, who could have been successful, but found it difficult to abide by the rules of the classroom. Dakota, according to Brian, was a student who was very smart but did not see himself in that way. He would not try in class because he was afraid of failure. Athletically, Dakota was phenomenal. Brian summarized Dakota in this way: “He can run, he can throw and he knows he is a good athlete, but he doesn’t know he is a good student.” When questioned further, Brian added this about Dakota:

He just has no desire, no backing, no support and I think he stays up when he wants, goes to bed when he wants, hangs out with who he wants. When he comes to school there is a little bit more rigid rules and stuff and he finds it a little more difficult to abide by those rules.

Brian wasn’t the only participant to respond with defensive language when questioned directly about FNMI and non-FNMI student differences. Ryan was absolutely emphatic that there was no difference between the races. He, like Brian, sought to defend his own position, rather than describe differences. Ryan began by saying that he didn’t actually teach as many FNMI students as other teachers because his subject area was difficult and most of the FNMI took a modified route. Nonetheless his classes were still about 25% FNMI. But then he expressed how he set a tone of neutrality in his class. “I set a pattern in this classroom.” When an FNMI student accused him of moving him because he was FNMI, Ryan said,

What! Because I am not that way at all, that’s not my personality. I got all over that like non-FNMI on rice and I said, “Look, there is no favoritism in this

classroom.” I don’t know whether that big lecture has stuck with every generation since because I have never had a kid say that to me since.

Karen was another participant who defended her neutral perspective. When asked if there was anything significant in her picking two FNMI students out of five students in phase I of the interviews, Karen said, “Probably not, probably not because, um, in my perception of kids, I just teach kids. I don’t think of who or what their background is, I just teach students.” Karen went on to explain that any differences she did see would be attributed to socio-economic background rather than race. When pressed for a more specific answer, Karen simply avoided answering.

Student to Student. When describing the participation of FNMI students, many participants found that while they were not eager to participate in front of the group, the students were much more likely to interact with individual students, especially if the other students were also FNMI. Patty described this as follows:

With my female First Nations students, participation in class is very minimal. I think culturally, there are not a lot of times where they are going to put their opinions out there for everyone to see. I mean they will talk to their friends, but not in public to the group.

She continues to describe this behavior.

The typical behavior is no eye contact. Shrinking in posture. Not really wanting the other students to hear. Talking very quietly, more or less as if it were a conversation between the two of us, rather than a whole class discussion. But if I came to their desk, they are willing to share with me.

This description of FNMI students is contrasted by the description of non-FNMI students who make eye contact, and provide a response. Patty described non-FNMI students as being more confident in responding. They would look up and speak with a clear voice.

Sheila also responded that while FNMI students were unwilling or hesitant to participate in front of the class, they were not reticent to talk to one another. When asked if the FNMI students minded getting up in front of the class, Sheila responded,

They still mind a bit actually. When they talk, they were still kind of speaking shy and kind of speaking more quiet actually. So I think in the class setting, they have a lot of friends and they like to talk to their friends, but when it comes to presentation time, they are shy again.

Two of the participants reported on this idea of willingness to participate in small groups especially with other FNMI students in a more serious fashion. Ted related that the more FNMI there are in a class, the “integration breaks down.” As the number of FNMI students increased at his school in the past two years, the FNMI children stopped interacting with their non-FNMI peers and started to want to sit with FNMI students. This pattern extended to the free time students have as well. He said,

I’d walk down the hallways and I’d see Native with non-Native walking together.

As the numbers increased there has been a lot more division. Natives tend to hang out with the natives and the non-FNMI hang out with the non-FNMI.

Even in class, Ted said that there would now be clumps of FNMI students sitting together.

Amanda reported that in her gym classes, the FNMI students always wanted to divide teams up FNMI and non-FNMI. She finally let one class do that and it had nearly disastrous results.

The only clash comes if you're not careful in dividing the kids up. You just can't. One year I tried, I tried. The kids wanted so bad to play Natives against non-FNMIs and so I thought "okay". I'm probably cutting my throat. I never ever did it again because that is exactly what happened. They can play together just fine, but [when I] separated them and it was just like a rivaling of the Natives against the non-FNMIs. It was just like a gang. That's exactly the feeling it was. And I said I would never do that again. I've had kids say to me: "Can we play Native against non-FNMI?" And I say absolutely not. It will not happen again. Because these were good kids, it wasn't that. But you know they just got that clash in them that one race became better than the other.

Class Participation and the Literature Review. The Government of Alberta FNMI Policy Framework (2002) shows that statistically, FNMI students do not participate on Provincial Achievement Test in the same proportion as the rest of Alberta students. This includes students both attending reserve schools and attending off-reserve public schools. Larkin and Pines (2003) had previously reported similar findings to the participants' descriptions of lower class involvement particularly when called upon to respond in front of the group. Little Soldier (1997) reported that Native students don't feel that they belong, therefore reinforcing the notion that they do not participate in school to the same degree as other students.

This study found support in the findings of Larkin and Pines (2003), whose work revealed that First Nations students are the most reluctant group to respond when called on in class. In a comparison with Asian, Hispanic, African-American and non-FNMI students, First Nations students were seen to be very uncomfortable with “calling on behavior” by their teachers.

In conclusion, this open coding section has “opened up the text and exposed the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained therein” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Open coding is the first step in the analysis of data in the grounded theory tradition. The next step is to put the data back together in new categories that emerged during the open coding section. The following section, axial coding, brings further understanding to the data by putting the data back together after being disassembled in the open coding process.

Axial Coding

The purpose of axial coding, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), “is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (p. 124). During the open coding process, data were examined and as a result of this initial analysis, six categories were identified. Axial coding further examined the data by analyzing the specific details of the data, that is, de-contextualizing this data found in the interviews. Then as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the data were re-contextualized to identify properties for each category. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that axial coding relates “categories to sub-categories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” (p. 124). Continuing the analysis using the process suggested by Strauss and Corbin, the categories were analyzed to discover their relationships to determine the

causal conditions, intervening conditions, contextual conditions and actions and interactions. These terms were further discussed as follows.

Causal Condition. Causal conditions “usually represent sets of events or happenings that influence phenomena” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 131). Often causal conditions lead to the development of a phenomenon. The causal condition of the categories of this study was having FNMI students in the classroom. It was having students in the classroom that influenced the phenomena.

Phenomenon. The categories that emerge during axial coding are referred to as phenomena. Strauss and Corbin (1998) described phenomena as “repeated patterns of happenings, events or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to problems and situations in which they find themselves” (p. 130). The six specific phenomena that emerged from the data are (a) family influences, (b) teacher as rescuer, (c) academics, (d) school procedures, (e) student attitude and (f) participation.

Context. Strauss and Corbin explained that context refers to “the specific sets of conditions (patterns of conditions) that intersect dimensionally at this time and place to create a set of circumstances or problems to which persons respond through actions/interactions” (p. 132). They further said that the context helped explain the “why” of a phenomenon.

Intervening Condition. These are conditions that “mitigate or otherwise alter the impact of causal conditions on the phenomena” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 131). These conditions often occurred as a result of “contingencies or unexpected events, which in turn must be responded to through a form of actions and/or interactions” (p. 131).

Action/Interaction. Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to the routine tactics that people use to handle situations or issues, which they encounter as actions or interactions. According to Strauss and Corbin, “strategic actions/interactions are purposeful or deliberate acts that are taken to resolve a problem and in so doing shape the phenomenon in some way” (p. 133). Actions and interactions are important concepts as they denote the dynamic between individuals, groups and organizations. They include discussions, negotiations and other verbal discourse. Actions/interactions also include self-reflective practices of students and teachers in this research.

Consequence. The final paradigmatic term used by Strauss and Corbin (1998) is consequence. In its simplest sense, a consequence is the outcome or result of an action or an interaction. The consequence can be described by an action/interaction or the lack of an action/interaction.

Table 8 displays the components of the axial coding process and the subsequent analytic flow that ties the components together.

Table 9

Axial Coding Process

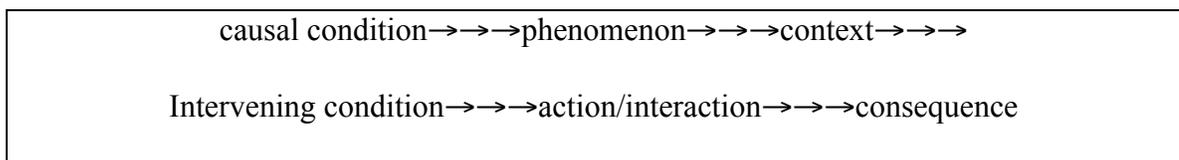


Table 10 presents a summary of the causal condition and its relationship to each of the phenomenon. This summary is presented in table format to better facilitate understanding of the phenomenon.

Table 10

Causal Condition and Phenomenon

Causal Condition	Phenomena
FNMI students in the classroom	Family Influences Teacher as rescuer Academic performance School procedures Student Attitude Class Participation

Each phenomenon is presented in a “Table” along with the details of its context.

Following the Table for each phenomenon the features and the context are described. The features are: (a) “Intervening Condition,” (b) “Action/Interaction,” and (c)

“Consequence.” The first phenomenon to be explored is “Family Influences.”

Phenomenon of Family Influences

The synthesis of four contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the phenomenon of family influences has emerged.

Table 11

The phenomenon of Family Influences in Context

Phenomenon	Context
Family Influences	Participants in this study perceived the family as a negative influence on the education of FNMI students. Participants perceived alcohol and drug abuse as being present in FNMI homes and described this as a damaging influence. Participants perceived acts of violence perpetrated upon the student, witnessed by the student, or committed by the student as being deleterious to their education. Participants perceived that the level parental support contributed to the students’ success or failure.

Listed below are the four contexts for the phenomenon of family influences and the features of each context. The phenomenon and its features have evolved from the axial coding process.

Family Influence Context #1:

Participants in this study perceived the family as a largely negative influence on the education of FNMI students.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants viewed the family influence as a determiner of student success.
- Action/Interaction
 - • Participants were aware of specific details concerning family influences.
 - Participants viewed these details in either a negative, neutral or positive light.
- Consequence
 - Participants attributed negative student school behavior to negative family influences.

Family Influence Context #2:

Participants perceived alcohol and drug abuse as being present in FNMI homes and described this as a damaging influence.

- Intervening Condition
 - Student difficulties were related to alcohol and drug abuse in FNMI homes.

- Some student difficulties were related to personal alcohol and drug use.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants described stories they had heard about FNMI students' victimization by adults who abused alcohol and drugs.
 - Some students were described as possible abusers themselves.
- Consequence
 - Participants expected FNMI students to perform poorly if there was an indication of alcohol or drug use in their home.
 - Participants often reported poor student performance when describing alcohol or drug use in the home of the student.

Family Influence Context #3:

Participants perceived acts of violence perpetrated upon the student, witnessed by the student or committed by the student as being deleterious to their education.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants described instances of violence in the homes of some FNMI students.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants told stories of FNMI students being witnesses to violence.
 - Participants related experiences of their FNMI students being victims of violence.

- Participants described some FNMI students as being violent outside the school.
- Participants described some FNMI students being violent at the school.
- Consequence
 - Participants explained low student performance in school as being a result of the violence in some FNMI students' lives.

Family Influence Context #4:

Participants perceived that the level of parental support contributed to the students' success or failure.

- Intervening Condition
 - Parental support for FNMI students was related to student performance.
- Action/Interaction
 - Parental support for FNMI students was generally described as inadequate.
 - Parents of FNMI students were described as willfully unsupportive.
 - Parents of FNMI students were perceived by teachers as not knowing how to support student success.
- Consequence

- Parents of FNMI students were perceived as contributing to their children being less successful in school than the mainstream non-FNMI students.

Phenomenon of Teacher as Rescuer

The synthesis of four contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the teacher as rescuer phenomenon has emerged.

Table 12

The phenomenon of Teacher as Rescuer in Context

Phenomenon	Context
Teacher as rescuer	<p>Teachers perceived themselves as rescuing the FNMI student from a variety of negative influences.</p> <p>Participants credited themselves with different levels of rescue.</p> <p>The participants focused on their personal involvement with the FNMI student.</p> <p>The participants described and valued the length and intensity of the personal relationship with the FNMI student.</p>

Teacher as Rescuer Context #1:

Teachers perceived themselves as rescuing the FNMI student from a variety of negative influences.

- Intervening Condition
 - • FNMI students were perceived as being at risk in their homes and at previous schools.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants accepted FNMI students into their schools and classes.

- Participants regarded their classrooms as superior to FNMI students' previous circumstances, regardless of which school the student attended previously.
- Consequence
 - The participants perceived their role as primarily rescuing FNMI students, and secondarily providing an educational program.

Teacher as Rescuer Context #2:

Participants credited themselves with different levels of rescue influence.

- Intervening Condition
 - FNMI students entering public off-reserve schools lacked the social skills and academic skills of other students presently attending the participants' school.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants related teaching appropriate school social skills to FNMI students.
 - Participants regarded their role as teacher of life skills before curriculum.
 - Participants expressed a desire to take the FNMI children to their own home in order to care for them.
 - Participants expressed a desire to adopt the FNMI child.
- Consequence
 - Teachers related FNMI success in terms of interaction with the participant.

Teacher as Rescuer Context #3:

The participants focused on their personal involvement with the FNMI student.

Intervening Condition

- Participants expressed a need to develop a personal relationship with the FNMI student.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants reported experiences that developed a personal relationship with an FNMI student.
 - Participants related interactions with the FNMI student outside the classroom.
- Consequence
 - Participants reported their success in terms of positive responses from FNMI students.

Teacher as Rescuer Context #4:

The participants described and valued the length and intensity of the personal relationship with the FNMI student.

- Intervening Condition
 - • Participants perceived the FNMI student as being initially disconnected from the mainstream milieu of their school and classroom.
- Action/Interaction

- The teachers interacted with the students to build a solid student/teacher relationship.
- Teachers strove to meet the physical, emotional and educational needs of the FNMI students.
- Consequence
 - Participants frequently referred to lasting friendships and good relations with the FNMI students that lasted beyond the years the participants were in the classroom teacher role.

Phenomenon of Academic Performance

The synthesis of two contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the academic performance phenomenon has emerged.

Table 13

The phenomenon of Academic Performance in Context

Phenomenon	Context
Academic Performance	The participants described poor academic performance as the norm for FNMI students.
	Participants described unfulfilled potential for FNMI students.

Academic Performance Context #1:

The participants described poor academic performance as the norm for FNMI students.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants expressed low academic expectations for FNMI students.
- Action/Interaction

- Most participants described FNMI academic achievement in terms of remedial experiences.
- When describing an FNMI student who had high achievement, participants expressed surprise.
- Consequence
 - When describing generally low achievement, participants also described compensatory behavior such as good personality or athletic ability.

Academic Performance Context #2:

Participants described unfulfilled potential for FNMI students.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants stated that FNMI students' potential was adversely affected by the circumstances of their lives such as violence, substance abuse and lack of parental support.
- Action/Interaction
 - FNMI students were given remedial work by participants.
 - Participants lowered expectations for FNMI students.
 - Some participants expressed surprise when FNMI students' achievement was high.
- Consequence
 - FNMI students did not achieve to the same level as non-FNMI students.

Phenomenon of School Procedures

The synthesis of two contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the school procedures phenomenon has emerged.

Table 14

The phenomenon of School procedures in Context

Phenomenon	Context
School Procedures	The participants viewed FNMI work habits as unsatisfactory.
	The poor attendance of FNMI students was a common description.

School procedures Context #1:

The participants viewed FNMI work habits as unsatisfactory.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants reported that FNMI students did not complete assignments.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants reported trying to motivate FNMI students.
 - Participants reported surprise when FNMI students had higher achievement in spite of not completing tasks.
- Consequence
 - Teachers expressed a desire for parents to support students by helping them complete homework assignments.

School procedures Context #2:

The poor attendance of FNMI students was a common description.

- Intervening Condition

- Participants reported that most FNMI students had lower attendance rates than non-FNMI students.
- Action/Interaction
 - Some FNMI students had poor attendance, which affected their school performance.
 - FNMI students were reportedly held back and/or suspended from school.
 - FNMI students dropped out of school due to poor attendance.
 - Participants placed responsibility for poor attendance on parents.
- Consequence
 - Participants expected low achievement from FNMI students related to the student's poor attendance.

Phenomenon of Student Attitude

The synthesis of two contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the student attitude phenomenon has emerged.

Table 15

The phenomenon of Student Attitude in Context

Phenomenon	Context
Student Attitude	Participants described student to teacher school attitude as an Important factor.
	Participants focused on students' attitude towards self.

Student Attitude Context #1:

Participants described student to teacher/school attitude as an important factor.

Intervening Condition

- Some FNMI students were described as having negative attitudes towards their schools and teachers. Most participants, however, did not report negative attitude as a frequent occurrence at school.
- Action/Interaction
 - Occasionally, FNMI students would “talk back” or be “lippy” with their teacher.
 - Most FNMI students did not reveal their emotions to the teacher or the class.
- Consequence
 - Negative student attitude was not an important factor in the stories told by the participants.

Student Attitude Context #2:

Participants focused on students’ attitude towards self.

- Intervening Condition
 - Some FNMI students felt persecuted by their school, their teacher or by society.
- Action/Interaction
 - FNMI students complain that actions towards them are racially motivated, when perhaps they were not.
 - FNMI students told teacher that they did not trust non-FNMI people.

- Consequence
- Participants described a distance between FNMI students and their non-FNMI peers and teachers.

Phenomenon of Class Participation

The synthesis of three contexts provides an explanatory framework from which the family influences phenomenon has emerged.

Table 16

The Phenomenon of Class participation in Context

Phenomenon	Context
Class Participation	<p>Participants perceived FNMI students as less willing to participate in class than white students.</p> <p>Participants described a relationship between FNMI participation And the number of FNMI students in the class.</p> <p>Participants perceived FNMI students as more willing to interact with other FNMI students in a smaller group setting.</p>

Class Participation Context #1:

Participants perceived FNMI students as less willing to participate in class than non-FNMI students.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants reported that FNMI students rarely volunteered to participate in class discussions.
- Action/Interaction
 - FNMI students did not raise their hands to indicate their readiness to offer a comment.

- Participants reported that when most FNMI students did participate, it was often not in an orderly or appropriate manner.
- FNMI students tended to hold back comments and were not willing to stand out in class.
- When some FNMI students were called upon by the teacher, they were more likely to respond if they were given the opportunity to talk to the teacher quietly, as in a conversation.
- Consequence
 - Participants reported making extra effort to include FNMI students in class discussions.

Class Participation Context #2:

Participants described a relationship between FNMI participation and the number of FNMI students in the class.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants reported that FNMI students would participate to a greater extent if there were a majority of FNMI students in the class.
- Action/Interaction
 - FNMI students would interact with other FNMI students if given a choice between non-FNMI peers and FNMI peers.
 - During class, FNMI students were reported to visit freely with each other but not willingly with non-FNMI students.
- Consequence

- Participants reported that integration between FNMI and non-FNMI students broke down as the number of FNMI students increased.

Class Participation Context #3:

Participants perceived FNMI students as more willing to interact with other FNMI students in a smaller group setting.

- Intervening Condition
 - Participants described FNMI students as being more talkative with peers if the size of the group was smaller than a regular class.
- Action/Interaction
 - Participants described FNMI students visiting and chatting within a small group of other FNMI students, but becoming shy and less talkative when called upon in front of the entire class.
 - Participants reported FNMI students became more willing to participate in small groups if there were other FNMI students in the group.
- Consequence
 - Participants reported being careful in dividing classes into groups for academic or athletic activities. They tried to make sure that some FNMI and non-FNMI students were in each group.

The axial coding process identified the causal condition of this research: “having FNMI students in the classroom.” An examination of the causal condition led to the identification of six phenomena. The relationship of each phenomenon to the data was

examined to identify the (a) context, (b) intervening conditions, (c) actions/interactions and (d) the ultimate consequences of that particular phenomenon. Breaking down the context of individual phenomenon and looking for relationships between the different phenomena is called re-contextualization by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Thus far the coding process has examined the data in detail, looking for relationships to provide a better understanding of the properties and their dimensions. Open coding revealed emerging categories and properties. Axial coding then led to a deeper and richer understanding of the properties of the original six categories, referred to as phenomena in the axial coding process. By relating the related phenomena to their contexts and actions, axial coding has led to a conceptual understanding of the consequences of those phenomena. The next section, selective coding, moved from a description of the phenomena to conceptualization of the theory. The selective coding process recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998) resulted in a narrative that was “used to facilitate identification of the central category and the integration of concepts” (p. 148).

Selective Coding

During the selective coding process, the categories developed in open and axial coding were integrated and refined. The ultimate goal of selective coding was to develop a core category that showed the interrelationship of the various categories outlined in the open and axial coding processes. Strauss and Corbin (1998) pointed out that initially, abstract concepts are identified. These concepts represented individual stories, but as the stories were reduced into and represented by conceptual terms they were compared to others' stories. By comparing the data from several sources and seeking similarities, the

data “should have relevance for and be applicable to all cases in the study” (p. 145). By examining the details included in each category, the case differences and variations within each category emerged.

The core category that emerged is important as it explains the relationships between the related categories. This is a powerful analytic tool, revealing the power of the study. The analysis of the qualitative data began with a micro view, during open and axial coding, and progressed to a macro view that is the foundation of the selective coding phase of the analysis.

The following section: “Perceptions of Teachers of FNMI Students”, identified the interrelationships between the core category and the six phenomena. A story line presented in a narrative format, articulated these interrelationships. By describing the story line a theory grounded in the data was formulated. The story line contained the context of each phenomenon. The concepts related to the phenomena are shown in bold type.

Perception of Teachers of FNMI Students

The teachers in this study described a three-way connection between the **FNMI student’s home, the school, and the teacher** themselves. These connections were seen as a key causal relationship to student **performance**. The teachers viewed the **home-life** of FNMI students as key detractor to the success of the FNMI student. Although the teacher themselves reported that they rarely, if ever visited the homes of their FNMI students, they did report stories related to them by the students.

The participants recognized the challenges that FNMI students face due to **family dynamics**. The **school** and particularly the **teacher** themselves were seen as **positive**,

compensating influences for the FNMI students. The school where the teacher worked was reported by the participants as being **superior** to the schools previously attended by the FNMI student. This was especially true when referring to a reserve school. This perception also included, to a lesser degree, other non-FNMI schools that the student may have attended.

The FNMI tradition of extended families living together was seen as bringing distractions into the students' lives. **Other adults** living in the home were perceived to bring **negative and dangerous influences** into the lives of the FNMI students. Sometimes uncles, older cousins and siblings were perceived as **abusing drugs and alcohol**.

When talking about **alcohol or drug abuse** in the student's home, teachers perceived the FNMI student as either a **victim or an abuser** themselves. The teachers were confident in expressing their concern that the **adults in some homes were abusing the children through their drug and alcohol consumption**. However, the teachers were more guarded in expressing their suspicions that the students themselves were abusing these substances. The teachers perceived the family influence of **violence** as a substantial factor in the **failure of FNMI students in school**. The teachers' stories related instances of **students witnessing violence**, being **actual victims of the violence** or in a few instances the **student was a perpetrator of violent acts**. Again, these stories were **connected to negative family influences that resulted in student failure** at school. **According to the teachers, instances of violence in the FNMI students' homes affected student attendance, homework and performance in a deleterious manner.**

Given the bleak descriptions of FNMI students' lives outside school, it is not surprising that **teachers viewed themselves** as being the **influence that could rescue** these students. One of the first **rescue strategies** described was in simply allowing the students to register in the school. Even though the school principal had ultimate responsibility for who is admitted to a school, the teachers claimed some **influence in encouraging the principal to admit** these students into the school.

The **new school environment** was also seen as an **agent of rescue**. Teachers described **FNMI parents pleading for admission for their children**. The **reserve schools** were perceived as being **environments of violence, bullying and inadequate teaching by the teacher**. **The teachers related stories of parents worried about these same concerns**. **Students who were admitted** were most often portrayed as **becoming better students** once they started attending the participant teacher's school. Some FNMI students were described as **becoming outstanding students as a result of their new school**. Participants even described students stating a desire for a change for the better in attending the public school.

Teachers spoke of a **personal role in the rescue of FNMI students**. At times the stories contained within the data were more about the teacher than about the FNMI student. The teachers related various strategies used to overcome the deficiencies in the FNMI students' background. They afforded the student **extra attention**. The students were given **extra chances** for both **academic activities** as well as for **discipline problems**. The participants were passionate about their **role as personal rescuers**. **Individual FNMI students attracted the attention of some of the participants**. Either their personality or their appearance brought them to the teachers' attention. Then, after

taking a personal interest in the student, **participants expressed a strong desire to help the student**, even to the **extreme measure of trying to adopt the child**. Teachers **perceived themselves and their classroom as safe places for the FNMI child**. Both male and female participants discussed these strong rescuing tendencies.

Teachers did not limit their concern for the FNMI student to the classroom. They not only **took an interest in the student outside of school**, but also **kept track of the FNMI students for years after they left the school**. Or if they lost track of the student, they also mentioned this as if it were a **failing on the part of the participant**. Teachers expressed pride in the **length of the relationship that they had maintained with an FNMI student**, even when the relationship was casual and interaction was very limited.

The participants generally **perceived FNMI achievement as being lower than the non-FNMI students**. Teachers had to **accommodate** this low achievement with **extra attention, specialized programming and severe measures** including **retention and mid-year grade changes**. There was **very little expectation** from the participants that the FNMI students would achieve at grade level.

Participants did share stories about an **FNMI student with high achievement**, but described their **surprise regarding this student's success**. Justifications were given for this unexpected achievement. In some cases, the **participants took the credit for the achievement**, either directly or by ascribing the success to their school. This relates to the **rescuing tendencies** described earlier.

The participants stated that **FNMI students transferring from other schools** were **missing important key concepts**. These **gaps in knowledge and skills** were **attributed to inadequate schools and instruction** in the students' previous

circumstances. The teachers did not describe the students as being incompetent, but rather, described them as being **ill prepared to succeed in a public education setting**. The student's **low achievement** was perceived to be the **result of deficiencies** in their previous education **rather than the inherent abilities of the student**.

The participants expressed concern with the **unfilled potential** of the FNMI student. The teachers' expressed their perception that **FNMI students were capable of achievement**, if only given the right circumstances at home and at school. The teachers worked hard to prepare students only to be **stymied by lack of student attention in class, failure to do homework and reluctance to complete classroom assignments**. Then when an FNMI student did well on a test, the teacher was reinforced in their perception that the **students were capable but unwilling**. The **unfulfilled potential of FNMI students** was also **attributed to violence** in the home, **drug and alcohol abuse** in the home and in the case of older students, **personal drug and alcohol abuse**. The participants also talked about **peer pressure from other FNMI students** that held some promising students back. The teachers' stories uncovered efforts to get the FNMI students to ignore these pressures and concentrate on success in school. Another **obstacle to achieving their potential was poor attendance** that diverted the attention of students away from school. Teachers had to contend with **extreme family circumstances** in trying to help their FNMI students.

When the participants talked about FNMI student work habits, they related this as an **undertaking of the teacher rather than the student**. The teachers described **feelings of guilt** when they could not motivate the students to complete classroom assignments. When **they were able to motivate the student** to complete tasks in class, this was

verification for their perception of the teachers' role as rescuer. Teachers **struggled to keep the attention of the FNMI student focused** on classroom tasks. They described FNMI students as easily distracted, moving about the room and refusing to stay seated. Teachers again, expressed **surprise when students scored well on tests**, since to the teachers view, the student was not paying attention or not doing the work.

The teachers most commonly **viewed FNMI student work habits as unsatisfactory.** Particularly in the younger grades, **FNMI student attention to task was poorly developed.** The participants stated the **cause** of this as **poor preparation in the home.** Students were **not read to, books were not available, parents were not capable** of providing a proper foundation for school.

Another key description of school performance was **poor attendance** at school. The teachers mentioned poor attendance in nearly every instance of FNMI student stories. **Responsibility** for this was placed directly on the **parents** by the teachers in the study. This is in contrast to the feelings of personal guilt teachers expressed in **failing to motivate students** to do class work. Teachers explained that **parents did not understand** the necessity of **regular attendance.** Often stories of FNMI students included contrasts by expressing belief in the **potential** of the student and then that potential being **devastated by poor attendance.** The **connection between potential and attendance** was strongly perceived by most of the participants.

The **expectation of poor attendance** was common among nearly all the participants. The participants used attendance expectations to guide their decisions for admission to their class or their school. They expressed reluctance to accept students they thought would have **poor attendance.** The participants that described an **FNMI student**

with good attendance, explained that the probable reason for this good attendance was such things as **pitiful circumstances** at home, which drove the student to attend regularly.

Students' attitudes towards themselves were a matter of concern. Participants were **reluctant to report direct feelings of persecution** felt by the FNMI students. When they did it was in the context of a later interaction with that student. Usually, this type of disclosure was also **connected to a life changing experience in the school** for the FNMI student. The most obvious **demonstration of student feelings of persecution** seemed to occur when groups of students were organized to participate in sports or even when the teacher tried to arrange the students in class. Then the teacher would have to deal with **FNMI students' accusations** that the teams or groups were **organized according to race**.

The teachers were quick to point out that they did not view the FNMI students any differently than the non-FNMI students in their classes. They were **defensive** at the notion that they might have **racist feelings**. The teachers reported how they diffused these types of situations and reassured the students that all students were the same to them. The **teachers also defended their neutral beliefs** to other adults.

The participants found that **FNMI students were less willing to participate** in the manner expected in a public school classroom. This **expectation of participation** included **vocal discussions, group work projects, offering opinions and responding to questions**. Teachers had to call on FNMI students, since they would not raise their hands. The participants provided **contradictory description for student participation**. On the one hand FNMI students were reluctant to participate by raising their hands, yet they

were also described as not waiting for their turn and shouting out answers out of turn. The teachers did report that through their influence, students showed progress in following classroom procedures over the course of the year that the students were in their class.

But overall, the teachers felt that **FNMI students were more quiet, shy and unwilling to put themselves in front of the class**. The only exception to this occurred when the FNMI students were grouped together and then they would be **more vocal, and discuss within the group**. However, the students were still **reluctant to participate in front of the class**. Teachers reported that often they could not get a verbal response but had to **contend with non-verbal responses** such as shrugs.

Creswell (1998) described how the narrative engages the reader; “Another technique is to narrow and expand the focus, evoking the metaphor of a camera lens that pans out, zooms in, then zooms out again” (p. 169). As the analysis focused on the raw data, categories or themes became evident. These themes were then examined from a new perspective, metaphorically widening the zoom of the camera. Finally, the camera was once again focused on specific themes that related back to the original data. This gave rise to the identification of the core category described in the following section.

Core Category

The analysis of the data from this study has led to the identification of a core category. This core category is called “Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Faced by FNMI Students in Public Schools.” According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the core category has “analytic power” (p. 146). That is, the core category helps to “pull all the other categories together to form an explanatory whole” (p. 146). Thus the core category

is related to the following six subcategories: a) family influences, b) teacher as rescuer, c) academics, d) school procedures, e) student attitude, and f) class participation. Each of these subcategories, in turn, is related to the others.

Subcategories

In the following section the interrelationships between each subcategory are briefly examined. Under their individual headings each of the subcategories was related to the core category and the other subcategories.

Family Influences. This subcategory served as a description of the setting from which the FNMI students come to school. The interrelationship with the “Teacher as Rescuer” subcategory was the most pronounced. It was from the home setting that many of the participants felt that the students needed to be rescued. The descriptions of home situations were entwined in nearly every story related in this study. Another strong interrelationship was with the “School procedures” subcategory. The absenteeism reported was perceived largely as a failure of the family to deliver the children to school. To a lesser degree, the students’ unwillingness to participate in an open fashion was also attributed to lack of proper stimulation in the home and blamed on cultural differences.

Teacher as Rescuer. The strong feelings expressed by the participants in this subcategory, were related to every other subcategory. As previously mentioned, the participants felt a strong need to academically, socially, emotionally and physically rescue the children from their home experiences. The subcategories of “Academic Performance” and “School procedures” were also closely related to this category. The participants expressed a desire to improve on previous academic experiences the students had in other schools. They described having to teach the students to pay attention, finish

homework and other common school behaviors because the previous school or teachers had not prepared the students for success in school activities.

Academic Performance. Since academic success is so central to the purpose of school, this category was strongly interrelated with the other subcategories. FNMI students were perceived to have below average academic ability. Teachers reported that FNMI students' achievement was lower than the non-FNMI students in their classes. As they told stories of this low achievement, the other subcategories were cited as reasons.

School procedures. The FNMI student behavior was described as unsatisfactory. One main area of concern was high absenteeism. The particular behavior was significantly interrelated with “Family Influences” and “Academic Performance”. The family was seen as the reason behind the multiple absences while the absences themselves were seen as a significant cause of poor academic success. The subcategory of “Student Attitude” was seen as a less powerful relationship but connected nonetheless. Students were described as being more motivated to focus on FNMI peers than on school tasks. This same line of reasoning also connects “School procedures” with “Class Participation”. As the FNMI student missed so much school, they would fall behind and this led to reluctance to participate in class.

Student Attitude. Although student attitude was seen as an important factor, it did not rise to the level of concern of the previous sub-categories. Its effects were subtly interwoven throughout the study, but more as an element of the backdrop, rather than an overarching influence. The most prominent feature of “Student Attitude” was in the perception that FNMI students were more at risk as a result of their self-perception attitudes than they were from outward negative attitude towards the school or the teacher.

Class Participation. As previously stated, this subcategory, was seen as a result of “Family Influences”, “Academic Performance” and “School procedures”. Students were at a disadvantage because of these three factors and thus did not wish to put themselves at further risk by publicly and openly participating during class.

Chapter Summary

The procedures of qualitative inquiry, and specifically the grounded theory approach, consisting of open coding, axial coding and selective coding were applied to the data in this study. This data was collected during a series of semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers over a period of three months. During the open coding process, initial themes emerged. These themes were then de-contextualized during the axial coding process. As relationships emerged the data segments were re-contextualized in the latter stages of axial coding. The axial coding process ultimately identified six phenomena with their related components.

Then the phenomena were subjected to a selective coding analysis. As the selective coding progressed, a core category emerged from the phenomena identified during the axial coding stage. These phenomena are referred to as “subcategories” of the “core category”. Interrelationships between the core category and the subcategories create a foundation for the grounded theory. A narrative report then concluded the selective coding stage of analysis. This narrative articulated the grounded theory and is called: “Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Faced by FNMI students in Public Schools”.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, summarizes the findings of this study derived from the open, axial and selective coding procedures. The findings will be presented to

answer the central question of this study: What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students?

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY, PROPOSITIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has used a qualitative research design to examine the perceptions of non-First Nations Métis and Inuit teachers about their FNMI students. Qualitative research is inductive in nature, as theories evolve from the data. Such is the case in this research. The strength of the qualitative paradigm lies in its ability to allow the researcher to explore data from a widely diverse population and still be able to identify specific interrelating phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained: “by the very act of naming phenomena, we fix continuing attention on them” (p. 102). They explained that after we have fixed our attention we begin to ask pertinent questions; “Such questions not only enable us to systematically specify what we see, but when they take the form of hypotheses or propositions, they suggest how phenomena might possibly be related to each other” (p. 102).

The inductive process of data analysis allowed a core category to emerge from the relationships between various categories. The core category “Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Faced by FNMI students in Public Schools,” is a product of an analysis of the phenomena, which Strauss and Corbin (1998) call subcategories. These “subcategories” of the “core” category include (a) Family Influences, (b) Teacher as Rescuer, (c) Academics, (d) School procedures, (e) Student Attitude and (f) Participation. Chapter Five summarized the findings from Chapter Four. The summary in Chapter Five also answers the central question and sub-questions posed which guided this study. Additionally, Chapter Five suggests implications for practitioners in the field of education and finally describes implications for further study. This holistic perspective

provides an enriched understanding of the interrelationships that exist between the categories that emerged from a thorough analysis of the data.

Chapter Five begins with a description of the process of developing a grounded theory by seeking patterns through an analysis of the data. Then these patterns or relationships were examined using a micro-to-macro analytic model. Strauss and Corbin (1998) described the initial microanalysis as the “detailed line by line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study” (p. 57). The purpose of the initial analysis was to generate the categories and build the foundation upon which the relationships unfold. The second section of Chapter Five explores the central question that guided the study. The supporting sub-questions are also related to the data in support of the central question. This section also examines the interrelationships in light of the supporting literature. The third section discusses the propositions described by Creswell (1998). These propositions resulted from the microanalysis of the data and as they unfolded during the selective coding, a macro view of the central question emerged. The relationships of these propositions to the literature are also included in this section. Chapter Five concludes with implications for practitioners as well as suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Chapter Four Findings

The data analyzed in Chapter Four came from the interviews with fifteen classroom teachers, each of whom had FNMI students in their classes. Although the individual teachers shared unique experiences, the data revealed common themes. These common themes formed the basis of the analysis in the following sections.

Holistic Analysis

The purpose of the grounded theory study is to generate a theory that emerges from an analysis of social data obtained from interviews or observations of social behavior. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained this process, whereby the theory is not predicted as a hypothesis before the data is collected. They proposed, rather, patiently letting the data lead the researcher to a conclusion: “A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data“ (p. 12). Strauss and Corbin (1998) further revealed the strength of grounded theory when they stated: “Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (p. 12). This particular grounded theory study involved the qualitative processes of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These analysis procedures as outlined and described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were fully articulated in Chapter Four.

During the open coding phase, six categories emerged from the data. After subjecting the data and categories to a rigorous analysis during axial and selective coding, a seventh core category emerged that is closely interrelated to the original six categories. The core category was identified as “Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges Faced by FNMI students in Public Schools”. This core category interrelated closely with the following six subcategories: (a) Family Influences, (b) Teacher as Rescuer, (c) Academics, (d) Attention to Tasks, (e) Student Attitude and (f) Participation. These categories together formed the framework of the grounded theory presented in Chapter Four.

Exploration of the Central Question and Sub-questions

According to Creswell (1998), central questions are “open-ended, evolving and non-directional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms” (p. 99). Creswell (1998) recommended that the central question be as open-ended and broad as possible in order that the researcher is not limited in focus or view. The focus of the central question narrows through the postulation of supporting sub-questions. In a grounded theory study these sub-questions can be posed as aspects of the coding steps suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998); these coding steps are referred to as open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

The following central question set forth the overarching focus of this qualitative study.

- What do the shared stories of teachers, in predominately non-FNMI public schools, tell us about their perception of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students?

The sub-questions focused an examination of the data on the perception of teacher and the affect that perception has on the actions and attitudes of the teachers. The following section refers to these sub-questions, which were developed to assist in illuminating the perceptions that teachers have regarding First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. These coding processes were described previously and articulated in depth during Chapter Four. The first sub-question addresses how FNMI students are represented in stories related by their non-FNMI teachers.

How are FNMI students represented in classroom stories as told by their teacher?

The participants in this study happened to be non-FNMI although that was not a criterion of participation. As these non-FNMI teachers told stories regarding their FNMI students,

they were generally positive in their description of the relationship they had with the students. While there were no overt racial descriptions or language, there were multiple instances of prejudicial thinking, prejudicial attitudes. The tone of the description was more of concern and less of a racist nature. Even as the participants described some horrendous situations involving the students, they managed to maintain a sympathetic, caring and sometimes over solicitous attitude.

FNMI students were usually described as achieving lower academically than non-FNMI students, but the participants of this study ascribed this to environmental factors and experience rather than ability. The participants were most likely to attribute poor achievement to factors outside the students' abilities and control. In fact, FNMI students were often described as bright even though their achievement was described in a negative manner. This paradoxical description was a common occurrence throughout most of the interviews.

From the perspective of the teachers in this study, students were represented as victims of their culture. It might be proposed that the First Nations culture is not the factor that made the victims of the students, rather, socio-economic conditions, alcoholism or violence of some individuals were the victimizing factors. These negative influences are not limited to any particular culture and should not represent any particular culture.

Again, these representations were described by the teachers in kindly terms, without anger or racist tones. In many cases the students were described as being "cute", "great athlete", "great personality". The teachers were looking to present the children in a positive light even though the reality of the child's life might be very tragic.

How do teachers describe their interaction with FNMI students as compared to non-FNMI students? The teachers in this study generally told more positive stories when talking specifically about non-FNMI students. The life stories related of non-FNMI students were more connected to the teacher's own background. As an example, teachers told of community interactions and church congregational interactions with the non-FNMI students. These interactions were described as background for the success of the non-FNMI student.

On the other hand, teachers described few interactions with the FNMI student outside the school. With this limited opportunity to interact with the students, the teachers did not have an understanding of the FNMI culture or the life experiences that shaped those students. As a result of this lack of understanding, the teachers tended to discount the value of the FNMI culture and lifestyle.

In what ways is the teacher's espoused theory of their interactions with FNMI students, in the follow-up interview, consistent with the theory in use about the FNMI student in the first phase of the data collection? When this question was first postulated, it was assumed that the teachers might mask their real perceptions of FNMI students in the open interviews. Then the follow-up questions were intended to bring out the true feelings and attitudes of the teachers. Even though the teachers were sincere about their perceptions, differences in espoused theory from theory in use became evident early on during the story-telling in phase I and then were further illuminated during the interviews.

Teachers were eager to state that they thought that FNMI students were the same in their eyes as non-FNMI students. Even when the researcher did not ask specifically about this, teachers volunteered this notion. This occurred especially during the interview

portion of the study in phase II. As soon as the subject realized that the focus of the study was on the FNMI students in their class. It was evident in a few cases, that the teacher was suspicious of the intentions of the research and wanted to make it absolutely clear that they were not prejudiced or racist. Even though the previous stories had not revealed blatantly racist thinking, the subjects still felt compelled to defend themselves against imagined accusations.

One difference exposed between the espoused theory and the theory in use came in the description of FNMI student potential and ability. Participants readily and frequently attested that FNMI students had potential and ability. Then they proceeded to describe students underachieving and students unable to complete homework. The teachers usually placed the blame for this on someone or somewhere else: the parents, the home, and the previous school. Rarely did the teacher assign ownership of the students' problems solely to the student. This dichotomy of thought revealed the difference in espoused theory and theory in use articulated by Argyris (1974, 1999).

Many of the subjects stated that the FNMI students were really the same as the non-FMNI students. This espoused theory was contradicted in the same story or in the subsequent interview, over and over. The participant's theory-in-use described FNMI students as not cooperating in a group work in the same way as non-FNMI students. The teachers' stories told of FNMI students becoming less integrated as their numbers grew in the school. Gang behavior was described for FNMI students and not for non-FNMI students.

Ironically, subjects routinely reported that FNMI families were not equipped to prepare FNMI students for school. Not only that, according to the participants, the FNMI

families did not possess the skills necessary to support their children in non-FNMI schools. This espoused theory belies the reality that many FNMI children do succeed in school. The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework (2002), reported that 50-70% of FNMI students in public schools met the acceptable standard on Provincial Achievement Tests. One of the high schools in the area encompassed by this study had three of the previous four valedictorians from the FNMI population. So, while there is an academic deficiency for FNMI students as a group, individual FNMI students have achieved very successfully. The participants of this study, however, focus on the short term actions of the moment rather than looking at the complete picture of the FNMI student.

Teachers' espoused theories regarding attendance were shared by most of the participants. According to their stories, FNMI children miss a lot of school, much more than non-FNMI children. Poor attendance was given as a primary reason for low achievement and student misbehavior. The subjects' theory in use in this case, was the same as their espoused theory. One school's records showed that over half of the FNMI students miss more than 20 school days per year. The converse of this is that nearly half of FNMI students have normal attendance. Once again, this shows that FNMI students as a group have lower attendance than other students, but individual students can have exemplary attendance habits.

In summary, participating teachers' espoused theory of FNMI students was distinctly different from their theory in use. They showed a tendency to over-generalize characteristics of a small number of FNMI students to include all FNMI students. When questioned about this discrepancy, teachers stated that they thought the researcher would

be interested in extreme cases, or that the extreme cases stood out. Nonetheless, the teachers were given wide latitude in choosing students to talk about, and almost invariably they chose the extreme cases, which were usually negative depictions of FNMI students.

What standards of achievement are expected of FNMI students by their teachers as compared to non-FNMI students? Subjects in this study collectively related stories of underachievement by FNMI students. Some teachers, having taught for more than 20 years talked about FNMI students throughout their careers being underachievers or at least achieving below the norm and definitely below the achievement level of non-FNMI students. Subjects related their expectations that FNMI students would not achieve at an average level, especially if they transferred in from a reserve Native school. Although a few students were described as being academically bright, the teacher hinted that credit for this achievement belonged to the teacher or at least to the non-FNMI school. One subject related the success of an FNMI student on a test and expressed great surprise at this achievement as if high achievement was not an expectation for FNMI students.

When describing the potential for achievement of FNMI students, the teachers generally predicted lower achievement than for non-FNMI students. They listed many factors that would stand in the way of FNMI students realizing success in school. Factors such as drug use, victimization, poor attendance and inadequate home environments were all cited as reasons why FNMI students would not be able to achieve success in school to the same high degree as non-FNMI students.

What standards of behavior do teachers describe for their FNMI students? The FNMI students described in this study were seen by their non-FNMI teachers as not

understanding the expectations for behavior that non-FNMI children had learned prior to coming to school. Young students were described as not being able to wait for their turn, not staying on task, and not being able to stay at their desks. FNMI students were also seen by their non-FNMI teachers as being more aggressive, especially in the middle to junior high grades.

Teachers described discipline experiences differently from FNMI to non-FNMI students. When FNMI students were involved in a discipline situation, there was a lack of understanding of “the way we do things at this school”. According to the participating teachers, FNMI students did not seem to be able to change behavior without more extreme actions such as suspensions and expulsions. On the other hand, the non-FNMI student could be talked to or their parents could be appealed to in most cases for a successful resolution.

Teachers in this study did report that FNMI students were respectful of teachers and the other adults in the school. This was attributed to a cultural tradition of respect for elders. Most stories of serious aggressive misbehavior by FNMI students were directed at other students and rarely at the teacher. FNMI students were also seen as more likely to break rules when they were supported by FNMI peers.

Holistic Analysis Related to the Literature

The central question and its subsequent sub-questions were answered through the analysis of the data in this study. The purpose of this section is to relate the literature in Chapter Two of the study to the synthesis of the data examined in the holistic analysis. As stated in Chapter Two, it was difficult to find specific literature regarding First Nations students.

The perceptions reported by the subjects in this study regarding negative family influences are supported by the work of Barton (2004). In his work on the achievement gap, Barton suggested 14 factors that affected school achievement. The teachers in this study described two of those factors: (a) mobility and (b) parent reading to the child in the home. Barton's findings revealed that children “whose parents or caregivers read to them when they were young gain a considerable advantage in terms of language acquisition, literacy development, achievement in reading comprehension and general success in school” (p. 9). A final comparison can be made with Barton’s postulations, as the teachers described the great mobility of FNMI students. Nearly all of the FNMI students moved from a reserve school to a public school at least once in their first nine years of school. Many of these students moved multiple times. Barton pointed out that “frequent school changes scored lower on school tests. Poor students and students from single parent homes had the highest school-changing rates” (p. 10). This description of the effects of high mobility is mirrored by the descriptions of the teachers interviewed for this study. Not only did the teachers report FNMI students changing schools frequently, but also the students moved from home to home as different relatives became temporary guardians.

Cavanaugh, Schiller and Reigle-Crumb (2006) related evidence that supports these conclusions in the area of family influences. The teacher as rescuer concept revealed in this study has also been referred to by Betsinger, Garcia and Guerra (2004). This was further supported by the work of Rowenthal and Jacobson (1968) in their work on teacher’s beliefs correlating with student performance. Huff’s work (1998) supported the finding of teachers being reluctant to discuss their racial attitudes. FNMI student

academic achievement findings are reinforced by the work of Gallagher (2004), Pauls (1984), Makokis, P. (2000) and Makokis, L. (2001). They refer to the effect that the residential schools have had on family breakdown, thereby giving credence to the perceptions of the teachers in this study regarding the inability of FNMI families to support their children in school. These authors, as reported in Chapter Two, describe lower academic achievement as one result of this effect. Little Soldier's (1989, 1997) findings supported the evidence found in this study regarding FNMI isolation in public schools and the disconnect that parents and school experience.

An important author to this study is Helms (1990, 1992) who has described two major themes regarding racist attitudes. Helms' findings supported the conclusions being drawn in this present study. One of the themes related to abandoning a racist ideology. She describes three levels of behavior that have a bearing on this research. Some participants interviewed for this study displayed a sense of disintegration in that they had a conflicted awareness of the disproportionate presence of racism in society. Other participants conveyed a sense of reintegration. They showed a passive belief in the superiority of the non-FNMI in the school culture.

Helms' second theme, related to developing a non-racist white identity. This theme was revealed as subjects explained their behavior and attitudes regarding developing a positive non-racist identity as a non-FNMI teacher. Helms three levels within this theme are hierarchical. The stories related by the subjects as well as the follow-up interview responses showed that most of the subjects are at the first level: pseudo-independence. The subjects seemed to be aware of racial injustice, but

unintentionally perpetuated the belief in non-FNMI superiority. They demonstrated a lack of understanding that non-FNMI criteria are not universal.

Propositions

This study has resulted in three propositions that will be discussed in the next section: (a) Teachers' perception of FNMI student culture as preparation for school, (b) Teachers' self-perception as rescuers, and (c) Teachers building a racial identity. These propositions result from the holistic analysis of the reported data, which evolved from the qualitative processes of open, axial and selective coding.

Teachers' Perception of FNMI Student Culture as Preparation for School

The students described in this study come from the Blood Indian Reserve. They and their families are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, a historical alliance between the Blood, Peigan and Blackfeet nations in southern Alberta and Northern Montana. The participants included in this study are teachers in provincial public schools that are teaching at least 25% FNMI students in their public school classrooms. Their perceptions of the students and their families were limited to occasional parent-teacher interviews, phone calls and the information that the students bring to the school. Participant perceptions were also developed from the behavior of the students themselves.

The overall and common perception that the teachers described was a failure of the FNMI family and home to prepare FNMI students for the behavior and study habits necessary to succeed in a provincial public school. The perception of the teachers was that even though some parents might have desired to support their children at school, these parents did not themselves possess the requisite skills to do so. This perception

underscores the confusion that most teachers experienced as they mistook social issues such as alcoholism and violence for cultural issues in the First Nations family. Poverty was also confused at times with culture. While this did not appear to be a deliberate distinction, the teachers nonetheless described cultural barriers the same as they did societal barriers to education.

As noted by the stories of the teachers, these parents did not understand the importance of regular attendance, completion of homework assignments and creating a sustaining home environment conducive to student success at school. The teacher's perceptions were that FNMI parents and caregivers were actually negligent in their lack of proper support for their children at school. The teacher's perception was that the students in these homes were subjected to neglect, abuse of various kinds and deprivations that not only hindered their schoolwork, but also, in the extreme, endangered their lives.

Teachers Self-Perception as Rescuers

Growing out of their perceptions of the students' home life, the teachers described a perception of themselves as rescuers for the students. The teachers' perception of themselves as rescuers went to the extreme of considering adopting some of the students. The teachers were willing to make drastic changes in their personal lives by bringing a new child into their home.

According to the teachers in this study, not only did the children need to be taught the regular curriculum, but also the students needed to overcome the perceived deficiencies in their lives. The teachers saw themselves and their schools as the agents of this rescue.

Teachers' stories related how the students came to the school ill prepared for success. The students were lacking in literacy and/or math skills and concepts. The FNMI students did not understand the routines and procedures of school. Only after the teacher had helped the student to overcome these deficiencies, were the students able to succeed and achieve the normal requirements of the curriculum. As a result of this emphasis on rescue, the stories often focused on what the teachers did, rather than what the students accomplished.

At times the stories of rescue moved the focus from the student to the teacher. The teachers were desirous of making sure that their efforts were seen in a positive light. These teachers seemed to try to dispel any notion that they could fail the FNMI student. However, this attempt to deflect perceptions of bias and prejudice really lead to a conclusion of neutral racist behavior on the part of the subject. This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Teachers Building a Racial Identity

The subjects of this research did not perceive themselves as racists. Some were very adamant that they viewed FNMI students the same as non-FNMI students. They were eager to state that they treated all students the same regardless of race. During the course of the initial stories and the subsequent interviews the researcher did not see evidence of hurtful or malicious racism. But, the subjects did relate differences in how they viewed the students. They also related differences in how the students responded in class.

As Janet Helms (1990) explained in her model of non-FNMI racial identity development, "racial identity development theory concerns the psychological

implications of racial group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership” (p. 55). According to Helms, non-FNMI individuals face two major developmental tasks. The first task is the abandonment of individual racism. The second task facing non-FNMI individuals is the recognition of and opposition to institutional and cultural racism. This second phase also includes three stages: (a) the pseudo-independent stage, (b) the immersion/emersion stage and (d) the autonomy stage. Non-FNMI individuals accomplish each task by progressing through the three stages inherent in each.

Although the participants were careful to avoid blatantly racist language, their descriptions of the FNMI students displayed racial stereotypes and assumptions. The participants most frequently chose to describe extreme behaviors that typified stereotypical FNMI actions. Even though some of these descriptions seemed valid, they were nonetheless indicative of specific individuals. Notwithstanding the individual description, the assumptions drawn from those stories were often related to other FNMI students who had not exhibited that particular behavior.

Examining the subjects in relationship to the disintegration stage, the subjects showed some discomfort in describing their own attitudes towards FNMI students. While they did not display active forms of racism, their stories and interviews revealed more passive forms of racist behavior particularly in failing to acknowledge contributions of the FNMI culture and failing to consider the impact of non-FNMI policies and practices on the minority student.

In examining the participants, relative to the third reintegration stage of abandoning a racist ideology, there was evidence in this study that more progress needs

to be accomplished. Statements from teachers participating in this study often put the burden of change on the FNMI students and their families. There was an underlying feeling that the FNMI families were responsible for the deficiencies their children exhibit in the public school system. According to David Wellman (1977), this “allows the non-FNMI individual to relieve himself or herself of guilt as well as responsibility for working toward social change” (p. 60).

The teachers commonly stated that the student needed to change to non-FNMI behaviors in order to succeed. The participants frequently expressed frustration at the families’ lack of understanding of non-FNMI values and practices. As stated earlier, teachers often described social situations as if they were cultural. It is clear to the researcher that alcoholism, violence and abuse are not First Nations cultural practices, yet the teachers used examples of these situations in describing the families of their students.

Data from the interviews often revealed that the focus of the teacher described the teacher more than it described the student. As the teachers expressed their desire to help the students, they described teacher behavior more than student behavior. You could say that a common thought from the teachers was that the students need to understand me rather than me understanding them.

Implications

The findings in this study have uncovered significant themes regarding the education of FNMI children in public school. These themes discussed in Chapter Five have generated implications for practitioners and for future studies. These implications are discussed below in two sections: “Implications for Practitioners” and “Implications

for Future Study.” The first section describes implications for those presently in the field of education or those about to enter this rewarding field of endeavor.

Implications for Practitioners

The ultimate goal of this study was to explore and understand the perceptions of teachers regarding their FNMI students. One benefit of this understanding would be to bring about positive changes in pedagogy for the benefit of FNMI students. The concept of transferability becomes the focus of this purpose. Transferability permits readers of this study to make connections between elements found in the study and their own experience. It is hoped that readers of this study will look closely at their own perceptions of FNMI students as well as other minority students in their classrooms and schools.

The participants in this study were sincere and caring teachers. They expressed firm perceptions of what they thought FNMI students were experiencing. There was a common attitude expressed that if the FNMI students could learn to be more like the non-FNMI students in the class (non-FNMI and other descriptors) they would experience more success in school. This perception, however, was at odds with some findings in other research focusing on the importance of culture to the FNMI student. For example, Robb, M. and John, C. (2005) in the Alberta Government publication *Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners* state that the influence of culture such as language cannot be overcome in a brief exposure such as school. They stated that the effects of language patterns can endure for three generations after the language is no longer spoken in the home.

The implication for practitioners is that they cannot expect to change the cultural foundation of the FNMI student. In fact, educators should not expect to change the

cultural foundations of any student to overcome the students' perceived deficiencies. Rather, the nature of the pedagogy needs to be adapted to fit the strengths of the FNMI student. The classroom teacher therefore must learn more about the culture of their FNMI students and arrive at a sincere understanding of the FNMI students' perception of school and embrace the differences rather than try to fix those differences.

The need to learn and understand the nature of FNMI students is essential for all teachers, regardless of the length of their career. Even experienced educators need to invest the necessary time to truly understand their FNMI students and families. This understanding will only come from actual involvement with the FNMI culture through association with and participation in cultural activities, extensive professional development opportunities and a willingness to accept FNMI culture on an equal status to non-FMNI culture. It is not enough to read about the FNMI culture, it must be experienced first hand to truly bring about an understanding. Educators need to have FNMI parents and elders join their school parent councils to offer insight and help to guide activities that will meet the needs of their FNMI children.

Educators show a great need to distinguish between societal factors such as socio-economic status, violence, alcoholism and the cultural factors that shape the FNMI student. Applying these negative social descriptors to FNMI as if they were cultural is a serious form of racism and attitudes among educators must be changed.

Teacher training programs in areas with significant FNMI populations must offer inclusive courses where both prospective and experienced teachers can actively participate in cultural opportunities. School jurisdictions must offer professional development opportunities that provide on-going experiential activities for cultural

sharing. The responsibility lies on the educators to adjust and adapt their pedagogy and their attitudes to the needs of the FNMI student, rather than continuing to expect the student to adjust to a culture foreign to them in order to succeed.

Implications for Future Study

In answering the central question about teachers' perceptions of FNMI students, a number of other questions have emerged that warrant further study. It is hoped that other researchers will use this study as a starting point to gain deeper understanding of the FNMI student. Some specific questions that have emerged from this study and require further investigation are:

- What are the perceptions that FNMI students have about teachers and school?
 - How do FNMI students perceive the importance of regular attendance?
 - How do FNMI students perceive the importance of achievement in school?
- How do FNMI parents value the school experience for their children?
 - Do they understand the importance of daily attendance?
 - Do they view achievement the same as non-FNMI parents?
 - What are the anticipated outcomes that FNMI parents have for their children's education?
- Do teachers treat FNMI students the same as they do non-FNMI students?
 - Can that behavior be quantified?
- What are the preferred learning styles of FNMI students?
 - Is there a cultural preference?
 - Is this preference effective pedagogically?

The participants in this study were well meaning dedicated teachers who showed obvious concern for their students, both FNMI and non-FNMI. Their desire to improve the educational experience for the FNMI student in particular showed a nobility of purpose that is admirable. However, as these teachers try to fit the FNMI student into the same mold as the non-FNMI student, they perpetuate the challenges of the FNMI student. Trying to help the FNMI student by rescuing them from their culture becomes the problem.

It is obvious that FNMI education is sorely in need of additional studies based upon empirical evidence. There are many important aspects of FNMI education that merit further inquiry. As Argyris (1999) stated, it is difficult to determine someone's theory in use by interviewing them. Actual observations of teachers' interactions with FNMI students are only one of several possible future investigations suggested by the implications of this research.

In conclusion, this qualitative study has peeled back a layer of understanding to reveal multiple layers of questions. Teachers, although sincere, are highly influenced by their own training and cultural background. Their assumptions are based upon the knowledge they possess about students in general. Too often the student on the fringe is expected to respond with mainstream behavior. When this does not occur, the student too often finds failure. It is hoped that this study will open the doors and eyes of educators at all levels to provide success for all students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Request for Jurisdiction Permission to Conduct Study

Blaine Hogg
P.O. Box 487
Cardston, Alberta T0K 0K0

Date
School Superintendent Name
School Jurisdiction Address

Dear _____:

I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at The University of Montana. The topic of my dissertation is *Teacher Perceptions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Public School Classrooms*. In 2003 the Alberta Commission on Learning put forth fifteen recommendations that related directly to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. All of these recommendations have been accepted by the provincial government and schools throughout Alberta have been encouraged to proceed with the accepted recommendations. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference in the way classroom teachers perceive FNMI students and non-FNMI students.

The research design identifies the target population as teachers employed in public schools located adjacent to the Blood Reserve and the Peigan Reserve. I am requesting permission to conduct research on the topic of the classroom teacher's perceptions of their students. Only classroom teachers will be involved and no students will be asked to participate. Each staff member will receive an informed consent form on which they can signify their intention to participate or not. I assure you that confidentiality will be maintained. I will use a coding system to protect the names of the teachers. Any student names will be replaced by fictitious names during the transcription process. Reporting of results will not identify jurisdictions, schools, teachers or students.

I am proposing to conduct two interviews with classroom teachers in schools that have at least 25% FNMI students in their classrooms. I will ask them to tape record 5 stories about students in their classroom. I anticipate that this will entail no more than 60 minutes of their time. Then after reviewing the written transcript of their recording, I will ask them to participate in a follow-up interview that I will conduct. This interview should take no more than 30-45 minutes. The interview questions will focus on the perceptions of the teachers and will not seek specific information regarding students or your jurisdiction.

In order to gain unbiased information from the teachers, my instructions to them will not specify that the focus of this study is FNMI students. I will talk to the teachers in a general manner about students in the school. I would appreciate your not sharing the FNMI focus with any of the participants. The full nature of the study will be revealed during the interview sessions of Phase II.

Thank-you for your consideration in providing permission to include schools within your jurisdiction as part of this study. If you have any questions, please

contact me at (403) 653-4955 or my doctoral dissertation chair, Dr. Bill McCaw (406) 243-5395. I look forward to your response.

Given your busy schedule and limited time, I have provided a form and return envelope. Using this form you may indicate your willingness to allow schools in your jurisdiction to participate. Use of the form is completely up to you. I do not intend to be presumptuous or intrusive; you may prefer an alternate form of communication.

Respectfully,

Blaine Hogg
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Montana

Enclosures

- Letter to principals
- Letter to teachers
- Informed Request information provided to teachers

Permission to Conduct Study in Westwind School Division #74

Dissertation Research: *Teacher's Perceptions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Public School Classrooms.*

Date: _____

Blaine Hogg
P.O. Box 487
Cardston, Alberta
T0K 0K0

Dear Mr. Hogg;

I have reviewed your "Request for Jurisdiction Permission to Conduct Study" including the teacher questionnaire, principal and teacher letters of permission.

_____ I grant permission for you to include schools in my jurisdiction.

_____ I do not grant permission for you to include schools in my jurisdiction.

School Jurisdiction _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B
Request for Principal Permission to Conduct Study

Blaine Hogg
P.O. Box 1544
Cardston, Alberta Canada T0K 0K0

Date:

Name and address of principal

Dear principal;

Your jurisdiction Superintendent (Name), has granted permission for me to elicit collection of data from schools within the jurisdiction. The data collected will be used to complete my doctoral studies in Educational Leadership through The University of Montana. The topic of my dissertation is “The Perceptions of Classroom Teachers of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students in Their Classes”.

This letter is a follow-up to our telephone conversation of (date and time).

This letter requests permission from you in two ways.

I am requesting permission to ask your teachers to participate in this study. In order to collect useful data, it is necessary to keep the exact topic of the dissertation from the teachers until the completion of the study. I will be asking your teachers to tell the stories of students in their classes. I will not be telling them that the focus of the study in FNMI students.

I can assure you that complete anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the collection of data.

I am proposing to gather information from the teachers in your school. First they will be asked to tell 5 stories about experiences involving students in their classes and to record each experience on a tape recording. Then, the teachers will be asked to respond to a short list of questions in a follow-up interview with the researcher. Both of these activities will be tape-recorded.

If you grant permission I would request your cooperation in a simple manner. Could you provide me with a list of your teachers along with their home phone numbers and e-mail addresses? Without notifying the teachers I would request that you identify teachers who teach classes with at least 25% FNMI students. Then I will ask you to provide class lists for those teachers with the last names removed and the students identified only by first name, male or female, non-FNMI or FNMI. These lists will be used only to tie the teacher’s story to the gender or cultural background of the student. Both the student and teacher will be given a coding that will render identification impossible.

Thank you for your consideration in providing permission to survey teachers in your school. I will be very appreciative of your participation and support. Once again, I assure you that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained. Reporting of results will not identify your jurisdiction, your school or the individual participants.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (403) 653-4955 during the day, (403) 653-4645 in the evening. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully;

Blaine Hogg

Doctoral Candidate

The University of Montana

Enclosures:

Permission to Conduct Study in (specific) School

Permission to Conduct Study in (specific) School

Dissertation Research: *Teacher's Perceptions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Public School Classrooms.*

Date: _____

Blaine Hogg
P.O. Box 487
Cardston, Alberta
T0K 0K0

Dear Mr. Hogg;

I have reviewed your "Request for Jurisdiction Permission to Conduct Study" including the teacher questionnaire, principal and teacher letters of permission.

_____ I grant permission for you to conduct research in (specific) School.

_____ I do not grant permission for you to conduct research in (specific) School.

School Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C
Subject Information and Consent Form

Title: Teachers' Perceptions of Students in Public School Classrooms

Project Director: W. Blaine Hogg, P.O. Box 1544, Cardston Alberta T0K 0K0 Canada

Phone – 403 653-4645 or 403 653-4955

Special Instructions to the potential subject:

If there are any parts of these instructions that are not clear to you, please call the project director at the above phone numbers.

Purpose:

You are being asked to participate in a research study examining the perceptions of teachers concerning the students in their classrooms. Your school has been chosen because it fits the profile of teachers and students necessary for the success of this study.

-Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this research study you will be asked to do the following:

1. Think of a minimum of 5 stories that combined present a complete picture of the students and their experiences in your class.
2. Using a tape recorder supplied by the researcher, tell each story involving students. Again, you may relate anything you choose. You may describe student behavior in class, their home situation, and their relationship with their peers or anything that comes to mind. Then go on to the next story. Each story should be between five and eight minutes in length.
3. After the researcher has had time to review the stories that you relate, he will set up a time to interview you for no more than 45 minutes at your school. You will be asked to respond to five or six questions.

Payment: There is no payment for your participation.

Risks/Discomforts: It is not anticipated that there will be neither any risk to you nor any discomfort. You will be informed of any new findings that may affect your decision to remain in the study. In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims representative or University Legal Counsel.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you but it is hoped that this study will result in improved teacher training programs.

Confidentiality:

- Your story will not be used without your consent.
- Only the researcher, the faculty supervisor and The Institutional Review Board at The University of Montana will have access to the files concerning this study.
- Your identity will be kept confidential by using a coding and the use of fictitious pseudonyms to replace names of participants.
- The students you describe will remain anonymous and will ultimately be referred to using fictitious names.
- The audiotapes will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. Only your code name will be on the tape. In this manner, the

transcriptionist cannot identify you. Once the transcription is completed the tape will then be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

- Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary.
- You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled.
- You may leave the study for any reason.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the research now or during the study contact:

Blaine Hogg (403) 653-4955 daytime (403) 653-4645 evening

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through the University of Montana Research Office at (406) 243-6670.

Subject's Statement of Consent:

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Furthermore, I have been assured that a member of the research team will also answer any future questions I may have. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

School Name _____

Printed Name of Subject _____

Subject's Signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix D
Teacher Prompt

Dear Classroom Teacher;

My name is Blaine Hogg. I am a doctoral candidate at The University of Montana. As a part of my dissertation I am conducting research on the perception of students by teachers in Southern Alberta public schools. As a primary source of information, I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research

1. Please think of a minimum of 5 stories that combined present a complete picture of the students and their experiences in your class. Choose one story at a time and record it. Then go on to the next story.
2. The researcher will conduct the interview with a tape recorder. You will only need to tell the stories to the researcher who will operate the recording system. When your recording is transcribed, you will only be identified by the confidential code and therefore the transcriptionist will have no way of knowing who you are. Please use the students' real names. This transcriptionist will substitute the student's real name with a fictitious name prior the researcher getting the transcribed data. This will ensure the confidentiality of the student's identity.
3. Once you have completed recording the five experiences, the researcher will take the tape which will only be identifiable by a code on the tape.

Please spend at least 5 minutes describing each story that typifies the activities that you and your students experience as part of your classroom. The following kinds of information could be included. You may choose any experience that you wish:

- attendance habits
- general achievement
- attitude towards school
- work habits
- relationship with other students
- relationship to staff
- stories about accomplishment
- stories about disciplinary events