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Challenges, as Perceived by Teachers, to Integrating Aboriginal Content

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Abstract

Aboriginal students are not succeeding at the same rate as their non-Aboriginal counterparts. An approach to address this concern is to increase Aboriginal content, as it will positively affect Aboriginal student achievement. A quantitative study was conducted, surveying 87 teachers to elicit perceived challenges to integrating this content into the B.C. curriculum. The teachers were of varying grade levels and years of teaching experience. Lack of Aboriginal resources and lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures were the challenges reported. Results suggest a need for a shared vision of Aboriginal student success. In addition, teachers require strategic professional learning in the area of Aboriginal content and perspectives in order to effectively deliver the content.

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Chapter One: Problem to be Investigated

Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this study was to identify challenges perceived by teachers, to integrating Aboriginal content into the B.C. curriculum. It is assumed that the descriptive information on the perceived challenges would be used to inform teacher practice. Further research will need to be done to develop specific strategies to support teachers in overcoming these perceived challenges.

Justification of the Study

Aboriginal students do not experience academic achievement at the same rate as their non-Aboriginal counterparts in the public school system (Ministry of Education, 2008). There are factors to consider that contribute to this phenomenon. Systemic racism and the poor socioeconomic conditions of many Aboriginal families play a large role in limiting academic success (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996). Eurocentric thought and ideology have permeated the public school system to the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2002). To correct historical and social biases that have developed, greater integration of Aboriginal perspectives into existing and future curricula is a necessary step. Schools are obligated to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are fairly and accurately conveyed to all students. The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives into curricula will benefit not only Aboriginal peoples, but non-Aboriginal peoples as well. All students are denied a quality education if they are not exposed to the contributions made by all people in the development of the country in which they live. Promoting educational successes for Aboriginal students involves education and research exploring the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students as well as professionals.

Over the past decade, researchers in the field have commonly focused on theoretical perspectives or on the direct relationship between teacher practice and Aboriginal student achievement. Limited empirical research exists to provide information on teacher attitudes toward their practice of integrating Aboriginal content. Some researchers who have focused on the integration of Aboriginal content into the curriculum have demonstrated that although teachers may agree with this practice, very little Aboriginal content has made its way into classrooms (Kanu, 2005; Aikenhead & Huntley, 1999).

The findings of the present study may influence future directions in the field of Aboriginal education. The challenges to integration of Aboriginal content faced by many teachers will foster further research to investigate what suggested strategies are present in current research and also what specifically can be done. In addition, possible changes to the School District 68 Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement could be recommended, as well as changes to how Aboriginal resources are currently being used. Lastly, recommendations could be made to the provincial teacher education programs.

Research Question

The research question driving the present study is what are the challenges, as perceived by teachers (identified by gender, years of teaching experience and grade level taught), to integrating Aboriginal content across the B.C. curriculum?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that teachers will report a variety of reasons why they choose to integrate little or no Aboriginal content into the curriculum taught in their classrooms. From these reported reasons, challenges to integration may be reported as lack of teacher

knowledge regarding Aboriginal culture and perspectives, a discomfort with teaching the content, few available resources, a belief that Aboriginal content should not be mandated into the curriculum, little or no administrative support for integration and that teachers do not think that Aboriginal content is relevant in their classrooms. It is also hypothesized that responses will vary according to reported demographic information.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as follows:

1. Teacher: A person holding a current teaching certificate in the province of British Columbia issued by the British Columbia College of Teachers;
2. Integrate: Although there are many interpretations of integration as it pertains to the inclusion of content into the curriculum, for the purposes of this study integration will be defined as the infusion of Aboriginal content, concepts, themes, and perspectives into the curriculum throughout the year/term.
3. Aboriginal: First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Canada. However, varying terms such as Native, Indian or Indigenous, that were used by the authors whose work contributed to this study were included in order that the integrity of their words not be lost. These terms, for the purposes of this study, should be considered synonymous.

Brief Overview of Study

The goal of the present study was to understand the challenges, as perceived by teachers when considering integrating Aboriginal content into their classroom curriculum. To this end, an anonymous survey was administered to teachers. 87 respondents completed the survey over a two month period. These results gave insight into the challenges teachers perceived to the integration of Aboriginal content into the B.C. curriculum. The survey included eight statements

about challenges to integration, each with an accompanying five-point rating scale. These results were then used to make recommendations for further study and to suggest strategies to support the increase of integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives into curriculum.

Chapter Two: Background and Review of Related Literature

Historical Background

The continuing inability of Aboriginal students to succeed within the curriculum context of a public education system is not only related to the effects of cultural dissonance and racial stereotyping, but to other endemic and long standing problems (Battiste, 2002; BCTF, 1999; Hampton, 1995; Hesch, 1999; Kanu, 2005b; Turner, 1998). The tragic legacy of residential education began in the late nineteenth century with a clear vision of education in the service of assimilation. It included a justification for removing children from their communities and disrupting Aboriginal families. A precise pedagogy was created and practiced for re-socializing children in the school and finally, schemes for integrating graduates into the non-Aboriginal world were implemented (Alberta Education, 2005; Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), 2007; RCAP, 1996). Historically, integration of Aboriginal content or perspectives has not been present, thus subjecting Aboriginal students to educational systems that do not reflect the lives of Aboriginal people. This narrow focus on Eurocentric knowledge, at the expense of Aboriginal knowledge, has served to prevent Aboriginal students from succeeding in the public school system (Battiste, 2002; Kanu, 2005a, 2005b; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. It is the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems (UNESCO, 2008). Bringing this Indigenous knowledge forward is critical in beginning the process of decolonization. Decolonization is a process that includes raising the collective voice of

Indigenous peoples, exposing the injustices in our colonial history, deconstructing the past by critically examining the social, political, economic and emotional reasons for the silencing of Aboriginal voices in Canadian history. Battiste (2002) contended, this process then, needs to legitimize these voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the educational curriculum. Within the public school system decolonization can begin with the integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and with the education of teachers with respect to these perspectives and associated pedagogy (Kanu, 2005b).

The exclusive use of Eurocentric knowledge in education has failed First Nations children (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Aikenhead and Huntley (1999), Battiste (2002) and Kanu (2005a, 2005b), conveyed that Indigenous knowledge is now seen as an educational remedy that will empower Aboriginal students if applications of their Indigenous knowledge, heritage, and languages are integrated into the Canadian educational system. Battiste continued that despite this realization, few universities across Canada have made Aboriginal education a mission or a priority. Few teacher training institutions have developed any insight into the diversity of the legal, political, and cultural foundations of Aboriginal peoples, often treating Indigenous knowledge as though it were a matter of multicultural and cross-cultural education. Consequently, when educators encounter cultural difference, they have very little theory, scholarship, research, or tested practice to draw on to engage Aboriginal education in a way that is not assimilative or racially defined (Battiste). The central purpose of integrating Indigenous knowledge into Canadian schools is to balance the educational system to make it a transforming and capacity-building place for Aboriginal students (Battiste). Although the Ministry of Education advocates the integration of Aboriginal perspectives from Kindergarten to Grade 12

there is little evidence to show that this is actually happening (Aikenhead & Huntley; Kanu 2005b; Turner, 1998).

Related Literature

The lack of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives in the school curriculum and among teachers, 94% of whom are non-Aboriginal and belong to the dominant cultures (English or French) (Kanu, 2005a), has been identified as a significant factor in school failure, prompting calls for the inclusion of Aboriginal cultural perspectives across school curricula and teacher education programs (RCAP, 1996).

First Nations, Inuit and Métis have long advocated learning that affirms their own ways of knowing, cultural traditions and values. However, Aboriginal peoples also desire Western education that can equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in Canadian society. First Nations, Inuit and Métis recognize that “two ways of knowing” will foster the necessary conditions for nurturing healthy, sustainable communities (CCL, 2007, p.3).

Anti-racism education has heralded a movement away from the traditional approaches toward the inclusion of racial minority or ethnic cultures in schooling that "celebrates differences", rather than dealing directly with the issues of power and subordination that are often masked by multiculturalism (Zine, 2002). An anti-racist approach examines the social, cultural, economic and political relations of privilege and disadvantage that occur among differentially empowered groups in society. Zine views education as a means toward greater social justice and equity in schools and society.

Empirical Research

Integrating Aboriginal content into the regular school curriculum increases the likelihood that Aboriginal students will achieve higher academic success. Simultaneously, this integration

helps avoid assimilation into the dominant culture (Aikenhead & Huntley, 1999). The teacher plays a key role in assisting Aboriginal students to negotiate both their Aboriginal cultures and the dominant society culture (Aikenhead & Huntley). A valuable tool is one that gives a clear picture as to what challenges teachers perceive to integration (Kanu, 2005a).

Aikenhead and Huntley (1999) discussed teacher's views on Aboriginal students' learning of both Western and Aboriginal science. Western science content communicates a Eurocentric world view because science is a subculture of Western culture and students with differing world views who study this science will have a cross-cultural experience. Aikenhead and Huntley suggested that this is certainly the case for Aboriginal students. They posited that to transmit a Western scientific world view to these students is essentially perpetuating cultural assimilation and suggested one way to avoid assimilative practices, is to integrate indigenous knowledge into the existing curriculum. Aikenhead and Huntley suggested that students who must cross these cultural borders need a teacher who is a "culture-broker" (p. 160). A culture-broker teacher would help students walk in both worlds, moving back and forth between the two. Aikenhead and Huntley emphasized the message that the teacher is key to success. A better understanding of how teachers regard this notion of culture brokering would lead to more effective collaboration around integration; therefore developing new and more appropriate curricula, instruction and assessment practices that benefit all students.

Aikenhead and Huntley's (1999) main findings, or barriers to integration, are important findings in the field of Aboriginal education. They assist in understanding why teachers choose to integrate Aboriginal content in their classrooms. Aikenhead and Huntley proposed that Aboriginal knowledge was respected by science teachers, but only a "token" amount was "added" onto, but not "integrated" with, school science (Aikenhead & Huntley, p.165). This is

an interesting finding, however it would be beneficial to have the terms “added” and “integrated” operationally defined, so that readers could understand teachers’ perceptions of what they believe integrating to mean. The term “token” could be clarified or even quantified, again so that the measure of integrating content was more transparent. Also relevant, was the statement that teachers found there were insufficient resources and support for both teachers and students (Aikenhead & Huntley). Lastly, students’ lack of participation in science or related careers was considered unexplainable by teachers or was blamed on student deficits. Few teachers held accountable, their curriculum and teaching (Aikenhead & Huntley). Although Aikenhead and Huntley focused on the teaching of science, the findings are relevant to any discipline with regards to integrating Aboriginal content. It gives pertinent information on teachers’ beliefs about indigenous knowledge. As stated in Aikenhead and Huntley’s article, teachers play a central role in the education of their students. More information around teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, can lead to greater teacher learning, all to the benefit of Aboriginal student achievement.

In a related article, Kanu (2005a) asked, what are teachers’ perceptions of the integration of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum? In her ethnographic study conducted among 10 teachers from three public high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Kanu found that there was an openness to the integration of Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum, however in practice little or only moderate gains were being made.

In this qualitative study, all 10 teachers were identified by their colleagues and school principal as integrating Aboriginal perspectives in their classrooms. The perceptions and beliefs of teachers who do not currently integrate Aboriginal content were not recorded. A disproportionately high number of dominant-culture (English or French) teachers participated in

the study because they constitute the vast majority of public school teachers (Kanu, 2005a).

Kanu utilized ethnographic research methods and multiple data collection methods. Included were classroom observations, teachers' journals and interviews.

The main findings of this study yielded in-depth information. Kanu (2005a) reported that integration was important for a variety of reasons. Because these teachers were recommended for the study based on their practice of integrating Aboriginal content, there is no data from teachers who may be ambivalent or even disagree with integrating Aboriginal content. Although the teachers generally supported integration, clear differences emerged among them in how they understood and approached integration (Kanu). Kanu referred to the four approaches to inclusion of multicultural perspectives in the classroom coined by Banks (1993). The teachers in Kanu's study showed evidence that their understandings and approaches to integration spanned Banks' first three categories. The four approaches to the inclusion of multicultural perspectives observed among teachers are: (a) the contributions approach, where the focus is on teaching students about the contributions made by each cultural group; (b) the additive approach, where content, concepts, and perspectives from others cultures are occasionally added to a curriculum that remains largely Eurocentric; (c) the transformational approach, where curriculum topics are taught from multiple perspectives; and (d) the social action approach, based on the transformational approach, where students are encouraged to take action for social change (Banks).

The interviews and journal entries revealed several issues that teachers perceived as challenges to meaningful integration. These challenges were reported to be teachers' lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultural knowledge about Aboriginal content topics, or issues and Aboriginal ways of learning, lack of resources, racism, lack of administrative support and an

incompatibility between school structures and Aboriginal cultural values/practices (Kanu). In contrast, they also reported their perceptions of meaningful integration of Aboriginal cultural knowledge.

Overall, this study offers in-depth qualitative data around teachers' perceptions of integrating Aboriginal content into the regular curriculum. Data regarding teachers' beliefs and perceptions is much needed in the field of Aboriginal education. As emphasized by Aikenhead and Huntley (1999), the teacher is a central figure in the education of students. Kanu (2005a) provides the research findings needed to recommend supportive strategies for teachers so they can integrate Aboriginal content in a meaningful way.

Patrick Solomon (1997) offers insight from his hypothesis that ethnocultural minority teachers bring to their pedagogy characteristics and experiences which create a positive learning environment. Solomon concluded that creation of a positive learning environment and the implementation of an inclusive curriculum enriched with cultural and cognitive strategies, create conditions likely to produce better learning outcomes. However, Solomon continued, often where there is a minority teacher present in the school, this teacher becomes regarded as the expert on his/her particular culture and is called upon in this manner to the exclusion of the dominant culture teachers. In addition, the dominant culture teachers begin to distance themselves from racial and ethnocultural issues in both the school and in the classroom. Some teachers have resisted acquiring the requisite, awareness, knowledge and skills to create a culturally inclusive curriculum within schools.

Solomon (1997) conducted a two year study of 20 teacher candidates of colour. Data collection strategies included examination of personal profiles and autobiographical data completed as a part of the teacher candidate admission package and a series of interviews. It is

not stated, however, how these 20 teacher candidates came to be in the study. Solomon stated the following:

the belief in, and commitment to, the role-model hypothesis [were] pervasive in the findings. From their preparation of autobiographical statements for admission to teacher education to their practice as graduate teachers in their own classrooms, the theme of racial and ethnocultural identity and representation in schooling dominated the narratives (p. 398).

It seems that Solomon's sample choices would affect the results of the study differently than if he had chosen random subjects from a pool of minority teacher candidates. The teachers that participated in the study were already committed to the role-model hypothesis and therefore, supported Solomon's hypothesis that ethnocultural minority teachers bring with them, their pedagogy characteristics and experiences which create a positive learning environment. Had he sampled a random group of minority teacher candidates, perhaps his findings would have been more varied. In addition, Solomon referred to the literature on race, culture, identity and schooling. In the Canadian literature, Solomon noted the challenges of access and preparation of Aboriginal and other teachers of colour in dominant-group institutions. Also recognized, are the challenges Black and Aboriginal students face within the school system. Unfortunately, Solomon's study failed to include any Aboriginal teacher candidates. Information from this particular cultural group in Canada would have been beneficial to his study.

Studies that focus on integrating Aboriginal content into the mainstream curriculum emphasize the importance of the teacher as a central figure. As understanding increases around teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward integration of Aboriginal knowledge, it is hoped that effective strategies will evolve to support teachers in a way that leads to their growth.

By way of theories of cognition, Kanu (2005b) believes that cultural socialization influences how students negotiate and respond to curriculum materials, instructional strategies, learning tasks and communication patterns in the classroom. Kanu's research leads her to ask what specific aspects of culture influence the learning of a particular group of Aboriginal students? The overall goal of the research was to arrive at a greater understanding of how the influence of culture on Aboriginal students' learning could result in more inclusive teaching and, therefore higher academic achievement.

Five culturally relevant themes were uncovered. These are traditional Aboriginal approaches to learning, patterns of oral interaction, concepts of self, curriculum relevance and the educator's interpersonal style. They provide useful insights into the development of appropriate instruction for the enhancement of cross-cultural communication, the design and implementation of assessment strategies, and the creation of effective instructional materials.

This study was conducted in an inner-city school in urban Winnipeg, selected because of its high Aboriginal population and its interest in working with the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Data were collected in a grade 9 integrated social studies classroom with 80% Aboriginal students and teachers who had been identified as successful teachers of Aboriginal students. The total number of participants was 12, selected on the basis of their willingness to participate in the study. Of these 12, ten students were of Aboriginal ancestry (7 Ojibway, 2 Cree, and 1 Métis). One teacher was Caucasian and had taught Social Studies 9 for 23 years. The other was a Black (African Canadian) teacher who taught mainly science. Due to the voluntary nature of this kind of research, students who do choose to participate may be students who represent a particular kind of learner. The study examined the cultural influences that affect student learning however, it does not represent the personalities of the reluctant

learner, or the disengaged learner therefore the reader is not witnessing the experiences of the students who did not participate in the study. This, in turn may limit the relevancy of the study. Again the school in which the study was conducted was quite unique in that it has a 50% drop-out rate each year, most of the students are teenage parents on income assistance, 79% percent of the students' parents are unemployed. How well do these results transfer to student learning across the country? In addition, it also begs the question, how would the findings be different if either one or both of the teachers were Aboriginal?

This was an ethnographic study in which multiple data collection methods were used such as classroom observations, research conversations, and students' journals. Classroom observations were made by only the researcher, therefore limiting objectivity. Research conversations, while allowing for rich dialogue are also subjectively interpreted, as there were no consistent questions posed to each participant and again were administered by only the researcher. Students were asked to maintain a journal where they documented the cultural experiences that influenced how they negotiated and responded to curriculum materials, teaching strategies, and learning tasks in their social studies classroom. At face value this appears an excellent source of relevant data, however, deciphering one's cultural influences would appear an extremely complex task. This task would require great insight into one's self, into one's culture, one's learning styles, and perhaps clarity around one's Aboriginal culture separate from the dominant culture in which one exists. This may be a daunting task for a high school student asked to record these influences in a journal. There was evidence of dialogue between the participants and the researcher around some of these themes, however it is unclear how or if they made their way into the journals. In addition, findings were based on student's personal experiences and preferences with regards to the curriculum, teaching strategies and tasks. The

findings which highlighted themes that include traditional Aboriginal approaches to learning, patterns of oral interaction, concepts of self, curriculum relevance and the educator's interpersonal style were uncovered based solely on student's experiences in this regard. Student's responses are limited to their experiences with teaching strategies. There are myriad teaching strategies practiced in schools that these students may not have had exposure to and therefore are not able to report on. This may mean that there are many more applicable strategies that provide relevance to Aboriginal learners.

Kanu (2005b), provides valuable insight into a much needed area of education. With the goal of inclusion, this study sheds light on inclusive teaching practices that could greatly benefit Aboriginal students. Multiple data collection strategies were also used to lend credibility to this study as data from multiple sources, when triangulated, increase the validity and reliability of results (Kanu, 2005b).

Faculty perceptions about barriers to active learning is a research topic approached by Joel Michael (2007). A qualitative study was conducted to elicit perceived barriers to active learning. The data were gathered employing focus group interviews. Among the several barriers perceived by teachers, emerged three themes that encompass these items: student attributes, issues related to teachers, and pedagogical issues that could affect student learning.

29 faculty members from Niagara University and neighbouring institutions voluntarily participated in the study. Prior to the data collection portion of the study, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the meaning of active learning and to create an operational definition. Michael (2007) has defined active learning as building, testing and repairing one's mental model of what is being learned. The 29 participants were divided into four working groups. The groups were asked to generate a list of all the barriers to teachers adopting an 'active learning'

approach to their own teaching and then asked to prioritize the lists. Most of the participants were from the same university, and may or may not have been comfortable with one another. It could be asked, to what degree were participants able to be totally honest with their responses in this social context? Perhaps results may have been significantly different if participants were able to respond to the same task alone in an anonymous format. In addition, as participation was voluntary, it may be likely that participant's responses from this group would be different from a group who would not necessarily volunteer to participate in a study about active learning.

A whole group list was created. The original wording was edited by the researcher, as he grouped together like responses. The items that were included in the results appeared on multiple lists and were understandable to the researcher, as many of the responses were cryptic or vaguely worded. This editing, grouping process opens up the issue of researcher interpretation. How able were the participants to communicate exactly what they meant and how able was the researcher to interpret the true intent of the written responses? In addition, forty eight items were reported on the four lists, however only twenty two of them were included in the study. It seems that more than half of the responses were not included in the results. The items were then grouped to indicate how many lists on which each originally appeared. There were two items that appeared on all four lists, seven appeared on three lists, five appeared on two lists, and eight appeared on only one list. Although the last eight items appeared on only one list, they were judged to be significant by the participants. The criteria for these judgments are unknown.

The most commonly reported barriers that appeared on all four group lists were: active learning requires too much preparation time, and the classrooms in which we teach do not lend themselves to active learning. The barriers that appeared on three out of the four lists were:

students do not know how to do active learning, active learning takes too much class time and coverage of content will suffer, in an active-learning classroom the teacher has less control, active learning is compromised because students do not come to class prepared, students are unwilling to engage in active learning, active learning is difficult to do because of student heterogeneity, and students lack the maturity needed for active learning.

Michael's (2007) finding regarding teacher's perceptions about barriers to active learning are significant and could possibly be applied to other areas of teaching. Barriers such as time constraints and prior experience are issues in many aspects of teaching and learning. More applicability could be achieved with aspects of a study that were anonymous and less open to researcher interpretation.

Slepko (2008) reports on an action research study that closely followed and documented the journeys of professional growth for a group of teachers. The study documented the professional development of teachers as their students worked to complete various learning tasks in conjunction with participation in a six month project called GrassRoots (Slepko). The GrassRoots program was designed to motivate schools to learn how to use the internet in the hopes of increasing student growth in this area. The task was to create a classroom webpage that would be posted on the internet. Teacher learning of this technology was documented in this study. Four questions were investigated. First, why did these teachers embark on a path of significant professional growth? Next, what capacities or abilities did they bring along with them on their journeys? Third, what conditions were in place that facilitated or detracted from their journeys? Last, what did these teachers see as their next steps?

26 participants were involved in the study and participation was voluntary. 16 of the participants were well known to the researcher, as the researcher had the professional role of

curriculum consultant in the school district. The researcher functioned in the role of facilitator of the projects as the professional developer working with the participants, therefore making this an action research process. A mixed-methods design, which utilized both qualitative and quantitative data, was employed. The advantage of using the two methods is that the strengths of each method will compliment the other and potentially off set each method's respective weaknesses (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). Every interaction between researcher and participant provided informal opportunities to gather information about that teacher and his or her learning journey (Slepkov, 2008). Multiple sources of data were used which included: observation, informal interview, discussions, a questionnaire, an e-survey, a written report and a checklist. In analyzing the data, the researcher searched each set of data for statements relating to the professional journeys of the participants, and then categorized those responses as to which of the four research questions the data were addressing. It is not reported however, if there were significant responses that fell outside the parameters of the four questions.

This study affirmed what current research is reporting regarding sustainable teacher learning (Timperley, 2008). The participants in this study took on the challenge of professional learning because they were invited to participate by a colleague at a time when they were ready to take on a new challenge. In other words, it was necessary that there be the infrastructure present to continuously invite teachers to involve themselves in professional learning.

An important finding was the importance of the professional development educator as facilitator of learning. Participants knew that there was someone to support and guide their learning. Although this relationship was a benefit to teachers, one must acknowledge the existence of data collector bias. The researcher must take care not to overlook what he does not want to see. Implementation and attitudinal effect are also a strong possibility. Implementers

and data collectors can distort the results of a study and therefore be a threat to internal validity. Another strong feature of the teacher's participation in professional learning was the existence of personal and/or professional goals. These teachers were motivated to move their learning along. This study seemed to include few participants, if any who were not motivated to grow and learn. Would professional learning opportunities need to look different if uninterested or unmotivated individuals were the target group?

The study also revealed that knowledge of how people learn is advantageous. This knowledge of cognition and learning needs to be applied to professional development endeavors. Participants also reported that one of the determining factors of their successes was having a colleague to collaborate with. The study also emphasized that teachers need their professional development to be authentic. The new learning needs to apply directly back to the classroom context. Participants reported that the GrassRoots project reinforced their already existing schema about what student learning should look like. Finally, the study attempted to address the issue of longevity of professional learning. Research is referred to which concludes that only when learners are able to engage in meaningful learning over time, will any significant gains be made. This study claims also overwhelming evidence that further professional learning would be sought by the participants. However, the evidence presented regarding this issue is simply a statement of intention by participants. It would be interesting to record if any of the participants actually pursued further professional learning opportunities, for how long and their experiences therein.

The findings of this study have limited external validity, as it was action research that was specific to the reported context. It is difficult to generalize results from a very specific context. These results would need to be replicated in other contexts in order to increase

generalizability (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). However, the reported results coincide with much of the current theory and research on teacher professional learning. The research findings presented in this study would be beneficial knowledge for any educator facilitating professional learning for teachers.

Chapter Three: Procedures & Methods

Research design

The chief aim of this present program of research was to investigate teachers' perceptions of challenges when integrating Aboriginal content into the B.C. curriculum. The present study utilized a survey to retrieve quantitative data from teachers. The survey listed eight statements that reflected these challenges. All teachers employed by School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) were given the opportunity to fill out the survey. All participation was anonymous and voluntary.

Participants

Participants were obtained from the population of interest. 87 teachers employed by School District 68 in Nanaimo, B.C. Canada participated in this study. All teachers in the district were given the opportunity to complete the survey. The teachers in the sample vary by gender, years of teaching experience and grade level (elementary/secondary) taught. The data retrieved from this sample were used to generalize to the teaching population at B.C. School District 68.

Instruments used

A survey was used to obtain information about teachers' perceptions of challenges to integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum and to obtain demographic information. In addition, the term 'integration' was defined for the participants. The survey consisted of eight statements that reflected challenges, which teachers may perceive, to integrating Aboriginal content into their class curriculum (See Appendix A). Each of the eight statements was accompanied by a five-point Likert scale. The numeral 1 represented Strongly Disagree and 5 represented Strongly Agree. At the end of the survey was the open-ended question intended to elicit information that was not addressed in the previous questions. Each survey came with a

Study Information Sheet (see Appendix B) giving a full explanation of the purpose and intentions of the study, a clear statement that participation was voluntary and that participation was completely anonymous. It was also made clear that completion of the survey indicated free and informed consent to participate in this research study.

The eight survey questions were based on the research findings on teacher's perceptions of integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum (Kanu, 2005a) and field experience of the present researcher. Kanu discovered that teachers found several barriers to integrating Aboriginal content such as: lack of knowledge, lack of available resources, racism, lack of administrative support and incompatibility between school structures and Aboriginal cultural values/practices. Respondents were asked to rate a statement such as I do not integrate Aboriginal content into the curriculum because I lack knowledge about Aboriginal cultures.

Procedures

Over a two month period in 2009, 87 teachers in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District completed a written survey. Surveys were distributed to all teachers in the school district. School principals in each school introduced the survey to their staffs. The school principal gave a full explanation of the purpose and intentions of the study, a clear statement that participation was voluntary and that participation was completely anonymous, as per the Study Information Sheet.

Surveys and Study Information Sheets were left for staff members to take and complete at a time convenient to them. Teachers were asked to leave completed surveys in a marked envelope. All completed surveys were sealed in the envelope by the school principal and sent to the researcher by way of the school district courier system. All surveys were kept in a locked facility to ensure the safety and privacy of the materials.

Surveys were gathered together and the data obtained from them was entered into an electronic statistical data analysis program. Mean scores for each of the eight questions were calculated and presented in frequency tables.

Validity

In order to minimize threats to internal validity the survey included items that elicited quantitative data (Likert Scale items). Data collector bias was avoided as participants responded directly to an anonymous survey. The survey questions were derived from previous research on the same topic (Kanu, 2005a, 2005b) and from the field experience of the researcher. More specifically, the researcher has experienced similar perceptions by teachers in her school district as those discovered in the research. The survey was presented in a trial with 10 teachers not in School District 68, so that they could give feedback as to the structure and content of the survey. In addition, factors such as clarity of printing, size of type, appropriateness of language, clarity of directions were taken into consideration when creating the survey. The survey retrieved data that directly answered the research question, thus demonstrating concurrent validity.

How participants view a study and participate in it can also threaten internal validity. A participant may have negative or less than supportive beliefs about Aboriginal people, therefore it may be possible that the subject may have answered questions related to these beliefs. To minimize this threat to validity, the author of the present study emphasized: the importance of the study, that all responses to the questions would assist the study, and that the study would include recommendations to better support teachers. It was also stressed that all participation was anonymous.

Justification of the Methods of Analysis.

The data from the surveys was summarized in frequency distributions that included all eight integration statements. In addition all data were disaggregated according to the demographic information provided. The data were analyzed and organized into categories depicting the mean for each integration statement and presented in tables. Teachers' responses to the survey questions directly answered the research question.

Chapter Four: Results

The findings of this action research study answered the question what are the challenges, as perceived by teachers, to integrating Aboriginal content across the B.C. curriculum? Data were generated from one survey that was distributed to teachers across the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District. All data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. There was a total of 87 surveys returned out of a possible 800, which indicates a return rate of 11% . Of the 87 respondents 21% were male, 69% were female and 10% did not respond to this question. In regards to teaching experience, 9% had less than five years, 9% had between five and ten years, 13% had between 10 and 15 years, and 64% had 15 years or more. 5% did not respond to this question. 67% of the respondents taught at the elementary level and 27% taught at the secondary level. 6% did not respond to this question. The data reflects the responses to the following eight statements, as per a five-point Likert scale:

1. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have time.
2. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have knowledge of Aboriginal cultures.
3. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have the resources.
4. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I don't believe it is my responsibility.
5. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because it is not relevant to my students.
6. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because it is incompatible with school and classroom structures.
7. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I don't feel comfortable teaching a culture that is not my own.

8. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I don't believe it should be mandated into the B.C. curriculum.

Table 4.1 displays the overall mean scores for each integration statement. As the survey presented statements with accompanying five point Likert scale, potential means could range from 1.0 to 5.0. Actual means range from 1.48 to 3.02. Table 4.1 illustrates the mean frequency of each perceived challenge. A mean score of > 3.00 is considered a perceived challenge to integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum, as 3.00 is rated as neutral in the survey and anything < 3.00 is rated as not a challenge. Statement three, I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have the resources, is a challenge as perceived by this sample of teachers.

Table 4.1

Overall Mean Scores for Each Integration Statement

Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	86	1.0	5.0	2.08	1.07
Integrate 2	86	1.0	5.0	2.72	1.24
Integrate 3	86	1.0	5.0	3.02	1.27
Integrate 4	85	1.0	5.0	1.55	0.91
Integrate 5	86	1.0	5.0	1.50	0.85
Integrate 6	86	1.0	5.0	1.49	0.84
Integrate 7	85	1.0	4.0	2.14	0.08
Integrate 8	85	1.0	5.0	1.48	0.92

Data were analyzed utilizing the reported demographic information (gender, years of teaching experience and grade level). Table 4.2 displays mean scores according to gender.

Table 4.2

Mean Scores for Each Integration Statement According to Gender

Male					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	18	1.0	5.0	2.22	1.22
Integrate 2	18	1.0	5.0	3.06	1.30
Integrate 3	18	1.0	5.0	3.00	1.28
Integrate 4	18	1.0	4.0	1.61	0.98
Integrate 5	18	1.0	4.0	1.67	0.97
Integrate 6	18	1.0	3.0	1.61	0.70
Integrate 7	18	1.0	4.0	2.28	1.07
Integrate 8	18	1.0	3.0	1.44	0.78
Female					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	60	1.0	5.0	2.13	1.05
Integrate 2	60	1.0	5.0	2.72	1.21
Integrate 3	60	1.0	5.0	3.17	1.22
Integrate 4	60	1.0	5.0	1.57	0.91
Integrate 5	60	1.0	5.0	1.48	0.85
Integrate 6	60	1.0	5.0	1.50	0.91
Integrate 7	60	1.0	4.0	2.15	1.05
Integrate 8	60	1.0	5.0	1.53	1.01

Subject areas taught, reported by participants, were grouped together according to whether they were taught at the elementary or secondary level. Table 4.3 displays the mean scores for each integration statement according to these two levels.

Table 4.3

Mean Scores for Each Integration Statement According to Teaching level

Elementary					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	58	1.0	5.0	2.07	1.02
Integrate 2	58	1.0	5.0	2.64	1.20
Integrate 3	58	1.0	5.0	3.02	1.21
Integrate 4	58	1.0	5.0	1.50	0.90
Integrate 5	58	1.0	5.0	1.41	0.82
Integrate 6	58	1.0	5.0	1.43	0.77
Integrate 7	58	1.0	4.0	2.12	1.06
Integrate 8	58	1.0	5.0	1.48	0.98

Secondary					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	24	1.0	4.0	2.08	1.06
Integrate 2	24	1.0	5.0	3.00	1.32
Integrate 3	24	1.0	5.0	3.17	1.40
Integrate 4	23	1.0	4.0	1.61	0.89
Integrate 5	24	1.0	4.0	1.67	0.92
Integrate 6	24	1.0	5.0	1.58	0.97
Integrate 7	23	1.0	4.0	2.17	1.11
Integrate 8	23	1.0	3.0	1.52	0.85

Table 4.4

Mean Scores for each Integration Statement According to Years of Teaching Experience

0-5					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	8	1.0	4.0	2.38	0.92
Integrate 2	8	2.0	4.0	3.25	0.89
Integrate 3	8	2.0	5.0	3.25	1.17
Integrate 4	8	1.0	3.0	1.38	0.74
Integrate 5	8	1.0	4.0	1.50	1.07
Integrate 6	8	1.0	2.0	1.38	0.52
Integrate 7	8	1.0	4.0	2.00	1.07
Integrate 8	8	1.0	3.0	1.25	0.71

5-10

Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	8	1.0	4.0	2.50	0.76
Integrate 2	8	1.0	5.0	3.50	0.93
Integrate 3	8	1.0	5.0	3.88	0.83
Integrate 4	8	1.0	4.0	1.63	1.06
Integrate 5	8	1.0	3.0	1.63	0.92
Integrate 6	8	1.0	3.0	2.13	0.83
Integrate 7	8	1.0	4.0	2.75	0.89
Integrate 8	8	1.0	3.0	1.50	0.76

10-15

Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	11	1.0	4.0	1.55	0.93
Integrate 2	11	1.0	4.0	2.09	1.04
Integrate 3	11	1.0	5.0	2.36	1.29
Integrate 4	11	1.0	2.0	1.09	0.30
Integrate 5	11	1.0	2.0	1.18	0.40
Integrate 6	11	1.0	2.0	1.27	0.47
Integrate 7	11	1.0	4.0	2.09	1.04
Integrate 8	11	1.0	2.0	1.18	0.40

15+					
Statement	n	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Integrate 1	56	1.0	5.0	2.13	1.13
Integrate 2	56	1.0	5.0	2.70	1.28
Integrate 3	56	1.0	5.0	3.05	1.26
Integrate 4	55	1.0	5.0	1.65	0.97
Integrate 5	56	1.0	5.0	1.55	0.89
Integrate 6	56	1.0	5.0	1.46	0.91
Integrate 7	55	1.0	4.0	2.09	1.09
Integrate 8	55	1.0	5.0	1.58	1.05

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Summary

This study investigated the challenges that exist as perceived by teachers, to integrating Aboriginal content into the B.C. curriculum. This research question was prompted by the success rates of the Aboriginal students in School District 68 and the province of B.C. Aboriginal students are not succeeding at the same rate as their non-Aboriginal counterparts. This ongoing phenomenon has many root causes. The Aboriginal people of this country have been faced with colonization and cultural genocide to a degree that effects are still very apparent today. The racism affected by the dominant culture has been historical and systemic. Education is power and it is through this system that much of our beliefs and values are transmitted. It seems pertinent that investigation begin here.

Of the many factors that contribute to low Aboriginal student success in the public school system, the degree to which teachers integrate Aboriginal content into the curriculum is key. To understand this further, a literature review of relevant research was undertaken and a survey was distributed across the Nanaimo-Ladysmith school district. The survey consisted of eight statements which depicted potential challenges to teachers. Participants were asked to rate each potential challenge on a five-point Likert scale. Data were then analyzed to discover these challenges to integrating Aboriginal content, perceived by the participants. The data was then disaggregated to underscore gender, years of teaching experience and grade level taught.

The research findings demonstrated that access to resources and knowledge of Aboriginal cultures presented barriers to the inclusion of Aboriginal content in the BC curriculum by teachers in School District 68. No additional barriers were suggested in the anecdotal section of the survey.

Discussion

A lack of Aboriginal resources and a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures proved to be challenges to integrating Aboriginal content, as perceived by teachers. This data was retrieved from the overall mean scores as well as the disaggregated data.

The overall mean scores indicated that a lack of Aboriginal resources presented a challenge to teachers regarding integrating Aboriginal content. As the mean for this statement was 3.02, it is indeed categorized as a challenge (>3.00). That stated, each of the integration statements had a range of responses from 1.00 to 5.00, with the exception of statement seven which had a maximum response of 4.00. This range indicates that some respondents find all of the challenges to exist to a strong degree (5.00).

School District 68 has a district resource centre that is available to all teachers. The Aboriginal collection is the largest collection within this resource centre. Perhaps the existence and promotion of this collection has not been adequately communicated to the teachers of this district, therefore appearing insufficient. The Aboriginal collection is a substantial collection; however access to information around the resources is limited. For example, the search tool used by the resource centre may indicate the title of the resource, author and other suggested resources, however it rarely indicates the contents of the resource, how to use it, or the grade / reading level. With limited time, teachers may not perceive attaining familiarity with these resources, a priority.

More pertinent to the perceived lack of resources could be the levels of background knowledge teachers have when attempting to utilize the resources. The topic of Aboriginal peoples in this country and in this province is a multi-faceted, sensitive and somewhat political one. In addition, teachers come with their own sets of beliefs around Aboriginal peoples.

Potentially, teachers may not be comfortable using these resources because they feel they don't know how to use them. They may be unfamiliar with the culture and its protocols and therefore perceive the resources to be user-unfriendly, thus perceiving a lack of useful resources. Teachers may believe that they need to be knowledgeable around Aboriginal pedagogy in order to effectively use Aboriginal resources. With little or no guidance available to this end, teachers will not use the resources. The lack of background knowledge pertaining to the utilization of Aboriginal resources could be present as a perceived lack of resources available.

The data were disaggregated to obtain results according to gender, grade level taught (elementary/secondary) and years of teaching experience. It was this disaggregation that allowed for the lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures to surface as a challenge. Male respondents indicated that access to resources and knowledge of Aboriginal cultures presented challenges to inclusion. While female respondents indicated that access to resources was the only challenge. In addition, three out of the eight integration statements had a maximum response of 5.00 (strongly agree) by male respondents. Three statements had maximum responses of 4.00 and two had maximum responses of 3.00. A minimum response for all eight statements was 1.00 (strongly disagree). Female respondents however had a minimum response of 1.00 for every statement and a maximum response of 5.00 for every statement. So, although male respondents indicated two barriers and females indicated only one, the data specifies that fewer male respondents perceived barriers overall. It must also be noted that there were far less male respondents (21%) than female (69%).

The data revealed no significant differences between elementary and secondary teachers regarding the challenges to integration. Both found the lack of resources to be a challenge. Secondary teachers however indicated a greater lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures (3.00)

than did elementary (2.64). It would seem reasonable that elementary teachers would find the lack of knowledge less of a challenge, as all elementary grades have Aboriginal content mandated into their curricula, whereas this is not the case in all subject areas at the secondary level. As the majority of elementary teachers are female, it could be assumed that most of the male respondents are at the secondary level. If so, it would then be fair to state that males at the secondary level perceive a lack of resources and a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures to be challenges to integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum. It must also be noted that there were far more elementary respondents (67%) than secondary (27%).

Challenges to integrating Aboriginal content were revealed as the data were presented according to years of teaching experience. The data indicates that teachers with 0-10 years of experience perceive a lack of resources and a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures to be challenges to integrating content. Teachers with 10-15 years of experience indicated no challenges and senior teachers with 15+ years of teaching experience reported a lack of resources to be a challenge.

The lack of Aboriginal content in teacher preparation programs could account for this lack of knowledge in teachers with less experience. These students therefore may perhaps view the integration of Aboriginal content as less of a priority. As a result, viewing Aboriginal knowledge acquisition as a low priority could foster ambivalence in these teachers. It should also be noted that new graduates may be more likely to have Teacher on Call positions and not have their own classroom assignments where they oversee the delivery of the curriculum, therefore not being required to deliver Aboriginal content. It would also seem reasonable that new teachers may not have the knowledge of resources and familiarity of the district resource centre at the beginning of their careers.

The data exhibits that teachers with 10-15 years experience perceive no challenges to integrating Aboriginal content. More specifically, four of the eight integrations statements had only a maximum response of 2.00. It could be considered that these teachers have enough experience to feel confident in their skills as teachers, however still junior enough that they may not be entrenched in their ideas and beliefs. They may still remain open to change and new challenges, such as integrating Aboriginal content. Are these teachers however, actually integrating more Aboriginal content than their colleagues or do they just not perceive any challenges to the integration?

In contrast, senior teachers with 15+ years experience may have more traditional approaches to teaching and may be more entrenched in their ideas about education. Aboriginal perspectives have not always had a place in the B.C. education system. Historically they have not been represented in any significant or respectful way other than through a lens of the dominant culture. The paradigm shift from exclusion to inclusion is paramount and this potential shift may be overwhelming for teachers who are entrenched in their practice and fearful of change.

Disaggregating the data according to demographic information proved valuable to this study. Not only did this process uncover a second and important challenge to integration, it provided data that will assist in targeting these particular demographics when strategizing to support teachers around these perceived challenges.

The demographic data highlighted a complex challenge to integrating content. This challenge, the lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, is significant. As the related research in this study shows, the process of inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and the education of teachers with regard to these perspectives and related pedagogy is a first step in decolonization

(Kanu, 2005b). Aikenhead and Huntley (1999) affirm this notion by concluding that integrating Aboriginal content will increase the academic success of Aboriginal students, while at the same time, avoiding assimilative practices. They contend that the teacher plays a crucial role in assisting Aboriginal students to negotiate between their Aboriginal cultures and the dominant western culture. The inclusion of Aboriginal content and perspectives in the curriculum is beneficial to all students, however if the classroom teacher is unfamiliar with the content, it will not make its way into the curriculum.

Limitations

One of the understood goals of this research study was to survey as many teachers as possible in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District. To that end, the surveys were sent to each school with express instructions for the principals to deliver the surveys to their staffs. This was the path chosen for distribution, as it held the likeliest success in getting out to the largest number of teachers in the shortest amount of time. However, this method did not allow the researcher to have control over how the survey was distributed to teachers.

The quantitative methodology used was limited by the contents of the survey. The survey provided eight statements that depicted potential challenges and although the respondents did not suggest any further challenges in addition to the eight, it cannot be necessarily concluded that no others exist.

In almost all surveys, some members of the sample will not respond, this study was no different. This study had an 11% return rate, therefore leaving 89% of the teaching population having not communicated what they perceive to be the challenges to integrating Aboriginal content. It is very likely that those who do not respond will differ from the respondents on answers to the survey questions. The demographic information depicted that, of those who did

respond, the largest contingent were female elementary teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience.

Of the several threats to instrument validity, survey questions can cause individuals to respond differently than they may otherwise respond if they are worded in a manner which is leading or insensitive (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Anecdotal information provided by some respondents presented the notion that because the questions were worded negatively it conveyed a negative tone to the entire survey. The survey was attempting to elicit challenges to integration and perhaps a negative tone is inherent in the wording of these challenges.

Recommendations for Practice

One of the strongest strategies to address the challenges indicated in this study is to create a shared vision of Aboriginal student success in School District 68. Teachers need to have a clear moral purpose when embarking upon professional learning and change. District leadership could foster this sense of moral purpose by making Aboriginal education a priority. In addition, it is also important to have this moral purpose communicated to the members of the school district.

“The more leaders focus their influence, their learning, and their relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence on student outcomes” (Robinson, 2007, p. 5). Strong instructional leadership is vital to teacher professional learning. Professional learning is essential if teachers are going to increase their knowledge of Aboriginal content and perspectives. In order for professional learning to be valuable, however it needs to be approached strategically. Timperly (2008) suggests ten integrated principles to effective teacher professional learning. Professional learning experiences should:

1. Focus on the links between teaching activities and valued students outcomes.
2. Be context specific.
3. Integrate teacher knowledge and skills.
4. Address the knowledge and skills teachers need to assist their students to achieve the valued outcomes.
5. Provide multiple opportunities to learn new information and understand its implications for practice.
6. Provide different approaches depending on whether new ideas are, or are not, consistent with the assumptions that currently underpin practice.
7. Provide opportunities to process new learning with others.
8. Provide expertise external to the group of participating teachers so that the necessary challenge to existing assumptions and development of new knowledge and skills associated with positive outcomes for students is achieved.
9. Include leaders that are actively involved.
10. Be sustainable.

Timperley asserts that these ten principles do not operate independently of one another, rather they are integrated to inform cycles of learning and action. This growing body of research on effective professional learning for teachers provides support for a shift in thinking and perhaps a new paradigm. This quality of professional learning is one way of addressing the learning of teachers regarding Aboriginal content and perspectives.

School District 68 is currently operating under its second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (2006-2011). Teacher capacity around the issue of Aboriginal content

and perspectives could be the focus of the next agreement. This would allow for a committed focus for at least five years to increasing teacher knowledge.

The perceived lack of Aboriginal resources could be addressed by strategies around the communication of these resources. Perhaps resources could be made available or communicated in a content specific manner or a grade specific manner or by direct connections to prescribed learning outcomes. However, until the background knowledge of teachers is increased in the area of Aboriginal content that exists within these resources, teachers will continue to perceive this lack of resources. Increasing teacher capacity in this regard is the starting point for all actions regarding Aboriginal student achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is required in the area of Aboriginal student achievement. More specifically, research investigating the link between teacher knowledge of Aboriginal content and perspectives and Aboriginal student success would be pertinent to practitioners in this area. Both quantitative and qualitative research that focuses on teacher perceptions and attitudes toward Aboriginal education, students, content and perspectives is necessary in order to continue to support teachers to facilitate success in their Aboriginal students. Empirical research around Aboriginal student achievement is lacking and more needs to be known in order to facilitate change. Appreciative Inquiry could be utilized to uncover what is working to promote Aboriginal student success. What are others doing to overcome challenges in the field? What strategies are being used that have an impact? Research, regardless of methodology, fosters life long learning that benefits both students and teachers.

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Appendix A

Challenges to Integrating Aboriginal Content Survey

Demographic Information:

Gender:	M	F						
Years of Teaching Experience:	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+				
Subject Area Taught:	Elementary	English	Math/ Science	Fine Arts	PE	Social Studies	Info Tech	Other

Integrate: Although there are many interpretations of integration as it pertains to the inclusion of content into the curriculum, for the purposes of this survey integration will be defined as the infusion of Aboriginal content, concepts, themes, and perspectives into the curriculum throughout the year/term.

Aboriginal: First Nations, Métis and Inuit people of Canada

Please indicate how much you **Agree** or **Disagree** with each of these statements:

	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I don't have time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have knowledge of Aboriginal cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I do not have the resources.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I do not integrate Aboriginal content because I don't believe it is my responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5



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Appendix B

Study Information

Challenges to Integrating Aboriginal Content into the Curriculum
September, 2009

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Supervisor

(Purpose) I am a student at Vancouver Island University in the Masters in Educational Leadership Program. As such, I am required to complete a research project. I have decided to research what teachers perceive to be the challenges to integrating Aboriginal content into the B.C. curriculum.

(Description) During this study you will be asked to complete a survey concerning your perceptions of challenges to integrating Aboriginal content into the curriculum. You will also be asked to provide some demographic information (gender and teaching experience). Your participation will require approximately 15 minutes of your time.

(Potential Risks and Benefits) There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research. The potential benefits are the recommendations for teachers that will result from the study.

(Confidentiality) All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, such that only I and my supervisor will have access to the information. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within my district office. Data will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the project, approximately June 2010. The results from this study will be reported in a written research report and an oral report during a class presentation. Information about the project will not be made public in any way that identifies individual participants.

(Participation) Participation is completely voluntary. While participants are free to discontinue their participation during the execution of the survey, once the survey has been completed and submitted, there is no way to identify participants' individual responses from the aggregate data. Therefore, participant withdrawal from the study is only possible to the point of survey submission.

(Consent) I have read the above form, understand the information read, understand that I can ask questions or withdraw at any time. Completion of the survey indicates my free and informed consent to participate in this research study.