Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept

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Abstract

In 2014 the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student graduation rates in British Columbia was 24% (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2014). The current researcher wondered what, if any, impact this reality had on Aboriginal students’ self-concept. The aim of this research was to engage Aboriginal students within an arts-based project and explore the possible affect that being involved in such activities may have on students’ self-concept. Using a mixed methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative research methods, eight participants provided data pertaining to their perceived academic ability, involvement in the arts, and their overall self-concept. Likert responses were tabulated and organized into a table and a bar graph, while open-ended responses were arranged in tables and analyzed. Four participants also elected to participate in an optional 1-on-1 interview. Interview responses were coded and presented as individual case studies that the current researcher used to establish emergent themes and patterns. The results of the data indicated that involvement in arts-based activities can have a positive impact on Aboriginal students’ self-concept and warranted further pursuit in this area. If students, Aboriginal or otherwise, think more positively about themselves, then perhaps they will feel more confident and capable of attaining their academic goals and bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students’ graduation rates.
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Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to bring to light the fact that in 2013, 60% of Aboriginal youth in British Colombia graduated high school within the six year completion rate, compared to the 86% graduation rate for non-Aboriginal students (British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education, 2014), and to explore the potential influence that the arts might have in this dichotomy. In School District (SD) # 70, on Vancouver Island, less than 50% of Aboriginal students were achieving grade level milestones in 2012 (School District # 70, 2013, p. 37), affecting both their academic success and self-esteem. For a district that claimed to “emphasize improving achievement levels for Aboriginal students and inclusion of First Nations culture and language in educational programs,” (School District # 70, 2012, p. 16) there appeared to be a disconnect between the intentions of the district and the reality for its learners.

The primary goal of this research was to examine the impact, if any, that the arts might have on engaging Aboriginal students, thus increasing their academic and non-academic success. A secondary goal was to gain insight into Aboriginal youths’ self-concept, and to provide both a platform for Aboriginal youth to express themselves and an audience to hear their stories.

The current researcher had worked in SD # 70 for ten years at the middle school and high school levels, and had interacted with countless youth in a variety of arts contexts, including drama, dance, singing, script-writing, and fine arts. Within that time the researcher noticed that participation in arts-based activities appeared to impact attendance and engagement in a positive way for many Aboriginal students. This lead the researcher to wonder if similar clubs-based activities, such as extra-curricular drama, art, or dance groups, could be replicated in a different
context, including within the classroom curriculum, as a means to engage Aboriginal students who may be at risk of failing or dropping out of school.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

Can being involved in arts-based projects positively impact Aboriginal students’ self-concept? The researcher hypothesized that being involved in an arts-based project would create a sense of belonging for its participants, and that students would become more engaged in school as a result. The researcher also hypothesized that the encouragement of self-expression would lead students to a higher level of self-awareness, and possibly to an increase in self-empowerment. If this increase occurred, the researcher was interested to see if a correspondence could be made between increased self-empowerment and increased academic success.

**Justification of the Study**

The problem of Aboriginal disengagement within public school systems is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, it is understood to be one of the impacts of residential schools and the lack of trust that Aboriginal communities have in mainstream education systems (Ingen & Halas, 2006). One residential school survivor describes her experience as a silencing of her native voice, a by-product of Euro-Western peoples need to assimilate the Aboriginal people of North America (Antone, 2000). That lack of voice has led to a lack of identity and a sense of cultural confusion for many Aboriginal students, with one foot in the Euro-Western educational world and the other foot in the culture of one’s ancestors. As a result, many Aboriginal families are in a position of skepticism, whereby cultural practices and values are threatened by formal schooling as it exists today (Tunison, 2013). Teachers and administrators need to be culturally
aware of the lingering after-shock of residential school systems and avoid what Hatcher (2012) described as the “we are all the same under the skin” mentality:

[It] is a common phrase which is meant to deny that racism exists. This colour-blind view may appear virtuous but it perpetuates ways in which minority groups are similar to the dominant white group, indicating that the different values of the non-dominant group are irrelevant. Blindness to the influences of race in peoples’ lives has a powerful negative effect on educational institutions in Eurocentric societies by keeping white people from learning about the role that their privilege plays in personal and institutional racism. (p. 350)

If there is a lack of faith in the education system, it may be appropriate to assume that public school systems are part of the problem.

This lack of trust in the school system can have many negative repercussions, including inhibiting the building of trust-based relationships between Aboriginal families and school personnel, discouraging regular attendance, and students failing to adhere to the academic expectations of the school because said expectations are not valued (Ingen & Halas, 2006). Many aspects of modern day public schools go against prevalent Aboriginal ideals of education, whereby students are taken from a position of listening and learning through story telling and self-expression to a more passive learning experience focusing on note taking and absorbing large amounts of information (Lopez & Hall, 2007). Lopez & Hall (2007) argued that this had created a cultural dissonance which could impact Aboriginal students’ academic success and self-identity.
Despite attempts to build trust within school communities, many Aboriginal students lacked a sense of belonging within current Canadian public schools, as their identity was not reflected in the curriculum, buildings, or the majority of faces they interact with. Feelings of alienation can lead to a sense of negative self-worth and ultimately send students down a path of self-destruction (Pirbhai-Illlich, 2011). Antone (2000) argued that “too often, the Indian student is viewed as the problem, rather than the unquestioned approaches, attitudes, and curricula of the educational system” (p. 3). The dilemma here is that modern education systems have failed to cater to kinesthetic, visual, and musically inclined learners, styles which adequately describe many Aboriginal students (Lopez & Hall, 2007). Cognizant of the fact that group membership does not dictate the characteristics of individuals within the group, Lopez & Hall (2007) sought to identify learning styles of students who demonstrated a risk of academic underachievement in an effort to keep those students engaged until graduation. What they found was that relationships, stories, and opportunities to contribute to the world were all powerful means of engaging struggling learners, aspects that are often created through participation in arts-based activities (Lopez & Hall, 2007).

Many researchers have aimed to address the lack of engagement of Aboriginal students and several viable solutions have been put forth, with commonalities of incorporating relationship-building, creating a positive school climate, and utilizing the arts in the day to day curriculum (Lopez & Hall, 2007; Maclver, 2012; Conrad, 2004; Hatcher, 2012; Antone, 2000). Among them, Hatcher (2012) used the Montessori school model as an ideal learning community that all public schools should aspire to emulate because it aims to create a “psychologically safe environment . . . by a teacher who is present and mindful of their students” (p. 353). This theory builds upon Miller's (2007) concept of The Holistic Curriculum, a teaching practice which
acknowledged the traditions of Native inhabitants, made a place for Elders in education, recognized the power of non-verbal communication, and paid attention to the aesthetics of one’s learning environment. Although classrooms with these focuses would likely be positively received by many students, the focus of this research was to identify factors that could impact Aboriginal students specifically.

One example of a school that addressed the aesthetics of their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students’ learning environment was in New Mexico’s predominantly Diné (Navajo) Gallup/McKinley County. There, researchers found that students were “emotionally depressed and sensorially deprived” (Lopez & Hall, 2007, p. 32) because the value they placed on art was not reflected in the white, lifeless walls of their educational establishment. The National Indian Youth Leadership Project (Lopez & Hall, 2007) received funding which allowed students to embark on a project to create culturally rich murals throughout their school. The murals were linked to the prescribed learning outcomes and offered the students the type of “deep learning that is able to transform the lives of marginalized youth and produce a paradigm shift in the perception they have of themselves” (Lopez & Hall, 2007, p. 34). Similarly, Bae (2009) explored using murals as a teaching tool and discussed the function of art as a story telling device, enabling the viewer to examine the history, culture, values, and beliefs of a society.

Nielsen (2010) agreed that building a community around imaginative teaching and cultural inclusion had a major influence on student success. His Learning for Understanding through Culturally-Inclusive Imaginative Development project (LUCID) model attempted to engage students emotionally in their learning content via images and connections with human feelings. Through his research he concluded that accessing students’ imaginations resulted in a “more enjoyable and memorable learning experience” (Nielsen, 2010, p. 414). Connecting
students’ feelings to their intellect is what Sanacore and Palumbo (2010) determined to be key in engaging students and connecting new knowledge to their long-term bank of understanding.

Brain-based research from Australia indicated that the growing “neuroscientific work suggests that the creative arts have a positive impact on intellectual development and the capacity to redefine and enhance many facets of educational practice” (Scholes & Nagel, 2011, p. 971). Scholes and Nagel (2011) argued that using film-making as a creative medium increased the likelihood of student engagement, especially with boys who were at risk of underachieving.

One particular study related to drama and dance showed that both activities had a positive impact on working memory, procedural and short-term memory, higher-order thinking skills, and overall attention (Dunbar, 2008). In addition, Colley’s (2011) study examined teaching social studies through drama-based activities and found that the approach not only promoted student engagement, but also advocated for minority youth who “might not otherwise have a voice” (p. 8). Students themselves recognized the benefits of arts-based activities, using words and phrases like “fun,” “make me feel good about myself,” and “makes me feel proud of myself” when describing the process (Barrett, Everett, & Smigiel, 2012, p. 198).

Seventy percent of at-risk Aboriginal youth who participated in another study stated that cultural activities such as dancing and drumming significantly increased their engagement (Maclver, 2012). Port Alberni’s Haahuupayak school has used drumming and song to begin their school day since its onset. According to the school principal, Gio Mussato (personal communication, October 20, 2013), the morning check-in acts as a way for students to get their heart going, and to release any negative mental or emotional mindsets that may impact their perception of the day. He goes on to state that performing arts have increased students’
confidence and allowed them to “transform themselves,” giving them a reason to come to school, and ultimately giving them a hand in the construction of their self-identity (Gio Mussato, personal communication, October 20, 2013).

The limited research directly connecting Aboriginal engagement and the arts indicated that there was a need to explore this area in more depth. The research that has been done illuminates some positive impacts that the arts can have on students, thus meriting further pursuit by the current researcher as a means to engage Aboriginal students and potentially impact their self-concept in a positive way.

**Definition of Terms**

In their 1984 study, Marsh and O’Neill described *self-concept* as “an individual’s perception of self, formed through experience with the environment, interactions with significant others, and attributions of his/her own behavior” (p. 4). Marsh and O’Neill (1984) go on to describe self-concept as an accumulation of inferences about one’s self, both descriptive and evaluative, becoming increasingly multifaceted as individuals move from infancy to adulthood.

Martin et al. (2013) defined *engagement* as a threefold psychological investment that students make on a cognitive, “I believe I can…,” affective, “I am happy to…,” and behavioral, “I persist even when challenged,” level (p. 717). This was consistent with other engagement work on emotional engagement in terms of valuing, interest, and enjoyment; cognitive engagement through self-efficacy; and behavioral engagement by way of persistence (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007).
Academic success referred to students’ motivation, engagement, and educational resilience (Martin et al., 2013), as well as their ability to meet, anywhere from minimally to fully, grade level expectations as reflected in the prescribed learning outcomes.

Non-academic success included the following areas: positive self-perception, high self-esteem, and self-empowerment. Self-perception referred to the way that students saw themselves as autonomous beings, reinforced by their self-talk and judgements of themselves. Self-esteem was the value that students placed on themselves in relation to their world, including their perceived worth compared to others. Ojibwe beliefs state that self-esteem is synonymous with bravery, because it requires individuals to face themselves and others in an honest way (Toulouse, 2006). In the context of this study, self-empowerment was something students had when they believed their thoughts had the power to dictate success in an area of pursuit. This included believing that they were capable of achieving their best when they had a clearly defined idea of what they wanted to accomplish.

According to The Government of Canada’s Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2013) Aboriginal students consist of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, each of whom have their own unique language, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Brief Overview of Study

The current researcher aimed to explore the arts as a means to affect students' self-concept, specifically with Aboriginal students. The population participating in the research consisted of eight female Aboriginal students, ages 13-15, who were students in SD # 70 and who were involved in an extra-curricular film project with Parenting Path Group Productions. Parenting Path Group Productions is a production company based out of Port Alberni, BC that
looks at Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation parenting practices and child development. There were fifteen members of the film crew in total: twelve students, two producer/facilitators, and the current researcher, who acted as a coach and creative director.

Through quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as a case study type approach, the researcher used two questionnaires with the eight participants, one administered during the early stages of the film project and the other administered after the completion of the film project. Questionnaires consisted of Likert scale questions and open-ended questions that investigated a wide range of topics related to students’ self-concept. The current researcher also used voluntary 1-on-1 interviews with four participants to collect data.

Data collected from Questionnaire One and Two were gathered and compiled and a database of participant responses were created using Microsoft Word 2013. The individual participant's data was presented in tables, and group participants' data was presented in both a table and a bar graph. Graphs and tables were used so that the data could be represented in a visual format and would therefore be easier to understand. Qualitative, open-ended responses were entered exactly as participants wrote them on their questionnaires.

Recorded data collected from the 1-on-1 interviews were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word 2013 and then coded and analyzed for emerging themes and patterns. Participants were given a copy of the transcribed 1-on-1 interview to review for accuracy and to keep for their records.

Paper data was stored in a locked safe in the home office of the current researcher until March 2018, when they were destroyed by burning. Transcribed interview files were stored on a
Microsoft Word 2013 document on the password protected home computer of the researcher, and were deleted 3 years after the completion of the current study.
Chapter 2: Background and Review of Related Literature

Previous research has shown that the arts can have a positive impact on students (Bae, 2009; Barrett et al., 2012; Colley, 2011; Dunbar, 2008; Lopez & Hall, 2007; Nielsen, 2010; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2010; and Scholes & Nagel, 2011). However, little research has been conducted regarding the potential impact of drama-based activities specifically. Even less research has attempted to link the potential impact of drama-based activities with Aboriginal students’ self-concept as a factor in their academic and non-academic success. In order to understand what impedes Aboriginal students’ academic success, it was important to consider the issue from the Aboriginal students’ point of view.

An Aboriginal Perspective

In Aboriginal Students’ Perspectives on the Factors Influencing High School Completion, Maclver (2012) examines the factors that impact high school completion from the perspective of Aboriginal students themselves. The main problem in this study is clearly stated: that the Canadian education system is failing its Aboriginal population, made obvious by the fact that a significant percent of Aboriginal students are not completing high school. The purpose of the study was to enable Aboriginal students to attain higher graduations rates though inclusion and meaningful learning opportunities. The questions in this phenomenological study examined influences that foster Aboriginal middle-level students to remain engaged in their educational experience and to increase their likelihood of academic success. Maclver (2012) hypothesized that by creating a sense of belonging within Aboriginal students’ learning communities, students would feel encouraged to engage in academic pursuits.
The research method in this study was qualitative and consisted of conversational interviews with 10 Aboriginal youth between the ages of 12 and 16, attending an urban prairie treatment center. The participants were considered at-risk, having dropped out of school because of factors such as being expelled, drug and alcohol addiction, sexually intrusive behaviours, and a variety of mental health disorders. The interview posed open-ended questions pertaining to four specific areas: barriers to remaining in school, influential sources, ideal educator traits, and the influence of cultural heritage. Maclver (2012) states that the participants of the study were “purposefully selected” (p. 158) and that the intention of the study was to provide information pertaining to the participant’s unique, personal experiences.

The two main weaknesses of Maclver’s (2012) study were that by only interviewing 10 individuals one cannot draw conclusions that are necessarily relevant to a larger population, and because the participants were residents of a treatment program the findings are limited to an extremely at-risk clientele. There was also the potential in this study for the researcher to demonstrate a bias, insofar as the participants were “purposefully selected,” a term which begs the question: for what purpose? Although the researcher did not position herself within the context of the study, it is safe to assume that she has an agenda. Finally, this study did not use multiple methods of data collection and the lack of triangulation could also be viewed as a weakness.

The overriding strength of the study was that it provides Aboriginal youth with a voice, and sheds light on Aboriginal perspectives regarding obstacles to graduation. This was pertinent to the current researcher because the problem was the same: that the Canadian education system was failing a significant number of Aboriginal students. The current researcher included this study because if there is a problem with a specific group of individuals, it is important to gain
their perspective when trying to offer solutions to the problem. Maclver’s (2012) findings provided further relevance to the current study due to the fact that seven of the ten participants state that the arts (drumming and dancing) increased their engagement, and as Maclver (2012) pointed out, student engagement ultimately leads to academic success.

The results of the study revealed the need for culturally affirming learning environments and teaching methods that focus on personalized learning. The participants noted that teachers need to develop on-going relationships with Aboriginal learners, and incorporate humour as a means to open the lines of communication with students. Although the population in this study was small and included residents of a treatment program, one cannot ignore the voice of Aboriginal students declaring that arts-based activities and positive teacher-student relationships can positively impact their engagement and sense of belonging.

The importance of belonging is echoed in Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern’s (1990) book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. In fact belonging is one of the four quadrants of the Circle of Courage. According to Brendtro et al. (1990), the Circle of Courage is based on both the Lakota Sioux artist George Bluebird’s Medicine Wheel of Child Development and Stanley Coopersmith’s definitive work on self-concept in childhood. In the Circle of Courage, “significance,” or belonging, sits alongside “competence,” also known as mastery, “power,” also known as independence, and “virtue,” also known as generosity, suggesting that an individual needs to feel competency in these four areas to feel whole (as cited in Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 45). “Without belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity there can be no courage but only discouragement. DISCOURAGEMENT IS COURAGE DENIED [capitals in original]. When the circle of courage is broken, the lives of children are no longer in harmony and balance” (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 60).
Brendtro et al. (1990) go on to explain that individuals with a normal sense of belonging are attached, friendly, and trusting, while those with a distorted sense of belonging crave affection and acceptance, are promiscuous, and can be easily misled. Individuals with an absence of belonging are at an even greater risk of being unattached, isolated, and exhibiting distrust (Brendtro et al., 1990). Creating a sense of belonging with students has shown to increase student engagement (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005), and Maclver (2012) points out that student engagement ultimately leads to both personal and academic success. Brendtro et al.’s (1990) emphasis on belonging relates to the current study because it illustrates that when students feel a sense of belonging they are less likely to experience isolation and distrust. Involvement in arts-based activities can create a sense of belonging for students and this gave the current researcher hope that academic success could be impacted by participation in artistic pursuits.

**The Impact of the Arts**

*Learning Through the Arts: Lessons of Engagement* by Smithrim and Upitis (2005) addressed the declining support for arts programs in schools, and responds to that lack of support by implementing the *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA) educational approach. Their longitudinal study included over 6000 students along with their parents, teachers, principals, and guest artists, examining student achievement and attitudes towards the arts (both in and out of a school setting) over a three year period. Their research question was: would students experience increased engagement and academic success if they worked with professional artists within the curriculum? Smithrim and Upitis (2005) hypothesized that yes, incorporating professional artists within a learning community would lead to an increase in both academic success and engagement.
This study used a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, and utilized a control group to further compare their findings. Smithrim and Upitis (2005) conducted their study with a cross-sectional analysis of willing participants from Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Windsor, Cape Breton, and Newfoundland. Control schools were matched as closely as possible with LTTA schools in terms of size, location, and socioeconomic status. The quantitative tools included standardized testing, holistically scored writing samples, and surveys. Qualitative data was collected through open-ended surveys and both one-on-one and group interviews. Regression analysis was also conducted to further interpret their findings.

The results of the study, pertaining to academic achievement of students attending LTTA schools, showed an increase primarily in the area of computation and estimation skills, with a standard deviation difference of eleven percentile points (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005). These increases in mathematical understanding were attributed by Smithrim and Upitis (2005) to students’ higher levels of overall engagement in LTTA schools. There did not appear to be any known biases in this study, as the researchers themselves were removed from the interactions between participants and guest artists, and the methods of collecting data were objective.

The overriding strength of this study was that it included over 6000 students across Canada, offering a wide range of participants. The study concluded that arts programs do impact academic performance in a positive manner, specifically in the area of mathematics, and that the arts can increase student engagement. Both outcomes support the current researcher’s aim to engage Aboriginal students through the arts and impact academic competencies. If the arts can engage all students, then they can assist in engaging a specific sub-section of the general Canadian population, namely Aboriginal students.
The main weakness in Smithrim and Upitis’ (2005) study was that it did not offer any distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes. In fact there is no mention of data related specifically to Aboriginal students. In addition, there were no reported increases in students’ language development, and there was no mention of the effect on students’ social responsibility outcomes. Another challenge was measuring student “engagement” when a universal definition of the word may be impossible to attain. There were several references listed in the study that merited further pursuit, however since most of the sources were from the nineteen-nineties, the information in them may be viewed as outdated.

In a similar study, The Role of Arts Participation in Students’ Academic and Non-academic Outcomes: A Longitudinal Study of School, Home, and Community Factors, by Martin et al. (2013), arts participation was determined to have a positive effect on youth development, namely in the areas of academic (motivation and engagement) and non-academic (self-esteem and life satisfaction) success. This longitudinal study examined 643 elementary and high school students in Australia over a two year period, and analyzed the impacts of in-school arts participation, out of school arts participation, and parent-child arts interactions. The researchers acknowledged the increasing awareness of arts related benefits in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and aimed to gain insight into how arts engagement could impact students’ cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes. More specifically, Martin et al. (2013) focused their research on the following two questions: what is the link between arts participation and academic and non-academic outcomes, and to what degree does the ecological context (e.g. school, community, home) impact academic and non-academic outcomes?
Martin et al. (2013) used a longitudinal survey-based design, which included quantitative methods such as Likert scales; the PISA 2000 survey; the Motivation and Engagement Scale, developed by Martin in 2007 to measure adaptive and maladaptive motivation; and Australia’s National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy. The study also utilized the Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ) III, an assessment tool developed by Marsh and O’Neill (1984) that explored a variety of components of students’ self-concept. The SDQ III was used in the current study because it demonstrated validity in Martin et al.’s (2013) research. To ensure the validity of Martin et al.’s (2013) study, researchers included confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach’s alpha, and structural equation analysis (Martin et al., 2013). Focusing on methods that have proven to be both valid and reliable in previous research in turn reflects the validity and reliability of Martin et al.’s (2013) study. Data was collected only after consent was obtained from students and their parents, and researchers used an intricately designed identifying code system to protect the anonymity of the participants. Martin et al. (2013) obtained a cross-section of schools in its spread of type, region, socioeconomic status, gender composition, language background, and prior achievement to further enhance the validity of the study. The reasons behind research method choices were well explained by the researchers, and careful consideration had been made to eliminate any potential biases or flaws in the study’s design.

The results of the study showed that both receptive arts participation, whereby the student passively observed arts-based activities, such as watching a play or attending an art exhibit, and active arts-based activities, including creating art or being a member of a dance, had a positive impact on students’ academic and non-academic outcomes (Martin et al., 2013). Receptive arts participation positively impacted classroom participation and students’ sense of meaning and purpose, and active arts participation positively affected academic buoyancy and self-esteem.
(Martin et al., 2013). Arts engagement also had a positive effect on adaptive motivations, academic intentions, school enjoyment, and overall life satisfaction (Martin et al., 2013).

One surprising result of the study was that out of school arts activities negatively affected adaptive motivations, academic intentions, school enjoyment, class participation, homework completion, and self-esteem at school (Martin et al., 2013). Martin et al. (2013) attributed this finding to the identification/commitment hypothesis, described as context specific activities being associated with one’s “identification with and commitment to outcomes within that context” (p. 722). Martin et al. (2013) argue that in-school arts involvement can positively impact the school environment because students will associate the enjoyment of arts-based activities with the context of school. Comparatively, outside-school involvement in arts-based activities did not positively affect academic outcomes because students did not transfer their reaction to said activities to the context of school. This information was important to consider, as it suggests that meaningful arts-based activities need to be offered within the school context, either directly before or after school, at lunch time, or within the curriculum itself. The current researcher questioned if the results of the present study would parallel Martin et al.’s (2013) findings, that “[a]rts engagement positively predicts adaptive motivation, academic buoyancy, academic intentions, school enjoyment, self-esteem, meaning and purpose, and life satisfaction” (p. 719).

Strengths of this study included the duration of data collection, as it spanned over two years, and the diversity of participants that it focused on. However the main weakness was that, like Smithrim and Upitis’ (2005) study, there was no data collected that directly pertained to Aboriginal students. The research conducted by Martin et al. (2013) and Smithrim and Upitis (2005) illustrate the gap in research connecting the positive impacts of the arts directly with
Aboriginal students. Although they do show that arts-based activities can positively impact students’ engagement and academic outcomes, it was unclear what impact different types of arts-based activities had on students. Because the current researcher intended to use drama as her arts-based medium, she was also interested in researching the potential impact of the dramatic arts specifically.

Binta Colley (2011) aimed to do just that by incorporating drama with Social Studies teachers in the New York City Board of Education in an attempt to teach course content through the performing arts. The study included four workshops where educators were trained in the elements of script-writing, characterization, action, storylines, monologues, and theatre production. Teachers then took what they had learned and implemented it with their own students during Social Studies classes with grades nine through twelve. The results showed that, overwhelmingly, using the performing arts in mainstream courses “promotes student engagement and learning, but it also gives voice to students who are rarely heard” (Colley, 2011, p. 7).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Finland has opted to incorporate arts-based activities into their Culture Path Program. According to the *Kuopio Culture Path Program*, students, aged 7-16, embark on a variety of grade-specific paths that explore aspects of the arts such as fine art, libraries, theatres, etc. to enhance the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children (Mikkola, Rajala, Tornberg & Kumpulainen, 2012). The theatre path was accessible for all eighth grade students and included exercises that aimed to develop “students’ abilities to concentrate, express themselves, improvise, perform as a group and individually, solve problems, receive and give feedback, and to take others into consideration” (Mikkola et al., 2012, p. 14). These exercises helped support students in constructing a positive identity for themselves, including providing opportunities for self-expression, healthy communication, and a “welcome
variation to their normal boring school experience” (Mikkola et al., 2012, p. 23). It may be inferred that the Culture Path Program is a contributing factor to Finland’s global achievement as the world’s second highest ranked country for education and skills (The Conference Board of Canada, 2015).

**Aboriginal Students and the Performing Arts**

The study that most closely resembled the aims of the current researcher was entitled *Exploring Risky Youth Experiences: Popular Theatre as a Participatory, Performative Research Method*, by Diane Conrad (2004). In her research Conrad (2004) used a Popular Theatre process to build trust with at-risk youths, explore themes of their lives, and create scenes based on the past experiences of the participants. Popular Theatre, as a research methodology, draws upon both participatory and performance-based ethnography. It is an effective means of drawing out participants’ previous experiences and understandings, as well as identifying issues of concern within communities (Conrad, 2004). Furthermore, Popular Theatre enables participants to construct ideas around desired changes, brain-storm solutions, and present their ideas through a performance-based medium.

The purpose of Conrad’s (2004) study was to better understand the implications of being labeled *at risk* for Aboriginal youth in a rural Alberta community. Conrad (2004) aimed to “explore the learners’ lived experiences in both their humanizing and oppressive dimensions” (p. 5), and hoped to give voice to the marginalized sectors of her community. Conrad (2004) worked with the drama teacher in two mixed-grade 10/11/12 drama classes, consisting of twenty-two students, ninety percent of whom were of Aboriginal descent. There were an equal number of males and females in the group and they met with Conrad (2004) for a total of thirty hours over a one month period.
Conrad (2004) began the process with a series of games and activities that focused on trust-building and skill development. What followed were workshops on seeking emergent themes, story-telling, scene creation, and script writing. Conrad (2004) facilitated a brainstorming session whereby participants generated words and phrases that were recorded on a Graffiti Wall. A Graffiti Wall is a large surface (bulletin board, chalkboard, whiteboard, etc.) upon which individuals can write whatever they wish to express in words, phrases or pictures, often in response to a prompt. The ideas presented on the Graffiti Wall became the launching pad for participants to write a series of dramatic vignettes. Conrad (2004) created a script entitled “Life in the Sticks” that incorporated both the participants’ vignettes and the results of an informal, small group interview Conrad (2004) conducted with participants. This process “allowed an in-depth, embodied discussion of students’ perspectives regarding issues that affected their lives” (Conrad, 2004, p. 13). What emerged from this activity were themes about “boredom, rule breaking at school and its consequences, substance use, risky sex, gossip, gender relations, and interpersonal conflict” (Conrad, 2004, p. 13), topics which the participants described as having the “potential to undermine unjust social structures” (Conrad, 2004, p. 19).

Conrad’s (2004) study began with an interest in better meeting the educational needs of at-risk learners and concluded that at-risk youth chose to engage in learning when they were a part of the process and when their points of view were valued. The main strength of this study was that it gave voice to a marginalized population and aimed to gain insight into the Aboriginal students’ experience first hand. One weakness is that, due to the small sample size, findings from the study are not assumed to be transferrable from context to context. “Life in the Sticks” brought clarity to the experiences of Aboriginal youth from their own perspective, and that was the overarching goal of Conrad’s (2004) study. Conrad (2004) wanted to gain insight into what
Aboriginal students considered to be at-risk behavior and the study did just that, through a performance-based ethnography that brought to light a piece of Aboriginal youths’ self-concept. Conrad’s (2004) research provided a framework to conduct research in, as well as a process of accessing students’ prior experiences that was adopted by the current researcher. Conrad’s (2004) research brought together drama, Aboriginal youth, and elements of self-awareness and reflection that mirrored the intentions of the current researcher.
Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Description of the Research Design

The design of this study was a mixed methods approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as a case study type approach. Questionnaire One and Questionnaire Two were administered nine weeks apart, and participants could elect to take part in an optional 1-on-1 interview. The results of the open-ended questions and voluntary interviews allowed the current researcher to discover themes among qualitative data to determine if students’ involvement in the arts-based project had no impact, or positively, or negatively impacted their self-concept. The Likert scale responses provided the current researcher with quantitative data to understand the findings more fully.

Description of the Sample

The present study was conducted in School District (SD) # 70 with students between the ages of 13 and 15 who were involved in a film project aimed to educate parents about what it is like to be a teenager from a teenager’s perspective. The film was an extra-curricular activity, with Parenting Path Group Productions, intended to be used in Aboriginal communities, and all of the students who participated in the film project were of Aboriginal ancestry. Members of the film project were invited to participate in the present study by way of a recruitment script (Appendix A). Of the 12 students involved in the film project, eight had parent/guardian consent (Appendix B) and their own assent (Appendix C) to participate in the both Questionnaire One (Appendix D) and Questionnaire Two (Appendix E). Four of the eight participants also had parent/guardian consent and their own assent (Appendix F) to participate in the optional 1-on-1 interview.
The student participants were selected through the process of purposive sampling, as well as being a sample of convenience. Participants of the study were considered to have special qualifications in that they were all involved in a film project that qualified as an arts-based activity. The participants were also conveniently available within SD # 70. Although convenience sampling may not be representative of a larger population, the current researcher believed that any insights gained in the study merited its further pursuit.

**Description of the Instruments Used**

The instruments used in this study included two paper-based questionnaires, consisting of sixteen Likert scale questions and open-ended questions, two in Questionnaire One (Appendix D) and three in Questionnaire Two (Appendix E). There was also one optional 1-on-1 interview to which participants gave their assent to participate (Appendix F). The Likert scale questions were adopted from Marsh and O’Neill’s (1984) Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ) III, a questionnaire with 13 factors of self-concept that were identified with conventional and confirmatory factor analysis. Marsh and O’Neill’s (1984) study was originally designed as a Likert scale model, so the current researcher chose to use the questions from it as a means to adequately measure participants’ self-concept.

The SDQ model has been used in many previous studies, including Martin et al.’s (2013) study on the role of arts participation in students’ academic and non-academic outcomes. According to Martin et al (2013), the SDQ had demonstrated high reliability in previous research and for that reason, the current researcher utilized questions from it. The non-academic outcomes that Martin et al (2013) examined were similar to those of the current researcher, namely self-esteem, life satisfaction, and youths’ sense of meaning and purpose.
The SDQ III consisted of 136 Likert scale questions, 16 of which were used in the current study. The optional responses on the questionnaire were strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The Likert scale included positively stated questions (ex: “I am good at expressing myself”) that were assigned a number value; SA=5, A=4, U=3, D=2, and SD=1, and negatively stated questions (ex: “Overall, nothing I do is very important”) that were assigned a reversed number value; SA=1, A=2, U=3, D=4, and SD=5. Based on this scale, higher numbers on responses reflected students’ positive self-concept, while lower numbers on questions reflected students’ negative self-concept. When comparing the pre and post test results, the current researcher examined both group results and individual results to determine if the overall self-concept changed for the group and/or for the individual participants.

The two open-ended questions on Questionnaire One (Appendix D) and three open-ended questions on Questionnaire Two (Appendix E) were designed by the current researcher to obtain more information pertaining to the participants’ self-concept. The differences between Questionnaire One and Two were that Questionnaire Two asked participants about their involvement in the project instead of asking what they did to feel good about themselves, it asked participants to describe practices that they felt connected them to their Aboriginal culture, and it invited participants to partake in the optional 1-on-1 interview.

The optional 1-on-1 interview was designed by the current researcher and consisted of four areas: warm-up questions (2), self-perception related questions (5), academics related questions (6), and project related questions (6). There were 19 questions in total and the interview took approximately 30 minutes to conduct. Prior to participating in the interview, participants obtained parent/guardian consent and signed an Interview Participation Assent Form (Appendix F). All interviews followed an Interview Questions Protocol (Appendix G) and were
audio-recorded with a cassette tape recorder and transcribed at a later time. To explore the relationship between self-concept and academic success, the current researcher included questions related to both topics, and concluded the interview by asking the participants if their involvement in the project impacted the way they saw themselves in any way.

**Explanation of the Procedures Followed**

The first thing the current researcher did was obtain consent from SD # 70 superintendent, Cam Pinkerton, to conduct the study with students of SD # 70, and to use the facilities of SD # 70 during and outside of school hours for research purposes.

Secondly, the current researcher met with Tseshahkt First Nation chief Hugh Braker to discuss the intentions of the study, answer questions related to the study, and obtain permission to conduct the study on Tseshahkt territory. The current researcher also made numerous attempts to contact chief councilor of the Hupacasath First Nation, Steven Tatoosh.

Thirdly, the current researcher recited a recruitment speech (Appendix A) delivered at Alberni District Secondary School (ADSS) on the afternoon of September 24, 2014 to the fifteen members of the film crew, including the twelve students participating in the film project. ADSS was the site for workshops and film production, as it was centrally located within the community and had a multi-purpose/drama room to accommodate a variety of arts-based activities. At that time, a Parent/Guardian consent form (Appendix B) was made available to those interested in participating in the study. Potential participants were informed that if they chose to participate in the study at a later time, consent forms would be available until October 8, 2014. The consent form had three optional boxes to checkmark: one granting consent for their child to participate in two questionnaires regarding self-concept, one granting consent for their child to participate in
an interview with the researcher and for it to be audio-recorded, and the last one granting consent for their child to participate in an interview with the researcher, but not to have it audio-recorded.

On the afternoon of October 8, 2014, participants who had returned their signed Parent/Guardian consent form signed their own Statement of Assent form (Appendix C), assigned themselves a pseudonym, and completed Questionnaire One (Appendix D). Kerry Robertson, Co-Producer and Co-Founder of Parenting Path Group Productions and a retired Drama teacher in SD # 70, collected and filed the participants’ questionnaires in alphabetical order according to their pseudonym, and presented them in a sealed envelope to the current researcher on October 8, 2014. The questionnaires were immediately locked in a secure safe at the current researcher’s residence.

For nine weeks participants partook in a series of drama workshops that focused on trust-building, skill development, and film production. Workshops followed Conrad’s (2004) process of creating a Graffiti wall that explored aspects of being a teenager. The ideas generated through this method became the basis for the film project that participants embarked on. The current researcher administered Questionnaire Two (Appendix E) on December 10, 2014 according to the same protocol as Questionnaire One. Kerry Robertson detached the 1-on-1 interview request portion and gave the forms of those interested in participating to the current researcher in a separate sealed envelope. Questionnaires were submitted to the current researcher on December 10, 2014 and uninterested participants’ interview request forms were shredded by Kerry Robertson at ADSS.

The current researcher conducted 1-on-1 interviews from December 10 - 12, 2014 at ADSS because it was most convenient for both the participants and researcher. A ten dollar gift card from a local coffee shop was presented to the participant whose name was drawn after the
interviews were concluded as a thank-you for participating in the interview. All four interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Participants were given a copy of their interview for previewing, checking for accuracy and ensuring that they were comfortable with what they had said. Once participants approved of their transcript, the researcher analyzed the data from the 1-on-1 interview and Questionnaire One and Two.

Discussion of Validity

There was internal validity in this study because the aim was to examine participants’ self-concept before and after their involvement in an arts-based activity, and the questionnaires and 1-on-1 interviews allowed for this to occur. Some of the factors relating to internal validity were: all of the participants were female students between the ages of 13 and 15, two of the participants completed only one of the two questionnaires, and the fact that the drama workshops were held at the local high school. Each of these factors might have impacted the study in some way. Another component of internal validity was that the current researcher had been the teacher of three of the participants during the previous school year, and one of the participants was in the current researcher’s class throughout the duration of the film project. This is important to note, as the potential power-over relationship may have affected the responses given by the participants. Because the current researcher worked in a collaborative way with research participants on the film project, the choice was made not to view the data generated by Questionnaire One until Questionnaire Two was also completed, as doing so may unintentionally change the way the current researcher interacted with the participants. Results of the questionnaires and interviews were dependent on how the participant was feeling at the particular time of completion. Data may have been different if the instruments were
administered at a different time or place. Still, it offered a glimpse into participants’ general self-concept and offered a platform for Aboriginal youth to have their voice heard.

While the internal validity of the study was sound, there were details that needed to be addressed in terms of the study’s external validity. Firstly, the sample population consisted of Aboriginal students who were already involved in a film project. It could be assumed that to be involved in such an activity, one must possess a certain level of confidence or willingness to take risks in front of others. It was not assumed by the current researcher that all Aboriginal youth would share this inclination, however, if the arts could positively impact the sample population, then it could be argued that there was the potential to affect a larger population. External validity would be strengthened with further study, over a longer period of time, and with a more diverse cross-sample of participants.

Analysis of Data

To analyze the data the current researcher compiled and tallied the results of the questionnaires and examined the 1-on-1 interview responses. Likert scale questions from the questionnaires were assigned a numerical value and overall self-concept scores were tabulated. Results from the questionnaires were entered into a Microsoft Word 2013 document and represented in a comparison table (Table 4.1) and a bar graph (Figure 4.1). Open-ended responses from Questionnaire One and Two were arranged into tables (Table 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7) and analyzed. Interview questions were transcribed, tabulated, and coded for emergent themes and patterns. Both open-ended questions and the data collected by way of the interview followed an analysis approach that was comparable to a case study model, whereby individual responses were compared among participants to look for commonalities and trends. Data collected was arranged in a visual format so that it would be more easily understood.
Chapter 4: Findings and Results

Summary

The aim of this study was to examine if involvement in arts-based activities would have a positive, a negative, or no impact on participants’ self-concept, as reflected in their self-concept scores and through their written and verbal responses. The data collected in this study was both quantitative (Likert scale results) and qualitative (open-ended questions and 1-on-1 interview responses). Participants were asked a series of nineteen questions, including sixteen Likert scale questions, at the beginning of their involvement in a film project (Questionnaire One – Appendix D) and after the film was finished (Questionnaire Two – Appendix E).

The Likert scale questions (Q) on both Questionnaire One and Two covered a wide range of topics related to self-concept including self-respect (Q 1), happiness (Q 2), reliability (Q 3), self-worth (Q 4), upbringing (Q 5), academic ability (Q 6-9), physical ability (Q 10), relationships (Q 11 & 12), stress (Q 13), physical appearance (Q14), self-expression (Q 15), and self-confidence (Q 16) (Appendices D and E). The options on the Likert scale were: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. Positively phrased questions, such as “I can…” statements, were assigned a numerical value out of five ranging on a scale from strongly disagree responses being worth one point and strongly agree responses receiving a value of five. Reversely, negatively phrased question, such as “I have trouble with…” statements received a numerical value whereby strongly disagree responses earned five points and strongly agree responses were awarded one point.
Findings

The overall self-concept scores were calculated by adding together the scores from all sixteen Likert scale questions and were displayed in Figure 4.1. Theoretically, higher self-concept scores reflect a more positive self-concept and lower scores imply a more negative self-concept. Participants’ original pseudonyms were abbreviated as follows: Castiel Winchester (C.W.), Son (S.), Emm Somer (E.S.), Sqjudgy Carlile (S.C.), Darth Vadar (D.V.), Mashed Potatoes (M.P.), Crow (C.), and Vic (V.).

![Graph showing overall self-concept scores for participants on questionnaire one and two](image)

*Figure 4.1. Overall self-concept scores for participants on questionnaire one and two*

This graph illustrates that three of the participants’ self-concept scores went up, three of the participants’ self-concept scores went down, and two of the participants completed only one questionnaire. Results were further broken down in Table 4.1 where individual shifts in self-concept scores were recorded for each question. Because they only completed one of the two questionnaires, neither Crow nor Vic were included in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1. *Participants’ Self-Concept Score Shifts Between Questionnaire One and Two*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Topics</th>
<th>Castiel Winchester</th>
<th>Son Somer</th>
<th>Squidgy Carlile</th>
<th>Darth Vader</th>
<th>Mashed Potatoes</th>
<th>Total Shift for Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Self-Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Happiness</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Reliability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Self-Worth</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-3)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Upbringing</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-2)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Math</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- Written Expression</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- Academic Achievement</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- Physical Ability</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+2)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(+4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- Friendships</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12- Attention (opposite sex)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1.5)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13- Stress</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14- Physical appearance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15- Self-Expression</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-2)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16- Self-Confidence</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(-2)</td>
<td>(-1)</td>
<td>(+1)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Shift in Scores</strong></td>
<td><strong>(+1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(-2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(+6)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(-12.5)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(-8)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(-12.5)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the self-concept scores as shown in Table 4.1 were divided evenly, with 50% of participants having a higher self-concept score after their involvement in the film project and 50% of participants having a lower self-concept score after their involvement in the arts-based activity. Only one of the six participants (Squidgy Carlile) had entirely negative shifts in self-concept score, as all the other participants had a combination of both positive and negative shifts between Questionnaire One and Questionnaire Two results. Overall there was a difference of (-12.5) for the combined self-concept scores of all participants, with Squidgy Carlile’s results (-12.5) being the most negative and Emm Somer’s results (+6) being the most positive.

To gain further insight into individual participants’ results, qualitative data was used as well. Qualitative data was collected via two open-ended questions on Questionnaire One (Appendix D), three open-ended questions on Questionnaire Two (Appendix E), and from the nineteen questions asked during the optional 1-on-1 interviews (Appendix G). By adopting more of a case study approach to interpreting data, one can examine the story that individual results tell and look for emergent themes and patterns.

Because the participants assigned themselves their pseudonyms for Questionnaire One and Two and the researcher of the current study assigned the participants’ pseudonym for the 1-on-1 interviews, it is impossible to connect the questionnaire results with the interview responses. The researcher of the current study chose to do this so that the anonymity of participants on Questionnaire One and Two would not be violated.

The two open-ended questions on Questionnaire One (Appendix D) were: “What are five words that you would use to describe yourself?” (Q 17) and “What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself?” (Q 18). On Questionnaire Two (Appendix E), the open-ended questions were: “What are five words you would use to describe yourself?” (Q 17),
“Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain” (Q 18), and “Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture” (Q 19). One pattern that emerged was that all participants included “awkward” in the five words that described themselves. The rest of the results from the open-ended interviews can be seen in tables 4.2 – 4.7.

Table 4.2. Open-Ended Question Results: Castiel Winchester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17 Quiet, Worried, Insecure, Sad, Funny</td>
<td>Awkward, Quiet, Weird, Musical, Trust-worthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 Run, listen to music, hang out with friends, go on the internet</td>
<td>It made me more comfortable in front of small groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19 -</td>
<td>(left blank)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Questionnaire One: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? Questionnaire Two: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

It was interesting to note that on question 17, Castiel Winchester used only one positive descriptive word on Questionnaire One (funny) and two on Questionnaire Two (musical and trust-worthy). The impact of her involvement in the film project was described as a positive one as well, having made her feel “more comfortable” in front of others. It is also interesting that she left blank the question referring to her connection to her Aboriginal culture.
Table 4.3. *Open-Ended Question Results: Son*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17</td>
<td>Awkward Anti-Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Questionnaire One: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? Questionnaire Two: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.*

What struck the researcher of the current study with Son’s results was that she was only able to write two words that described herself on Questionnaire One and on Questionnaire Two she was able to write seven. In Questionnaire One Son only included negative descriptors, while in Questionnaire Two, two of the descriptors were positive (loyal and hilarious). The fact that Son wrote “NOTHING” regarding her connection to her Aboriginal culture was also a point of interest for the researcher of the current study.
Table 4.4. Open-Ended Question Results: Emm Somer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17 Weird</td>
<td>Awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Bubbly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubbly</td>
<td>Weird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Quiet/Loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>Curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 I wanna say wear make-up but that doesn’t really help, hmmm nothing really</td>
<td>Nah, but it made me a bit of a happier person because spending time with cool people is fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19 -</td>
<td>Dance practice (Native dancing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Questionnaire One: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? Questionnaire Two: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

One of the two most interesting responses that Emm Somer gave was on Questionnaire One when, after contemplating the use of make-up, she stated that there was nothing that she did that made her feel good about herself. The other thing that is worth mentioning is that on Questionnaire Two she included “curious” as one of the words she would use to describe herself.
Table 4.5. *Open-Ended Question Results: Sqjudgy Carlile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17 Awkward</td>
<td>Awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weird</td>
<td>Annoying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td>Different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lame</td>
<td>Distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupid</td>
<td>Pierce the Viel Obsessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 Listen to music</td>
<td>I am not sure how to answer this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19 -</td>
<td>Dance practice, activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Questionnaire One:* Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? *Questionnaire Two:* Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

The descriptive words used by Sqjudgy Carlile were overwhelmingly negative and this was of concern to the researcher of the current study. The fact that Sqjudgy Carlile did not know how to respond to question 18 on Questionnaire Two brought to light the limitations of paper-based questionnaires, in that they do not allow for clarification or discussion surrounding the meaning of specific questions.
Table 4.6. *Open-Ended Question Results: Darth Vader*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17 Happy, Friendly, Tall, Smart, Vibrant</td>
<td>Tall, Not short, Long-legged, Awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18 (left blank)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19 -</td>
<td>Eating with my mouth open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Questionnaire One:* Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? *Questionnaire Two:* Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

Darth Vader wrote many positive descriptions of her personality on Questionnaire One, but only included physical descriptions on Questionnaire Two. This left the researcher of the current study to wonder what the difference in Darth Vader’s mindset was when completing the two questionnaires. It was also perplexing that she wrote “eating with my mouth open” in response to question 19 which asked participants to describe practices that connect them to their Aboriginal culture.
### Table 4.7. Open-Ended Question Results: Mashed Potatoes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire One</th>
<th>Questionnaire Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 17</td>
<td>Q 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funny</td>
<td>Awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>Tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quirky</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Artsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 18</td>
<td>Q 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to get out of the house and do something like go for a walk or a drive</td>
<td>It’s changed the way I feel about myself in multiple ways. Before I started this I was a bit more shy and not as open as I am now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t really do anything like that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Questionnaire One: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself? Questionnaire Two: Q 17: What are five words that you would use to describe yourself? Q 18: Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain. Q 19: Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.*

Mashed Potatoes offered some keen insights in her responses, namely by including the word “artsy” in the words she would use to describe herself in Questionnaire Two and by recognizing that being involved in the film project changed her self-concept in multiple ways, including making her feel “more open” than she did before.

The last piece of qualitative data obtained in the current study was the results of the optional 1-on-1 interviews. Four interviews were completed by participants, all of whom also completed Questionnaire One and Two. To protect the anonymity of the participants’ questionnaires, interview participants were assigned a pseudonym by the researcher of the current study. Due to this fact, interview results could not be connected to questionnaire results. Those who participated in the optional 1-on-1 interview were Valerie, Smith, Morris, and Lenore. Based on the interview responses, four themes emerged around school, accomplishing
goals, self-image, and the film project. These themes coincided with the Guiding Questions from the interview (Appendix G), questions that pertained directly to self-perception, academics, and the film project.

Valerie admitted that “not doing good at school” and making it possible “to go to a good college” were topics of worry for her, and that she sometimes has difficulty sleeping because her worry was so great. Graduating from high school was considered to be very important according to Valerie because if you don’t you will “be poor…you don’t get to do much and you live paycheck to paycheck, and you’re in debt and there’s people calling your house and you can’t answer the phone.” Valerie was determined to get a scholarship this year and aspires to be a veterinarian in the future. She expressed that if she worked hard she could accomplish her goals. When asked if she enjoyed working on the film project, Valerie indicated that “it was fun making a film” and that is was insightful to see herself from an external perspective, the way others might see her. She claimed that the project gave her “more confidence” and made her feel at ease about moving up to the high school because she would “know some people there now.”

Smith was less concerned with academic achievement and appeared more concerned with self-image. She stated that school was “a waste of time” and that her goal for herself was “just to pass my classes.” Smith admits that one needs at least grade 12 to get a job and that learning “opens up new opportunities,” however she makes no mention of attending post-secondary education and states that she longs to be a photographer in the future. When asked what Smith saw when she looked in the mirror she replied “trash,” explaining that she looked like her father who left her family when she was very young. She stated, “I don’t know how I see myself, I don’t really look in the mirror that often. Just when I go to the bathroom, that’s it.” When listing the things she worried about, Smith said “how I look…socializing…if no one will listen to
me or if I say something wrong then it like sticks with me for the rest of the day and I over-think stuff.” Smith recalled the sense of belonging that the film project created for her, saying phrases like “working together,” “making memories,” and it “made me feel like I’m not alone and there’s other people that are like me that are going through the same struggles and stuff.” The last thing she said in the interview was, “Are we going to do more films?”

Morris thought that school was “good,” but listed “the work and all the tests and everything” as things that worry her. She was the only participant that said “when [emphasis added] I finish school and go to university,” compared to the other participants who said things like “I really want to graduate” or “if [emphasis added] I graduate I want to go to university.” Morris admitted that with hard work and determination, she will be able to accomplish her goals, including working with animals in the future. Morris stated that graduating from high school was a way to “be able to live better I guess.” When asked what some of her strengths were Morris passed on the question and when she described what she saw in the mirror she said, “I just see myself, just like, whatever, that’s just how I look, so.” The film project was described as “fun…a good experience that I never really had before” and she said that everything about it was “pretty cool.” Morris also mentioned that working with the group was one of the most enjoyable parts of the project.

Lenore stated, “I despise school,” asking “why does it put so much stress on kids cause I’ve noticed a lot of my friends are like so stressed out…doing homework until like two in the morning.” After sharing that her mom left school in grade 10, Lenore expressed having the academic goals of graduating from high school on time and attending university. When asked if she thinks she can reach her goals she said, “I think so…if I work hard.” She also stated that graduating from high school is not always necessary, and used singers as examples of successful,
non-graduates. Lenore aspires to be either a photographer or a music producer, and her role models were all musicians who had overcome issues such as “self-hatred,” “eating disorders,” and “heart disease.” When describing what she sees when she looks in the mirror, Lenore stated that she sees herself in three ways, “one, there’s the person I don’t like, two, there’s the person I like in myself, and three, there’s the person I see in myself for the future.” Her perception of the film project was mixed between enjoying spending time with friends and “an awesome teacher” and being “nervous that people would be like ‘holy she has problems, she’s mental’ and think things about me.”

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews provided insight into the participants’ self-concept, academic aspirations, and their belief in their ability to obtain said aspirations. Data was interpreted and analyzed in chapter five.
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

Summary

The current researcher began this research because she was concerned with the fact that 60% of Aboriginal students graduated within the six year completion rate, as opposed to the 86% graduation rate for non-Aboriginal students (BC Ministry of Education, 2014). She wondered what impact, if any, these statistics had on Aboriginal students’ self-concept and began to look for possible ways to increase Aboriginal students’ engagement level in schools. Having been a teacher for the past ten years, the current researcher had noticed that arts-based activities such as drama clubs, dance clubs, and choirs had created a sense of belonging for many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. She wondered if arts-based activities could be a means of engaging students in school until graduation and provide a platform for Aboriginal students to share their perspectives and experiences with a larger population.

As a result, the current researcher’s thesis question became: Can being involved in arts-based projects positively impact Aboriginal students’ self-concept? She hypothesized that being involved in a common goal that involved artistic expression would both create a sense of belonging for the members of the project and allow for participants to express themselves in a safe, supportive environment. The latter possibly allowing for participants to gain further insight into who they are, what they feel, and how they want to express themselves. Her hope was that by increasing self-awareness through self-expression, participants may gain self-empowerment and therefore feel more confident that they could attain their academic and non-academic (personal) goals.

Fortunately, in the community of Port Alberni, Parenting Path Group Productions (PPGP) was beginning a film project intended for Aboriginal communities that explored what it was like
to be a teenager from a teenager’s point of view. Because of her experience teaching drama, acting, script-writing, and directing at the local high school, Kerry Robertson, Co-Founder and Co-Producer of PPGP, approached the current researcher to see if she could assist her with the film project. The current researcher viewed this proposal as an opportunity to explore the impact that the arts might have on Aboriginal students’ self-concept and agreed to be involved in the project. After obtaining permission from the superintendent of School District 70 and First Nations chief Hugh Braker, the current researcher delivered a recruitment speech (Appendix A) to the twelve students involved in the film project and eight participants were obtained. All participants were female students between the ages of 13 and 15.

The current researcher created two paper based questionnaires and designed an optional 1-on-1 interview. The questionnaires included questions from Marsh and O’Neill’s (1984) Self-Description Questionnaire III, a questionnaire that examines 13 facets of self-concept. The current researcher also created two open-ended questions on Questionnaire One (Appendix D) and three open-ended question on Questionnaire Two (Appendix E), and invited participants to take part in an optional 1-on-1 interview to gain a deeper understanding of their self-concept. There were nine weeks between Questionnaire One and Questionnaire Two. The interviews took place ten weeks after Questionnaire One was administered.

Within that time the current researcher followed Conrad’s (2004) model of first creating a Graffiti Wall and exploring a topic in a brain-storming type fashion. The topic was “teenagerdom,” explained as the kingdom of being a teenager. Participants contributed their thoughts to the wall and seven themes emerged: technology, substance use, relationships, school, parents, self-image, and self-harm. Like Conrad (2004), the current researcher wrote a script that covered aspects of these emergent themes and shared it with the members of the film project.
The participants appeared excited to be addressing some, of what they called, “real” issues that were often the subject of difficult conversations. Many of the girls wanted to play the role of “girl” in the film, and as a result an audition process began whereby the girls voted on who they thought did the best job portraying the “girl.” The current researcher did the final casting, filming, and directing of the movie and two of the participants did the editing and sound on the production. A screening of the film occurred with the participants’ friends and family and the girls seemed proud of their accomplishment. All of the participants said that they enjoyed creating the film and many stated that it affected their self-concept in a positive way.

Discussion

The results shown in Table 4.1 indicate that, for some participants, involvement in arts-based activities can have a positive impact on self-concept. Self-concept score shifts were both positive and negative in Table 4.1. The fact that the highest individual score shift was negative three, on question 4 (self-worth) and question 8 (reading comprehension), suggests that there was minimal negative change in the way participants perceived themselves within their nine weeks of arts-based activity involvement. There was either no shift or a positive shift for the overall scores for participants on questions 1 (self-respect), 5 (upbringing), 9 (academic achievement), 10 (physical ability), and 16 (self-confidence). Three participants had a positive shift pertaining to how much self-respect they had and none of the participants had a decreased score related to self-respect. This may suggest that being involved in the film project increased their confidence and the pride they took in their work gave them more respect for themselves.

Of the 16 Likert scale responses, three had a negative shift for all participants: question 3 (reliability), question 13 (stress), and question 14 (physical appearance). This may suggest that participants felt stressed by what was happening in their lives or more specifically, related to the
project itself, and perhaps they felt that they were unreliable during the film project or in life in general. The fact that physical appearance scores went down may indicate that participants did not like the way they looked in the film, or it may indicate that the way they see themselves on a whole became more prominent while watching themselves on screen.

The results of question 9 (academic achievement) and question 16 (self-confidence) had an overall neutral shift, where the total shift among all participants was zero. Similarly, with only a negative one overall score shift were questions 2 (happiness), 6 (math ability), 7 (written expression), and 8 (reading comprehension). These results reveal that involvement in the film project had little effect on participants’ perceived academic ability and any negative score shifts may have been compounded by the fact that it was part way through their school semester and students had just received their list of incomplete assignments. Obtaining a list of incomplete assignments may have reminded participants of their academic shortcomings and affected their self-concept. These findings do not coincide with Smithrim and Upitis’s (2005) research connecting arts-based activities with an increase in mathematical understanding. Although the current study did not measure mathematical understanding, it did address students’ perceived competency in the subject.

Two of the most intriguing results were on questions 4 (self-worth) and 15 (self-expression). The current researcher had hypothesized that scores would go up in these two areas, but both scores went down: self-worth decreased by three points and self-expression decreased by four points. Perhaps this occurred because the participants felt that their ability to express themselves was confined to the script that the current researcher had created, or that because the film project was only nine weeks, once they began to truly express themselves the project was over. The results surrounding self-worth were the most concerning, but perhaps the process of
the film project, combined with the sense of belonging it created, allowed for the participants to be more honest in their responses on Questionnaire Two. There is the possibility that because the current researcher was also the teacher of three of the participants the previous year and one of the participants during the film process, participants may have wanted to project a more positive self-concept than was actual. This will be discussed further in the limitations section.

It is important to note that the overall self-concept score for the total group of participants went down by negative 12.5 points, but this is mainly due to the results of Squidgy Carlile whose overall self-concept score decreased by 12.5 points and Darth Vadar, whose self-concept score decreased by 8. If Squidgy Carlile was omitted from the data the overall self-concept score for the remaining participants would have been zero, suggesting that individual participants’ scores can significantly impact group findings. However, the data indicated that for many of the participants the film project was a positive experience, thus increasing their individual self-concept scores. In fact, half of the participants’ self-concept scores went up (Castiel Winchester: positive 1, Emm Somer: positive 6, and Mashed Potatoes: positive 3) and half went down (Son: negative 2, Squidgy Carlile: negative 12.5, and Darth Vadar: negative 8). This suggests that arts-based activities have the potential to positively affect some Aboriginal students’ self-concept.

Because the current researcher’s intention was to create a sense of belonging for the participants, it was interesting that four participants had a decreased score shift on question 11 (friendship) even though in the qualitative responses many of them mentioned working with friends as one of the things they liked most about the film project. Some of the comments that reflected this were: “I liked the fact that my friends were there” (Lenore), “It made me a bit of a happier person because spending time with cool people is fun” – Emm Somer (response to
question 18 on Questionnaire Two), “I feel more confident going up to the high school because I
know some people there now” (Valerie), and “It made me feel like I’m not alone” (Smith).

Even though the participants recognized the bond and sense of belonging they felt within
the group, their self-concept scores regarding friendships suggested that they still see others in
their environment as having more friends than they do. This was interesting because the
comments that participants made were not reflected in Table 4.1. Still, participants felt that they
belonged within the drama group and so the belonging quadrant of Brendtro et al.’s (1990) Circle
of Courage was strengthened, possibly allowing the quadrants of mastery, independence, and
generosity to be strengthened further as well.

The responses to the five open-ended questions on Questionnaire One and Two provided
three themes around self-concept, the film project, and participants’ connection to their
Aboriginal culture. When asked to list five words that described themselves, question 17 on
Questionnaire One and Two, participants offered a wide range of responses with only one
commonality throughout, “awkward.” This may be a reflection of being a 13-15 year old girl as,
according to the current researcher’s personal memories and teaching experience, those are
difficult years for many. The current researcher wondered if results may have differed if the
participant base had included males.

Like the self-concept scores, there was a division amongst the participants in terms of
how many positive self-description words were listed on Questionnaire One and Two. Castiel
Winchester and Emm Somer were the only two participant who experienced an increase in self-
concept score and had more positive self-description words on Questionnaire Two. Castiel
Winchester went from naming one positive self-descriptive word (funny) to two (musical and
trust-worthy). Emm Somer went from listing one positive self-descriptive word (bubbly) to two
as well (bubbly and curious). This would suggest that they see themselves in a more positive way after their involvement in the film project. It was encouraging that Emm Somer added “curious” to her list of self-description words as it suggests that she is more open to the world, wondering more about the possibilities for herself, and demonstrating a deeper awareness of life’s complexities.

Although Son’s overall self-concept score went down by two, she was able to add more self-descriptive words on Questionnaire Two. In fact, on Questionnaire One she only wrote two words, “awkward” and “anti-social,” when asked to list five. On Questionnaire Two she listed seven words, “awkward,” “annoying,” “loyal,” “idiot,” “rude,” “hilarious,” and “absent-minded,” two of which were positive, “loyal” and “hilarious.” This suggests that Son had gained insight into her self-concept and was able to identify some positives about herself after her involvement in the film project.

On the contrary Mashed Potatoes, who had an overall self-concept shift of positive three, listed fewer positive self-descriptive words on Questionnaire Two. The positive words she lists on Questionnaire One were “funny,” “smart,” and “quirky” and only “happy” and “artsy” appear as positives on Questionnaire Two. Although “awkward” was mentioned on both questionnaires, “shy” from Questionnaire One is replaced with “tired” and “overwhelmed.” This may suggest that, through the film project process, Mashed Potatoes became less shy and more tired and overwhelmed by the process of opening up to her peers. It might also be a reflection of the fact that she had just received a list of her incomplete assignments for school and was preoccupied with that. Perhaps these results show what Lopez and Hall (2007) referred to when describing students’ involvement in arts-based activities as “deep learning that is able to transform the lives
of marginalized youth and produce a paradigm shift in the perception they have of themselves” (p. 34). In some cases this shift is a positive one and for others it is a negative one.

Both Squidgy Carlile and Darth Vadar had decreased self-concept scores by the end of the film project and the words they used to describe themselves reflected that. Squidgy Carlile, whose self-concept score shifted by negative 12.5 listed only negative words on both questionnaires. Besides “awkward” being listed for both, she includes “weird,” “crazy,” “lame,” and “stupid” on Questionnaire One and “annoying,” “different,” “distracted,” and “Pierce the Veil obsessed” on Questionnaire Two. These responses were concerning as they illustrated the negative self-concept that she had and the ensuing isolation she must have felt. Based on her responses, the current researcher suspected that Squidgy Carlile was the participant who had auditioned for the part of “girl” in the film and did not get it. This will be mentioned further in the limitations section as well.

Darth Vadar also had a more negative self-concept score on Questionnaire Two with an overall shift of negative 8. Oddly, four of her five self-descriptive words on Questionnaire One were positive “happy,” “friendly,” “smart,” and “vibrant,” and on Questionnaire Two she did not include any positive descriptors, merely listing descriptions of herself physically: “tall,” “not short,” “long-legged,” and “awkward.” Darth Vadar’s shift to more superficial descriptive words suggests that she was not able or willing to look at herself more deeply, or that when she did look within herself she did not like or did not have the skill set to deal with what she saw. There is a chance that Darth Vadar was having a bad day or was too tired to think of a deeper response, or perhaps she became more guarded and uncomfortable through the process of watching others open up so much.
The feedback about the film project’s impact on participants appeared both in the open-ended question responses and in the 1-on-1 interviews. There were no negative comments made about the project and the language that participants used illustrated the positive effect that involvement in the film project had on their self-concept. On Questionnaire Two, participants wrote in response to question 18 (Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself?) that they felt “more comfortable” (Castiel Winchester and Son), were a “happier person” (Emm Somer), and that they had “changed in multiple ways…” becoming more “…open” (Mashed Potatoes) through the process. The current researcher believed that if participants felt that their involvement in an arts-based activity had affected their self-concept in a positive way, then indeed it did. In her 1-on-1 interview, when asked if she could go back in time and say anything to herself before she embarked on the film project, Lenore said “Change your attitude!” admitting that at the beginning of the project she was “like get me out of here and then by like the end I was like having a bit of fun.”

Question 19 on Questionnaire Two (Appendix E) asked participants to describe activities that connected them to their Aboriginal culture. It was surprising that only two of the six participants said that they were involved with activities that connected them to their Aboriginal culture, specifically Aboriginal dancing. Castiel Winchester, Son, and Mashed Potatoes stated that they did not participate in any cultural activities, and Darth Vadar wrote “eating with my mouth open.” The current researcher was unsure how to interpret the latter comment, but inferred that it was written as a joke and is a possible reflection of what Antone (2000) described as feeling torn between two cultures, the Euro-Western world of the education system and the traditional world of Aboriginal peoples. Sadly, by poking fun at members of her Aboriginal community, Darth Vadar may be trying to find her place among the majority of her peers in the
EXPLORING THE ARTS

Euro-Western world. This sentiment is echoed in Brendtro et al.’s (1990) *Reclaiming Youth at Risk* in the chapter dedicated to the spirit of belonging. They state that Aboriginal youth who do not respond in a positive way to a group do so because they do not feel a sense of belonging to that group (Brendtro et al., 1990). Perhaps Darth Vadar’s comment is reinforcing the fact that she feels an equal disconnect from both Euro-Western and Aboriginal cultures.

When reflecting upon the research question and hypothesis of the current study the current researcher believed that yes, being involved in an arts-based project can positively impact students’ self-concept. There appeared to be an increase in both self-expression and self-awareness, but the current researcher had not expected self-concept to be affected in a negative way as a result. Perhaps when individuals look within themselves it can be like looking into the ocean for the first time; one sees how vast, mysterious, full of beauty, and complex it is. With support and time, the current researcher believed that such self-exploration could increase students’ self-empowerment and perhaps increase their perceived ability to reach academic goals. In respect to the purpose of the current study, incorporating the arts in students’ learning environments has been shown to have the potential to engage students and give them insights into their self-concept, and perhaps this is a viable tool in bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal graduation rates.

**Limitations**

One important limitation that the current researcher would like to note is the fact that she is not of Aboriginal ancestry. Her Irish, Scottish, German, and English background have given her what Hatcher (2012) refers to as “privilege” that often goes unmentioned, but is always visible (p. 350). The current researcher had always been drawn to the beauty of Aboriginal culture, had participated in many full moon circle ceremonies, and instinctively cried when she
heard First Nations’ drumming, but she in no way claimed to understand Aboriginal ways of knowing first hand. Although the current researcher was in awe of the cultural practices of Aboriginal people and was enraged by the history of colonization in Canada, she could only gain further insight into Aboriginal culture from an external perspective.

Other limitations included the fact that the film project was only nine weeks in length, a short period of time to see significant changes in self-concept. If the study were longer it could have illustrated a more measurable impact on participants’ self-concept. The fact that undecided received a score of three on the Likert scale was also a factor because it does not confirm a positive or negative self-concept. Broadening the participant base to include males and examining students from a variety of age levels would have also allowed for a more thorough picture of youths’ self-concept as it relates to arts-based activity involvement. Furthermore, if a non-Aboriginal control group participated in an arts-based activity for comparison, a deeper understanding of the effect of arts-based activities on Aboriginal students specifically could have been explored.

The relationship between the participants and the current researcher was also a limitation in that she wore three hats throughout the process: researcher, creative director, and teacher. Because three of the participants had been students of the current researcher the previous year and one of the participants was currently a student in her class, there was a power-over relationship. Although the current researcher made it clear that the film project was a community project that in no way affected their grades, perhaps the girls cared about what the current researcher thought of them and this could have impacted the information that they chose to share with her. Squidgy Carlile for example, whom the current researcher suspected to be the participant currently in her class, had a self-concept score of 39.5 on Questionnaire One and a
score of 27 on Questionnaire Two. The current researcher inferred that Squidgy Carlile wanted to present herself in a certain way at the onset of the project, and perhaps became more honest as her sense of belonging grew. Or, as previously mentioned, she may have been upset by the audition process and her self-concept could have been negatively affected as a result.

The scores of individual participants also impacted group scores. For example, Squidgy Carlile and Darth Vadars’ self-concept scores played an important role in determining the results for Table 4.1. Because their self-concept shifts were so great, it impacted the total shift for all participants. Although 50% of the participants experienced a positive self-concept shift, the negative self-concept shifts for the remaining 50% were much higher, thus impacting the total score shift for the group.

Another limitation was that the participants did not appear to have enough self-awareness to articulate a clear self-concept either before or after their involvement in the film project. One example of this can be found when, on Questionnaire One, Son could only list two words that describe herself even though she was asked to list five. Another example is when Morris was asked in her 1-on-1 interview to list some of her strengths and she said “pass,” implying that she could not think of any of her strengths. In response to the same question Lenore said “some people say writing, but I don’t really know.” This comment suggests that self-concept is often based on what other people think or may suggest that saying something positive about one’s self without a disclaimer might be seen as conceited. Similarly, when Smith said she saw “trash” when she looked in the mirror in her 1-on-1 interview, she was referring to the fact that she looked like her father who abandoned her at a very young age. Here we see how participants can create their self-concept in relation to others, rather than based on how they see themselves as autonomous individuals.
Squiddy Carlile listed her strengths as “listening,” “being quiet,” and “following orders. That’s it.” This sort of statement implies that the individual does not feel entitled or encouraged to be their authentic self and must merely obey the orders of those viewed as being in a position of power. How can one express themselves and be aware of themselves when they are silenced in such a manner? These comments were concerning to the current researcher. Perhaps Lenore could offer some insight. When asked if the film project changed her, Lenore admitted that “[d]uring this I didn’t really think like about myself or anything. I just thought about what we were doing and how the day was going.” This shows the lack of meta-cognitive awareness that participants can have during their experiences, and perhaps illustrates the lack of permission these young women felt to express themselves authentically.

Another important aspect of the project was that there was food provided at workshops and meetings. This added to the sense of community and belonging that participants felt. In her 1-on-1 interview Valerie stated that “the food” was her favorite part about working on this project. The food also likely appealed to Morris, who when asked to share something interesting about herself in her 1-on-1 interview stated “I’m hungry a lot, like a lot.” Based on comments like these, the current researcher believed that food was a limitation, as the absence of it may have affected the participants’ involvement.

The last limitation or factor impacting results was the content of the film. The film encapsulated themes generated by the Graffiti Wall activity, including feelings of isolation, relationship pressures, substance use, and issues surrounding self-harm. The mood of the film was dark and could be perceived as negative. Although the current researcher reinforced the fact that participants were actors portraying characters who were experiencing such struggles, the act of embodying a person who engages in self-harm for example could have a negative effect on the
actor’s self-concept. The film was based on a poem that one of the participants wrote about self-harm and the poem was read in the background of the film. She chose to have her name listed in the credits as the author of the poem and felt vulnerable to the opinions of others based on that decision. If one’s self-concept is affected by what others think then this participant likely experienced dissonance as a result of exposing herself and her artistry.

Other limitations to consider include external factors influencing the girls’ self-concept when they were responding to the questionnaires, students who only completed one questionnaire, the questionnaires themselves, and maturation. However, this research parallels the work of Colley (2011) in that a drama-based activity provided a platform to give voice to student issues that are rarely heard.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The main areas for further research into the impact that the arts can have on Aboriginal students’ self-concept include the content of the arts-based project and who is involved. The last thing Smith said in her 1-on-1 interview was “are we going to do more films?” The current researcher took this as an indication that she valued the process and was keen to do it again. The current researcher’s response in the interview was “ah, we might have to I think” and she fully intends on continuing her research in this area. In the future however, the current researcher hopes to generate projects that focus on the positives of the clientele that are involved rather than the negatives. The current researcher hopes to create a film based on the theme “I can…” and embark on a mural project that illustrates the strengths youth see in themselves and in their community. Although the participants took pride in their performance in the film, the byproduct of exposing themselves in a potentially negative way is something the current researcher would like to avoid in future projects.
The next time the current researcher is involved in a film project she would also like for the participants to have more ownership over the content of the film. Instead of writing a script based on their contributions to the Graffiti Wall the current researcher would use a collective creation approach, described as a series of artistic pieces about a common theme strung together through intentional transitions. With this model, participants would be responsible for creating the individual pieces of the collective creation, be they dances, songs, scripted scenes, duologues, monologues or readers’ theatre. By taking this approach, the collective creation that participants create would resemble what Conrad (2004) calls performance ethnography, a form of participatory research that “stresses the inherent capacity for participants to create their own knowledge based on their experiences” (p. 7). With the collective creation, the artistic pieces that the participants create are essentially data, providing further evidence towards their self-concept.

It would be interesting to involve boys in any future projects as well, as Scholes and Nagel (2011) have shown that film-making specifically can raise engagement levels with boys. Arts-based activities have shown to foster relationships with both boys and girls, and as Maclver (2012) discovered in her research, a high number of Aboriginal participants (70%) attributed arts-based activities to their increased engagement levels. The current researcher planned to continue investigating potential ways to foster healthy self-concept building in a safe and nurturing environment.

Implications for Practice

The current study sought to explore the arts as a means to affect Aboriginal students’ self-concept. Based on the results of this research, the current researcher planned to continue using arts-based activities both within and outside of the curriculum. Whenever possible, she
will incorporate music, movement, fine arts, and expression in her teaching practice, as her research shows that arts-based activities can positively impact some students’ self-concept and engagement. The current researcher aims to offer students the possibility of joining extra-curricular arts based projects, such as film and mural projects that can create a sense of belonging by bringing students together, working towards a common goal.

The current researcher would also like to continue offering projects that are open to students from a variety of schools, as the current study alleviated some anxiety associated with transitioning from the middle school to the high school for one of the participants. Results of the current study will be shared with colleagues and the current researcher is prepared to present her findings at team meetings, staff meetings, and professional development opportunities. The main insight that the current researcher would like to share is that relationship-building, positive school climate, and opportunities for students to express themselves creatively are all viable ways of engaging students and impacting their academic success (Lopez & Hall, 2007; Maclver, 2012; Conrad, 2004; Hatcher, 2012; Antone, 2000).

The key to increasing the graduation rate for Aboriginal students is to continue to foster relationships with students, create a sense of belonging for all students, and based on the results of this study, incorporate arts-based activities whenever possible (Maclver, 2012; Lopez & Hall, 2007; Conrad, 2004; Brendtro et al., 1990). Perhaps an increase in self-awareness is the first step to creating a more positive self-concept, enabling individuals to reach both their academic and non-academic goals.

What the current researcher has learned from this study is that film can be a powerful means of artistic expression. The reaction from fellow educators upon viewing the film included statements such as “how brave the topic was…how we need to teach the whole person,”
“NEVER [capitals in original] forget the power that the arts can have on engagement,” and “your research reminds us of the value of scanning our students for self-concept and its correlation to academic success.” One colleague said “I was unaware of these serious issues and am wondering if you had any opposition with the content/subject of your video” and “it definitely highlights a problem and creates a voice for the students while creating awareness.” Another professional educator reminded the current researcher that such work “needs to be followed through” and remarked that it was “very courageous work.”

In the past four years, the graduation rate for Aboriginal students has risen 11%, from 51% to 62% (BC Ministry of Education, 2014). This increase confirms that things are moving in a positive direction and may reflect the use of what Maclver (2012) referred to as, personalized learning, an approach that relies on educators getting to know their students on a deeper level. When Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students believe that they can accomplish their goals, and know adults in their schools who believe in them, they will be better equipped to do just that.

_Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t – you’re right!_ –Henry Ford
References


http://199.71.28.69/eng/research/summary.pdf#page=11

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”

Principal Investigator: Sandra Shahi, SD 70 – Port Alberni, BC

Action Research Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
250.753.3245 ex. 2161
rachel.moll@viu.ca

Purpose of the Study:
I am a graduate student at Vancouver Island University in the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program and a teacher at A. W. Neill Middle School in SD # 70. As part of my thesis in the course called “Research in Education” I have designed a research project that explores arts-based activities as a potential means to engage Aboriginal students and impact their self-concept.

Scripted Introduction:
Hello. My name is Sandra Shahi and I am a Gr. 8 teacher in School District 70 and a graduate student at Vancouver Island University in the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program. Some of you might know me from school or even be in one of my classes. As part of my course at Vancouver Island University, I am conducting a research project that looks at arts-based activities as a way to engage Aboriginal students and impact their self-concept; how young people see themselves and their abilities. If you choose to participate in my study, I will be asking you about how you see yourself near the beginning of your involvement in a film project and towards the end of your involvement, to see if being involved in the film has affected the way you see yourself. There is also an optional follow-up interview to explore the potential impact of your participation. For participants who volunteer to participate in the survey or the interview your name will be entered into a draw for one of three 10$ coffee shop gift certificates. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without question. The questionnaires are anonymous and the interview is strictly confidential. If you choose to participate, your real name will never be used and anything you say in the questionnaires will remain confidential. The only instance where anonymity cannot be guaranteed is if you share information that jeopardizes your safety. If you are interested in
participating, please take a copy of the parent/guardian consent form and return it to Kerry Robertson within one week. Thank-you for your consideration in participating in my study.
Appendix B: Research Participation Parent/Guardian Consent Form

**Principal Investigator:**
Sandra Shahi  
Master of Education Student  
Vancouver Island University

**Research Supervisor:**
Dr. Rachel Moll  
Faculty of Education  
Vancouver Island University  
250.753.3245 ex. 2161

**Research Information and Purpose of Study**
In addition to being a Teacher in School District 70, I am also a graduate student at Vancouver Island University in the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program. As part of my thesis in the course called “Research in Education” I have designed a research project that explores arts-based activities as a potential means to engage Aboriginal students and impact their self-concept – how they see themselves and their abilities. Your child is currently involved in a film project intended for Aboriginal families to share what it is like to be a teenager from a teenager’s perspective. This is why your child is being asked to participate in this study which involves completing 2 questionnaires, and an interview. Participants who volunteer to complete the questionnaires and the interview will have their name entered into a draw for one of three $10 coffee shop gift certificates.

Your child’s participation in this research is completely voluntary. **He or she may choose to stop at any time without having to give an explanation and your child will not be penalized in any way.** All information your child has provided prior to the point of withdrawal will be removed and not included in the study results. During the questionnaires or interview process, your child may also choose not to answer specific questions. The questionnaires take approximately 15-20 minutes each and the optional interview approximately to 40 minutes to complete. The questionnaires will take place at ADSS during one of the project’s workshop, rehearsal, or filming sessions and the interview will take place outside of school time at a date and time convenient for your child and myself.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity**
A research assistant will collect student consent and assent forms. The information your child provides will be kept strictly confidential. All students completing questionnaires and interviews will choose a pseudonym (anonymous name) to be used in my written reports where needed. No one will be able to connect your child with any particular set of answers he or she provides. In the event that information is revealed that jeopardizes your child’s safety, I may be obligated to
report these matters to the appropriate authorities, and in these cases confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. With your permission and your child’s, the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed on to a computer document. Your child will be provided with a copy of the transcripts for their records. The results of this study will be compiled and reported in a written research report and published at Vancouver Island University. The report may also be shared with the Superintendent of School District 70, Cam Pinkerton, so that Aboriginal students have a voice in their learning community. The questionnaires will be kept in a locked safe at my home. They will be destroyed by burning in March 2018, approximately 3 years after completion of the research. The transcribed interview files will be deleted from the database approximately 3 years after completion of the research project, in March 2018.

**Potential Risks**
Since some of the questions ask your child about how they feel about themselves, they may experience feelings of emotional upset. If at any time during or after completing the questionnaires or optional interview, your child experiences any kind of distress and wishes to speak with someone, please contact the available counseling services at Kuu-us Crisis Line (250-723-4050), Children’s Help Line (250-310-1234), or Central Vancouver Island Crisis Line (1-888-494-3888).

**Concerns about your treatment in the research**
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) of by email at reb@viu.ca.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the email address or phone number below:

Sandra Shahi  
Master of Education Student  
Vancouver Island University

If you consent to your child’s involvement in this study, please sign the form on the next page (p. 3) indicating your consent and have your child return it to Kerry Robertson on or before the September 17 workshop at ADSS.

Please keep the above information for your records.
Appendix B: Research Participation Parent/Guardian Consent Form

PLEASE CHECKMARK THE APPROPRIATE BOX(ES):

☐ I consent for my child to participate in 2 questionnaires regarding self-perception for Sandra Shahi’s research.

☐ I consent for my child to participate in a 1-on-1 interview for Sandra Shahi’s research and for the interview to be audio recorded.

☐ I consent for my child to participate in a 1-on-1 interview for Sandra Shahi’s research, but do not wish to have the interview audio recorded.

____________________________________________________
Date:

____________________________________________________
Student’s Name (Please Print)

____________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print)

____________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature
Appendix C: Statement of Assent Form

“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”

Principal Investigator: Sandra Shahi
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Action Research Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
250.753.3245 ex. 2161

Research Information and Purpose of Study
As well as being a teacher in School District 70, I am also a graduate student at Vancouver Island University in the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program. As part of my thesis in the course called “Research in Education” I have designed a research project that explores arts-based activities as a means to affect Aboriginal students’ self-concept.

Key Terms
Arts-based activities are activities that involve a level of creativity, such as film production. Aboriginal means anyone of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit ancestry. Self-concept refers to how one sees themselves and their abilities.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are involved in a film project and you have Aboriginal ancestry. By participating in this study, you are being asked to complete two questionnaires that contain 19 questions each about how you see yourself, one near the beginning of film production and the other towards the end of production. You will also be invited to participate in a 1-on-1 interview towards the end of production. You are in no way required to participate in any of these activities. Participants who volunteer to complete both of the questionnaires and the interview will have their name entered into a draw for one of three $10 coffee shop gift certificates.

Potential Risks
Since the questions ask you about how you see yourself, you may experience feelings of emotional upset. If at any time during or after completing the questionnaires, you experience any kind of distress and wish to speak with someone, please contact the available counseling services at Kuu-us Crisis Line (250-723-4050), Children’s Help Line (250-310-1234), or Central Vancouver Island Crisis Line (1-888-494-3888).
Confidentiality and Anonymity
Other people may see you taking and/or completing these questionnaires; however, the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. No one will be able to connect you with any particular set of answers you provide since you will not put your real name or any other identifying information on the questionnaire. In the event that information is revealed that jeopardizes your safety, I may be obligated to report these matters to the appropriate authorities, and in these cases confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The results of this study will be compiled and reported in a written research report and published at Vancouver Island University. This report may also be shared with the School District 70 Superintendent, Cam Pinkerton. The questionnaires will be kept in a locked safe at my home. They will be destroyed by burning in March 2018, approximately 3 years after completion of the research. Please make up a pseudonym, or fake name, that you will easily remember to be used on both of your questionnaires.

Your Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You don’t have to participate if you do not want to and, if you start to participate, you may choose to stop at any time without having to give an explanation and you will not be penalized in any way. You may also choose not to answer specific questions. Please note that by handing in your sealed envelope containing your completed questionnaire to Kerry Robertson, you will have indicated your consent to participate in this part of the study.

Please keep this page for your references. This paper and pencil survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Concerns about your treatment in the research
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) of by email at reb@viu.ca.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the email address or phone number below:

Sandra Shahi
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University
“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”
Appendix D - Questionnaire One

PLEASE WRITE YOUR PSEUDONYM HERE ________________________________.
DO NOT WRITE ANY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please respond to the following items by drawing a circle around the response that most closely reflects your feelings: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

1. I have a lot of respect for myself.
SA     A     U     D     SD

2. I am happy most of the time.
SA     A     U     D     SD

3. People can always rely on me.
SA     A     U     D     SD

4. Overall, nothing I do is very important.
SA     A     U     D     SD

5. I would like to bring up children of my own (if I have any) like my parents raised me.
SA     A     U     D     SD

6. I have always done well in mathematics classes.
SA     A     U     D     SD
7. I have trouble expressing myself when trying to write something.

SA A U D SD

8. I often have to read things several times before I understand them.

SA A U D SD

9. I could never achieve academic honours, even if I worked harder.

SA A U D SD

10. I am awkward and poorly coordinated at most sports and physical activities.

SA A U D SD

11. Most people have more friends of the same sex than I do.

SA A U D SD

12. I get a lot of attention from members of the opposite sex.

SA A U D SD

13. I worry a lot.

SA A U D SD

14. There are lots of things about the way I look that I would like to change.

SA A U D SD

15. I am good at expressing myself.

SA A U D SD

16. Overall, I have a lot of self-confidence.

SA A U D SD

17. What are five words that you would use to describe yourself?
18. What are some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself?

19. Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

Thank-you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please place it in the envelope provided, seal it, and give it to Kerry Robertson upon completion.

If completing this questionnaire has caused you to experience any kind of distress and you would like to talk to someone about it, please let me know or contact the counseling services available on the attached assent form.
“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”
Appendix E – Questionnaire Two

PLEASE WRITE YOUR PSEUDONYM HERE ________________________________.
DO NOT WRITE ANY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please respond to the following items by drawing a circle around the response that most closely reflects your feelings: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

1. I have a lot of respect for myself.

SA  A  U  D  SD

2. I am happy most of the time.

SA  A  U  D  SD

3. People can always rely on me.

SA  A  U  D  SD

4. Overall, nothing I do is very important.

SA  A  U  D  SD

5. I would like to bring up children of my own (if I have any) like my parents raised me.

SA  A  U  D  SD

6. I have always done well in mathematic classes.

SA  A  U  D  SD
7. I have trouble expressing myself when trying to write something.

SA A U D SD

8. I often have to read things several times before I understand them.

SA A U D SD

9. I could never achieve academic honours, even if I worked harder.

SA A U D SD

10. I am awkward and poorly coordinated at most sports and physical activities.

SA A U D SD

11. Most people have more friends of the same sex than I do.

SA A U D SD

12. I get a lot of attention from members of the opposite sex.

SA A U D SD

13. I worry a lot.

SA A U D SD

14. There are lots of things about the way I look that I would like to change.

SA A U D SD

15. I am good at expressing myself.

SA A U D SD

16. Overall, I have a lot of self-confidence.

SA A U D SD

17. What are five words that you would use to describe yourself?
18. Has being involved in this film project changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain.

19. Please describe any activities or practices you are involved with that you feel connects you to your First Nations culture.

If completing this questionnaire has caused you to experience any kind of distress and you wish to speak with someone, please let me know or contact the available counseling services at Kuu-us Crisis Line (250-723-4050), Children’s Help Line (250-310-1234), or Central Vancouver Island Crisis Line (1-888-494-3888).
“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”
Appendix E – Questionnaire Two

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO MEET WITH SANDRA SHAHI FOR A 1-ON-1 PRIVATE INTERVIEW TO SHARE MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES?

VIU Student Researcher and Gr. 8 teacher in School District 70, Sandra Shahi is looking for students who are willing to participate in a private 1-on-1 interview as part of this research project. The information you give in the interview will be kept confidential.

Please put a checkmark below indicating whether you are interested.

_____ NO
I AM NOT INTERESTED IN MEETING FOR AN INTERVIEW.

If no, thank you for your time! Your questionnaire participation is really appreciated! See below for how to submit your questionnaire.

_____ YES
I AM INTERESTED IN MEETING WITH SANDRA SHAHI TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW. I WANT TO SHARE MORE ABOUT MY EXPERIENCES IN THE FILM PROJECT AND MY SELF-CONCEPT.

If yes, thank you for considering an interview with me! Please write your contact information below to discuss the details of the interview and sign the assent form.

Note: Writing your name below does not mean you are consenting to the interview right now, but that you are interested in discussing the interview process and consent guidelines with me. If you choose to participate in the interview your name will be entered into a draw, where 3 students will receive a $10 gift card for Serious Coffee.

Name: ____________________________
Phone #: __________________________
Email Address: _____________________
I will contact you to set up a time to meet.

Please detach this page and put in the envelope marked “Interview.” Place the questionnaire in the second envelope marked “Questionnaire” and give them both to Kerry Robertson upon completion. Thank-you!
Appendix F: Interview Participation Assent Form

Principal Investigator: Sandra Shahi
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Action Research Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
250.753.3245 ex. 2161

Research Information and Purpose of Study
In addition to being a teacher in school District 70, I am also a graduate student at Vancouver Island University in the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program. As part of my thesis in the course called “Research in Education” I have designed a research project that explores arts-based activities as a potential means to engage Aboriginal students and impact their self-concept. You are currently involved in a film project intended for Aboriginal families to share what it is like to be a teenager from a teenager’s perspective. This is why you are being asked to participate in an interview for this study.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate in this interview, you may choose to stop at any time without having to give an explanation and your will not be penalized in any way. During the interview, you may also choose not to answer specific questions. The interview should take approximately 40 minutes.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
The information you provides will be kept strictly confidential. In the event that information is revealed that jeopardizes your safety, I may be obligated to report these matters to the appropriate authorities, and in these cases confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. I will assign you a pseudonym (anonymous name) for the interview that will be used in my written reports where needed. With your permission, the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed on to a digital computer document. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript. The results of this study will be compiled and reported in a written research report and published at Vancouver Island University. The report may also be shared with the Superintendent of School District 70, Cam Pinkerton, so that Aboriginal students have a voice in their learning community. The transcribed interview files will be deleted from the database approximately 3 years after completion of the research project, in March 2018.
**Potential Risks**
Since some of the questions ask you how you feel about yourself, you may experience feelings of emotional upset. If at any time during or after completing the interview, you experience any kind of distress and wish to speak with someone, please contact the available counseling services at Kuu-us Crisis Line (250-723-4050), Children’s Help Line (250-310-1234), or Central Vancouver Island Crisis Line (1-888-494-3888).

**Concerns about your treatment in the research**
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the email address or phone number below:

Sandra Shahi  
Master of Education Student  
Vancouver Island University

If you choose to participate in this interview, please sign the form on the next page (p. 3) indicating your assent to participate in this interview.

Please keep the above information for your records.
Appendix F: Interview Participation Assent Form

☐ I assent to participate in an interview for Sandra Shahi’s research and for the interview to be audio recorded.

☐ I assent to participate in an interview for Sandra Shahi’s research, but do not wish to have my interview audio recorded.

______________________________________________________
Date:

______________________________________________________
Student’s Name (Please Print)

______________________________________________________
Student Signature
Appendix G: Interview Questions Protocol

“Exploring the Arts as a Means to Affect Aboriginal Students’ Self-Concept”

Principal Investigator: Sandra Shahi
Master of Education Student
Vancouver Island University

Action Research Supervisor: Dr. Rachel Moll
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
250.753.3245 ex. 2161

Purpose of Study:
The purpose of this study is to explore arts-based activities as a potential means to engage Aboriginal students and impact their self-concept. The aim of the study is to see if being involved in an arts-based project, such as a film project, changes the way students see themselves and their abilities.

Scripted Introduction:
This is a voluntary interview and you may withdraw from the study at any point. If you are ever uncomfortable with a question, you may choose not to answer it without penalty. The information will be audio-recorded and be kept completely confidential. Your real name will never be used in the study, and I will be creating a pseudonym, or fake name, for you to be used in my report. In order to keep the interview information confidential, when answering the question, please do not name others or provide any identifying information about yourself or your family.

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed. Your participation will help me to better understand how you feel about yourself, being a teenager, and whether or not the arts could help engage other young people in the future. Some of the questions may bring up some sensitive areas for you. If at any time you wish to stop or feel the need to talk to someone, I have counseling information available for you. You will also be provided with contact information for counselling services after the interview.
Warm-Up Questions:
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (ten being best), how are you feeling today?
- Can you tell me something interesting about yourself?

Interview Questions: (Guiding Questions)
Self-Perception Related
1. When you look in the mirror, can you describe what you see?
2. Can you tell me some of your strengths?
3. What are some things that you find challenging or worry about?
4. Do you feel like you can accomplish the things that you want to do in life? Why or why not?
5. Who is one of your biggest role models? Tell me about that person and why they are important to you.

Academics Related
6. How do you feel about school?
7. Do you have any academic goals for yourself?
8. If so, do you think you can reach those goals?
9. What part(s) of school do you find difficult or challenging?
10. Do you have any ideas about what you would like to do for a living as an adult? Please describe them.
11. Do you think that graduating from high school is necessary in life? Why or why not?

Project Related
12. Did/do you enjoy working on the film project? Why or why not?
13. What was/is your favorite part about working on this project?
14. Were there any parts of the project that you found difficult or challenging?
15. Do you think that working on the project has changed the way you feel about yourself? Please explain.
16. If you could go back in time and say anything to yourself before participating in this project, what would you say?
17. Do you have any final thoughts, suggestions, or questions you would like to share?

Scripted Post-Interview Information:
Thank-you for taking the time to answer these questions. I will be transcribing your answers and would like to meet with you briefly at a later date to give you a copy of your responses and have
you review them. You can still choose to opt out of the study at any point before the publication of my thesis. I really appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to meet with me and would like to enter your name in a random draw for a $10 gift card from Serious Coffee for participating in either the interview or the questionnaires. I will let you know when I give you the transcript of your interview if your name has been drawn. Thanks again!