

*It takes more than good intentions:*  
**Institutional accountability and responsibility to Indigenous higher education**

by

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## Abstract

An Indigenous wholistic framework is used to examine the question “*what makes a university a successful place for Aboriginal students?*” This study moves away from a student deficit discourse by critiquing universities from an Indigenous methodological and theoretical approach in terms of (a) how Indigenous knowledges were defined and found in universities and (b) how Indigenous understandings of success, responsibility, and accountability resonated in three universities in British Columbia, Canada. This research is grounded in Indigenous theory; however, social reproduction theory was used to explain power structures inherent in the mainstream educational system. The Indigenous research process involved a mixed methods approach. Approximately 60 interviews and four sharing circles were held with a total of 92 participants representing various stakeholders across the institution. In addition, the *Undergraduate Baccalaureate Graduate Surveys* (UBGS) were analyzed to contextualize Aboriginal undergraduate student experiences over the last 10 years.

A major finding is that respectful relationships between Aboriginal stakeholders and university faculty and leaders are *key* to universities becoming more successful places for Aboriginal peoples. This study shows how Indigenous knowledges were present, as *pockets of presence*, in the academy in programs and through Indigenous faculty, staff, and students. As sites of Indigenous knowledges, First Nations Centres played a critical role by wholistically supporting the *cultural integrity* of Aboriginal students and being agents of change across the institution. Indigenous wholistic understandings of success challenged hegemonic definitions that emphasized intellectual capital to include the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms. Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) 4Rs were used to critically examine the responsibilities of universities to Aboriginal higher education. The following institutional responsibilities were presented: *relationships*, such as the seen face through Aboriginal presence, having authentic allies, involving Aboriginal communities, and enacting agency; *reciprocity* and *relevance*, which addresses issues of limited financial resources, increasing retention and recruitment, and putting words into action; and *respect* for Indigenous knowledges. Institutional accountability from the Indigenous framework went beyond neo-liberal discourses, to include making policy public, surveillance from inside and outside the institution, and the need for metrics and benchmarks.

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the participants who took the time to be part of this research process.

It is also dedicated to

my niece, Cedar Maria Pidgeon, for your laughter and kisses,  
Nan and Pop Cooze for your unconditional support and love

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> student persistence through the Canadian educational system is influenced by cultural differences and historical realities (Barman, Hébert, & McCaskill, 1986). Aboriginal peoples' experiences in higher education continue to be impacted by a colonial history of educational policies and acts of symbolic violence, the objectives of which have been assimilation. It is important to question how the current structures, practices, and policies of post-secondary institutions aid or hinder Indigenous notions of success. This questioning is important because higher education, particularly at the university level, is a key component of capacity building for self-government and self-determination in Aboriginal nations (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Danziger, 1996; Wildcat, 2001c).

For Aboriginal peoples, participation in post-secondary education is complicated, and the reported disparities in educational attainment levels for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians require closer investigation. For example, although Statistics Canada reported more Aboriginal students are completing high school, it is important to be aware that over 50% of Aboriginal youth do not do so (Mendelson, 2006). With respect to post-secondary education completion, the 2001 Census<sup>2</sup> also reported that the rate of completion of programs in colleges for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's participation has

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<sup>1</sup> *Aboriginal* is being used in this dissertation to be inclusive of Canada's first peoples, as those peoples who self-identify as having Aboriginal ancestry. It includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. It also includes status/non-status, treaty/non-treaty and reserve/non-reserve peoples. *Indigenous* is used interchangeably in this work to refer to the Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Where I am using specific examples from a particular Aboriginal nation or Indigenous group (e.g., Maori), I use the term the group uses to identify themselves.

<sup>2</sup> The 2006 Census report on education was not released during the writing of this dissertation.

narrowed. Yet closer investigation of the data showed university attainment<sup>3</sup> of Aboriginal peoples remains dramatically lower than that of non-Aboriginals (e.g., 8% and 20% respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2003). In a further analysis of the 2001 Census, Mendelson (2006) reported that there had been a decrease (from 5% to 4%) in Aboriginal university graduation rates since the 1996 census.

Further exploring the complexities and reasons *why* university completion rates for Aboriginal peoples have not increased is important in understanding how to address the current disparity. Two pertinent reasons for the decrease in university attainment have been that (a) those Aboriginal students who do graduate high school often do not have the academic requirements to get into university and (b) the 1999 cap on federal Aboriginal funding programs has limited the numbers of First Nations students who receive funding to attend university or college (Mendelson, 2006). Another important consideration is the fact that Indigenous knowledge remains marginalized within a system that continues to value and reinforce the dominant hegemony. For example, Aboriginal students' ways of knowing not being respected in the university hinders their participation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990; Tierney & Jun, 2001). The "failure" of mainstream education to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples is usually discussed as a "problem" of the Aboriginal student and not of the educational system. This deficit model attributes failures of Aboriginal students in mainstream education to the students themselves, who are typically "blamed" for not having the valued traits and abilities that would enable them to be successful in these schools.

To counter this deficit model thinking, many studies have taken a different perspective, examining Aboriginal student persistence in terms of successful graduation rates, articulating success strategies students adapted, and identifying individual strengths

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<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada defines university attainment as the completion of an undergraduate baccalaureate degree.



that facilitated students success (e.g., Archibald et al., 1995; Hampton & Roy, 2002; Ryan, 1995; Sonn, Bishop, & Humphries, 2000). However, these research projects still focused on the individual rather than on structure. A contribution I hope to make in this dissertation is to examine from a wholistic<sup>4</sup> framework grounded in Indigenous epistemology, how the structures of the university and attitudes of those in the university impact Aboriginal students and their understandings of success.

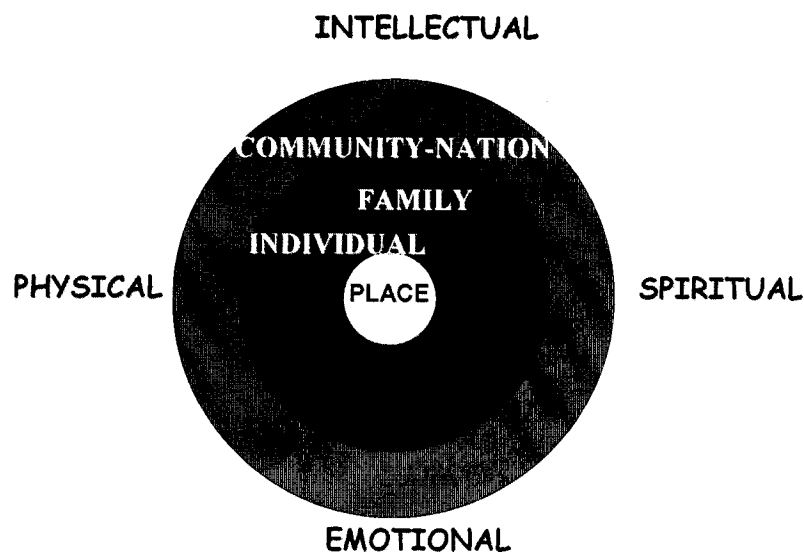


Figure 1

A wholistic representation of Indigenous knowledge

Understanding the complexity of Indigenous knowledges (IK) is important in positioning the Indigenous wholistic framework being used in this study to critique mainstream education. Just as Aboriginal people are not homogenous, Indigenous knowledge systems are unique, fluid, and heterogeneous. A foundational principle of

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<sup>4</sup> *Wholistic* is purposefully being spelled with a w, to reflect an Indigenous understanding of the interconnections of the student experience modeling how Jo-ann Archibald used the term (Archibald et al., 2004)

Indigenous knowledges (as shown in Figure 1) is that it is grounded in place. IK are shaped by relationships to that place, whether physically, spiritually, culturally, or intellectually. This wholistic relationship to place is also interconnected with individual, family, community, and nation (Battiste, 2000b; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999). Indigenous knowledges are seen as an educational remedy that will empower Aboriginal students if applications of their Indigenous knowledges, heritages, and languages are integrated into the Canadian educational system (Battiste, 2005). Consequently, understanding the role of Indigenous knowledge within post-secondary education can help transform institutions as places of success for Aboriginal peoples. One site where Indigenous knowledge is present in universities is Aboriginal student services.

### **Student Services: Institutional Responses to Support Student Success**

Student services have been one form of institutional response to the diversification of student populations. Student services in Canada began after World War II. The 1945 GI Bill's educational provisions gave access to higher education to thousands of veterans who required career and other counseling about campus resources, such as housing, financial aid, and counseling (Pidgeon, 2005). These initial services have now expanded to include support services such as academic advising, housing and conference services, student development, health and wellness, disability services, personal and career counseling, interfaith services, lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer, and transgender (LBGQT) services, campus safety, leadership, and advocacy. Each of these units works somewhat independently, meeting its own set mandate for student services. For example, on campus

housing and counseling run independently although they may collaborate to provide workshops or other initiatives relevant to residence life.

### **Development of Aboriginal student services<sup>5</sup>**

The advent of Aboriginal student services began in the late 1970s as a result of the growing Aboriginal student population on many campuses. This growth was influenced by three factors: (1) an increase in the number of Aboriginal high school graduates, (2) federal Aboriginal post-secondary education funding initiatives, and (3) the expansion of Native-specific programming such as Native Teacher Education and Native Studies (Pidgeon, 2001, 2005). The creation of Native-specific programs, such as Native Teacher Education or Native Studies, was evidence of institutional change that incorporated Indigenous knowledges into higher education. Another movement toward inclusion was the development of Aboriginal support positions, which were designed to help students with their academic transition to university (Pidgeon, 2005). The establishment of Aboriginal student services was advanced through provincial and federal government policy and funding (e.g., Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities, 1999; Provincial Advisory Committee, 1990).

Alberta led the way in 1972 with the establishment of “Indian Student Services” at the University of Calgary. This name changed to “Native Student Services” and then to the “Native Student Centre” between 1978 and 1982. The University of Alberta began offering student support services to their Aboriginal students in 1975 when the position of “Advisor on Native Affairs” was created by the General Faculty Council. Marilyn Buffalo was first

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<sup>5</sup> This section is derived from research that was part of other works by Pidgeon (2001; 2005).

hired to fill that position. Through tireless effort and much lobbying, she helped establish the Office of Native Student Services in 1977 (Pidgeon, 2005).

Although the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta had services in the 1970s, the majority of Aboriginal student services were initiated in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The University of British Columbia's First Nations House of Learning began providing services in 1987, and, in 1993, they moved into the First Nations Longhouse, which is described as students' "home away from home" (Gardner, 2000). In 1990, the British Columbia Provincial Advisory Committee (1990) on post-secondary education for Native learners presented the following conclusion and recommendations in their report:

The typical First Nations student entering the post-secondary system faces the combined pressure of an urban environment, upgrading requirements, academic gaps, funding frustrations, and alienation from family and community. . . research [has] indicated that students requiring and receiving special services, achieve higher academic performance than those who require assistance but do not receive it. (pp. 19-20)

The Provincial Advisory Committee then recommended "that the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, by September 1990, provide targeted funding to public post-secondary institutions to establish coordinator positions with the responsibility of providing student services for First Nations" (pp. 19-20). Part of this recommendation included a job profile, job goal, qualifications, and duties of such a position, which they called Coordinator-Native education. The 1990s saw the development of several Centres or at least one staff person hired as an Aboriginal student support worker in British Columbia's public post-secondary institutions, including Kwantlen University College, Okanagan University College, University of Victoria, and the University of Northern British Columbia. The University of Victoria Aboriginal liaison office saw further growth and expansion when the Faculty of Human and Social Development hired a First Nations counselor for academic and cultural support in 1998 (Pidgeon, 2005).

Aboriginal student services introduced a new framework within student services provision. Grounded in Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, Aboriginal student services take a wholistic approach to service provision (as outlined in Figure 2). They provide services that address the interconnected physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional needs of Aboriginal students within the broader relationships of the individual to his or her family, community (broadly defined), and nation (Pidgeon, 2001, 2005). Many of these services, as represented in Figure 2, do overlap the physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual realms. For example, financial advising assists students to develop budgets for the physical demands of paying rent and tuition, but this service also deals with the intellectual and emotional needs of students. Elders-in-residence programs also meet more than just the spiritual needs of students. Elders can also be important role models, confidants, and leaders for Aboriginal students. The intellectual realm may include academic advising, peer tutoring, transition services, and career counseling. The spiritual needs of students are addressed through (but not excluding) cultural ceremonies, leadership, and Elders-in-residence programming. The emotional needs of students are also facilitated by the presence of Elders, personal counseling, and community outreach. Financial advising and awards, along with housing, daycare, student spaces that include computers, kitchen, and lounge support the physical needs of students.

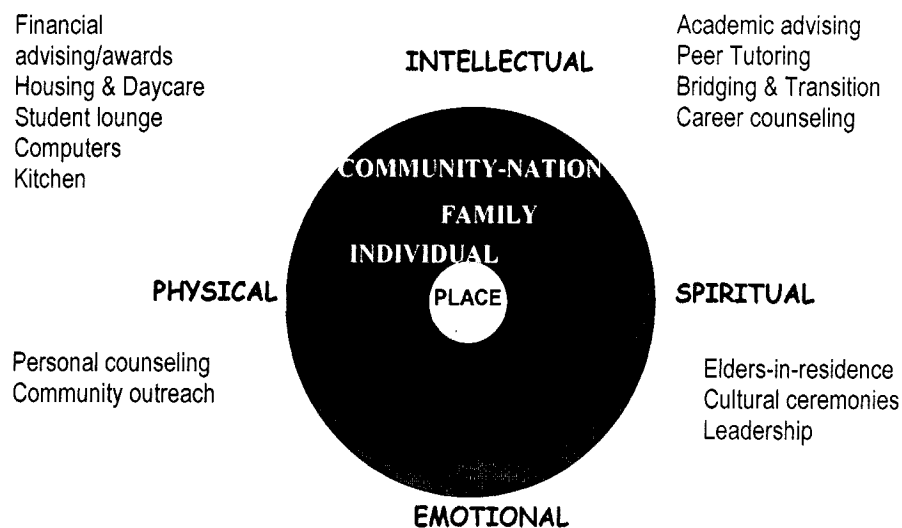


Figure 2

A wholistic representation of Aboriginal student service provision<sup>6</sup>.

I believe this model can be extended to represent the university experience in terms of access, recruitment, admissions, and retention. This broadens conceptions of success beyond graduation; success is based on positive negotiation of each of these realms. Thinking of the university experience in a wholistic manner helps conceptualize potential “gatekeepers” or barriers to Aboriginal student success at various phases of the university experience (Mihesuah, 2004). An access gatekeeper would be, for example, an admission requirement, such as a high school course requirement that may not have been available in rural high school programs. Another access gatekeeper might be costly and convoluted application procedures that discourage Aboriginal students from applying. Recruitment gatekeepers would be recruitment procedures and materials that do not resonate with

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<sup>6</sup> This diagram is not inclusive of all services provided across Canada. It is meant to be illustrative only and can be expanded to include many other forms of service provision specific to the institution.

Aboriginal students-- for example, recruitment materials that omit Aboriginal peoples or culturally misinformed recruiters who hinder Aboriginal student participation. These gatekeepers are found at the institutional level and, consequently, the barriers established by gatekeepers can be articulated as the institution's responsibility to Aboriginal education. By examining the university gatekeepers using an Indigenous wholistic framework, I am able to critique the larger university responsibilities to Aboriginal education by determining what is being done (and not done) for Aboriginal students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research project I conducted was to critically examine institutional accountability and responsibility to Indigenous higher education from a wholistic Indigenous framework.<sup>7</sup>

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed so each stakeholder (administrator, faculty, staff, Aboriginal student, and Elder) could reflect his or her own perspective.

1. How is Indigenous knowledge practiced within universities?
2. What makes a university successful for Aboriginal peoples using Indigenous definitions of success?
3. How are Indigenous knowledge and notions of success used to shape institutional accountability and responsibility to Aboriginal education? How can institutions be made more successful for Aboriginal peoples?

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<sup>7</sup> Indigenous student success is wholistically conceptualized as access, recruitment, persistence, and retention of Aboriginal students. *Responsibility* will be defined using Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991)

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this work is guided and shaped by Indigenous epistemology and ontology. Marie Battiste (2005) argues that an Indigenous theoretical perspective is important to us to “sensitize the western consciousness of Canadians in general and educators in particular to the colonial and neo-colonial practices that continue to marginalize and racialize Aboriginal students and to the unique rights and relationships Aboriginal peoples have in their homelands” (Battiste, 2005, p. 5). Unlike postcolonial theory, an Indigenous theoretical approach privileges Indigenous epistemology and ontology.

In using Indigenous knowledge as the language with which to mediate the dominant hegemony, Aboriginal scholars are communicating from their understanding of their reality, goals, and worlds. The work of Pierre Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory assists in the analysis of this research in providing a lens from which to understand the micro and macro structures of the mainstream educational system. The tenets of social reproduction theory relevant to this work are *capital*, *agency*, and *field*. Through these concepts, social reproduction theory provides a lens from which to critically engage with the question of institutional accountability and responsibility in Aboriginal education. These theoretical concepts will be further explored in Chapter 2.

## **Methodology**

An Indigenous methodological framework was used in this study. It framed the research from design to implementation, analysis, and dissemination. This research process used a mixed method approach for theoretical perspectives, data collection, and analysis (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003). Data collection techniques involved interviews, sharing



circles, document analysis, and site visits. This study also included survey data analysis from The University Presidents' Council's (TUPC) *University Baccalaureate Graduates Survey* reports focusing on Aboriginal alumni's responses.

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) provided an Indigenous perspective on how universities could be more successful spaces for Aboriginal students through the "4Rs" of respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity. These principles have more recently been revisited by Marker (2004) who argues that in the 13 years since Kirkness and Barnhardt's article, institutions still fail to honor the 4Rs. The use of the 4Rs along with the wholistic model (Figure 1 on p. 3) as the analytical framework for this work provided an opportunity to examine the participating institutions for evidence of the 4Rs and to bring these concepts to the forefront of this project.

Three universities in British Columbia, Canada, were the sites of study for this research project. Ninety-two key stakeholders participated in semi-structured interviews either face-to-face or via telephone. Participants included Elders and Aboriginal education committee/group members, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student service practitioners and administrators. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal faculty members and academic administrators also took part in the interviews. Sharing circles or interviews were held with Aboriginal undergraduate and graduate students who were enrolled in the academic year of 2005 to 2006.

In the summer of 2005, I began developing relationships with institutions by inviting them to take part in this study and shape its development. Data collection began in January, 2006, and continued until February, 2007. The majority of the interviews and sharing circles were held from January to April of 2006.

In addition to these data, I reviewed institutional policies pertaining to Aboriginal students: specifically, admissions, financial aid, housing, and academic advising policies.

The University President's Council (TUPC) data pertaining to alumni of university undergraduates provides important information related to Aboriginal student experiences. These data also provide insight into recruitment and retention in terms of institutional factors that impede or support student participation in university. Site observations were also an important part of this research process. Qualitative software, Atlas.TI, was used to analyze the interviews and sharing circle transcripts. The quantitative software package SPSS 14.0 was used to analyze the TUPC data sets. Chapter 3 will discuss the tensions and successes in applying the Indigenous wholistic framework as an analytical tool while using qualitative and quantitative software.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

I set several delimitations on this research to set the context and framework of this study. First, only universities that provide Aboriginal student services in British Columbia were invited to participate in this project. The rationale behind this decision was that the presence of these student services indicated that these universities already had some intentions to support Aboriginal students and a sizeable population to provide such services. Therefore, the chosen universities merit further investigation of institutional responsibility and accountability to Aboriginal higher education.

In choosing such sites, the context of the university influenced who was invited to participate once the university decided they wanted to participate. Interview participants were Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal faculty, staff, and administrators, along with Aboriginal students, and Elders. Community involvement in this project was facilitated by the Elders, who were also involved within the institution. Unfortunately, consultation with local Aboriginal communities was not possible due to the limited resources and timeframe

of this study. However, Elder and Aboriginal Advisory Council consultation along with Aboriginal student input were important community voices present within the institutional communities involved in this project.

The delimitations of this study logically impose several limitations on its findings. The first limitation is that the findings may not be generalizable to the community colleges or university-college institutions and universities that did not have Aboriginal student services. Two universities decided not to participate because they were already conducting similar research projects. Another limitation of this study is the transferability of the findings to other provinces in Canada due to this research being conducted in British Columbia. Other provincial universities may have different policies and practices related to Aboriginal higher education. It would be premature to transfer this study's findings to other provincial contexts without comparable data.

### **Researcher Positionality**

During this PhD journey, I have had to consider and reconsider my own multiple subjectivities as an individual of Aboriginal ancestry from the east coast of Canada, along with my role as a researcher and graduate student. Not being from the West Coast, I came to this research as an outsider, but my self-identification as a person of Aboriginal ancestry put me as an insider. My self-identification and how I positioned myself within this research helped me form relationships with participants within this research process. My responsibilities to my position as a researcher also determined how I engaged with this work.

I do believe that sharing my history with participants created a space where I was accepted as a person who was doing research following the 4Rs. There are politics within

the negotiation of being an Indigenous person who does research simply because being “Indian” is political (Grande, 2000, 2004; Menzies, 2001; Mihesuah, 1998; Urion, 1999). For some Indigenous scholars, the politics reside within their own communities or, even more dangerously, within their countries’ governments. For me, these politics played out more in the personal realm than in the public realm. My own self-confidence in who I was as a person of blended heritages, my “right” to be in the presence of other Indigenous scholars, and the larger purpose located within this work influenced how the political and personal collided. These collisions became teachable moments for me as I learned more about myself and the process of becoming a researcher. I speak more about the journey of the research process and my role as researcher in Chapter 2.

The moments of insecurity and reaffirmation I experienced through this process need to be acknowledged. It is from my internal struggles that my determination and confidence grew, and I was able to complete this journey. The external struggles over ideas, theories, and life choices did not happen in isolation. At various points, my committee members, family, and friends listened to my experiences of being a doctoral student; this sharing helped me on my way. SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement), a peer mentoring program for Aboriginal graduate students, was another form of support that also guided my doctoral journey. Finally, during the research process, especially the analysis phase, the voices of those who participated in the project resonated with my purpose and articulated for me my responsibilities as the researcher and the relevance of this work to the transformation of higher education for Aboriginal peoples.

## Outline of Dissertation

Chapter 1 describes the purpose of this research project and the context in which it arose. It also introduces the theoretical and methodological frameworks used and outlines the research questions and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Finally, it provides a brief history of Aboriginal student services.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the literature reviewed for this study, examining social reproduction, retention, critical, and post-colonial theories. This literature review contextualizes Indigenous knowledge within post-secondary education and analyzes the literature on retention and on Aboriginal participation in post-secondary institutions. It also discusses how Aboriginal student services are sites of Indigenous knowledge within universities. To contextualize the recommendations arising from this work, Chapter 2 outlines key recommendations that have been made from previous research studies (e.g., Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Hawthorn, Cairns, Jamieson, & Lysyk, 1966; Hawthorn, Tremblay, Vallee, & Ryan, 1967; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996).

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework and research process of this study. It provides the background literature on Indigenous research methodology and outlines the research process used in this project. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of this study, each chapter focusing on one of the research questions.

Chapter 4 provides insight into the first research questions: *How is Indigenous knowledge defined and how was Indigenous knowledge practiced within universities?* The focus of the chapter is on how the participants define Indigenous knowledge and how they saw Indigenous knowledge present within their respective institutions. This chapter also

presents how Aboriginal student services, as a site of Indigenous knowledge, both help and hinder the institutions' roles and responsibilities for Aboriginal success.

Chapter 5 addresses the second research question: *What makes a university successful and not successful for Aboriginal peoples using Indigenous definitions of success?* This chapter explores how success was defined by participants and how this contrasts with institutional and Aboriginal communities' definitions of success. It also identifies the helpful and hindering factors to success as defined by participants.

Chapter 6 discusses the third research question: *How are Indigenous knowledge and notions of success used to shape institutional accountability and responsibility to Aboriginal education? How can institutions be made more successful for Aboriginal peoples?* It also provides a discussion of the relationship between Indigenous knowledge and notions of accountability and responsibility within university education.

Chapter 7 provides a summary and discussion of the three main research questions of this study. Implications of this research for theory, practice, and policy are presented in this final chapter in reference to the findings of this study. Relevant implications for each stakeholder group, such as students, faculty, staff, administrators, and Aboriginal communities, along with the federal and provincial governments are offered in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to tell the interconnecting stories of Indigenous knowledges,<sup>8</sup> power, and higher education. These stories articulate institutional accountability and responsibility to Indigenous higher education. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section briefly defines Indigenous knowledge systems based on the academic writings of Indigenous scholars, such as Jo-ann Archibald, Marie Battiste, Graham Smith, Linda Smith, and others. In this section, I also articulate Indigenous theory that is the grounding theoretical framework of this study.

The second section of the literature review presents how Indigenous knowledges and the theoretical framework reference the terms *accountability* and *responsibility*. For example, one form of accountability is articulated in the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996). *Responsibility* is discussed in relation to the 4Rs (respect for Indigenous cultural integrity, relevance to Indigenous perspectives and experiences, responsibility through participation and respectful relationships) proposed by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991). I also provide some overview as to how current hegemonic discourses use those terms.

In the third section of Chapter 2, I look at notions of power – how it is used, how it is gained, and how it affects institutional accountability and responsibility in Aboriginal higher education. The tenets of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction assist in the analysis of current power relationships within mainstream educational structures. The work

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<sup>8</sup> *Indigenous knowledge* is pluralized to *knowledges* deliberately to emphasize the heterogeneity of Aboriginal epistemologies.

of critical theorists, such as Michael Apple and Graham Smith, further the discussion about power and counter-hegemonic movements, such as Indigenous knowledge and theory.

The fourth and final section of this literature review discusses the idea of the university as a field within which Indigenous knowledges endeavor to exist. *Field*, according to Bourdieu, is the stage on which the forms of capital are accumulated and used. The Indigenous forms of capital to be discussed within this section have to some extent decolonized some spaces within the academy that were previously closed to other ways of knowing. However, these spaces that Indigenous knowledge opens up are minimal and, some would argue, marginalized within the university (Battiste, 2000b).

The issues of power and agency will be revisited with respect to responsibility and accountability by universities to Aboriginal education, particularly within universities introduced in the third section. Within the field of a university, the tenets of retention theories reinforce valued forms of capital, and, as I will argue, under value other forms of capital. Subsequently, in the last section of this chapter, I provide a critique of retention theories' applicability to Indigenous forms of capital and cultural integrity. This critique is relevant to this study because it demonstrates how a university can be transformed to become a more successful place for Aboriginal students.

### **Indigenous Knowledge Systems Shape Indigenous Theory**

Indigenous knowledge (IK) systems and, subsequently, theoretical perspectives provide the foundational grounding of this research. As such, it is important to articulate how Indigenous knowledge systems are defined. Indigenous knowledges cannot be conceptualized as being uniform. IK systems are as diverse as the cultures of those who hold these ways of knowing. Archibald (1990) describes Indigenous epistemology as a



wholistic, cyclical relationship that has relational action entailing generation and regeneration. Indigenous knowledge systems shape traditions and customs in a spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to the environment (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cardinal, 2001; Kuokkanen, 2007). IK systems are composed of traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations. IK is personal, oral, experiential, wholistic, and may be conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Brant Castellano, 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999).

Figure 1 (as shown on pg. 3) is a wholistic representation of Indigenous knowledges that incorporates the interconnected realms of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual. It also represents the interrelationships of the individual, family, and community. This wholistic representation of Indigenous epistemology was used in the research process of my study. This diagram is just one way to visually conceptualize Indigenous knowledges and theory and, as such, should not be viewed as a “one-size-fits-all” conceptualization of Indigenous theory.

Eber Hampton (1995, p. 11) argued that an articulated Indigenous theoretical framework “would serve to organize research, guide practices, and serve as an explicit aid to the discussion and clarification” of Indigenous education. Indigenous scholars have been articulating Indigenous theory through the centering of Indigenous knowledges within their practices as scholars, researchers, and mentors. As a result they are “writing-back” and “teaching-back” to established research and teaching practices; these actions create venues of change within theory, research, and practice (Battiste et al., 2002). The centering of Indigenous knowledges within their research, theory, and practice has developed an Indigenous theory that is grounded in Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and axiology.

Indigenous knowledges as theoretical frameworks have been used in a variety of contexts by Indigenous scholars to empower, decolonize, and reaffirm their ways of

knowing in everyday practices. For example, Linda T. Smith (1999) uses a wholistic model to explain an Indigenous research agenda that has four directions of decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization. Each direction represents processes that connect, inform, and clarify the tensions between the local, the regional, and the global. These research processes can be incorporated into practices and methodologies (L. T. Smith, 1999). Other Aboriginal scholars developed their theoretical and methodological approaches based on their own cultural references and understandings. For example, Dawn Marsden uses wampum beads to articulate the interconnections and interrelationships in her Indigenous methodology process (Marsden, 2006).

The circular model has also been used in an educational context by Armstrong (1995), Cohen (2001) and most recently, the Canadian Council on Learning (2007). *Squlxwcut* is an Okanagan pedagogic model whereby the children are the center and the family, schools, parents, and educational system all focus on that center (Cohen, 2001). Cohen (2001) described his circles as “dissipative structures” that are in a continual process of change. Armstrong’s (1995) Dance House was also circular representing the intellect, spirit, emotion, and body from which the self, family, community, and land are interconnected and interrelated. Cohen (2001) believes a central element in the Okanagan First Nations’ worldview that applies to other Indigenous epistemologies is the “belief that humans are not the supreme beings of the planet . . . our health and vitality are directly related to the health and vitality of the natural world of which we are part” (p. 142). The Canadian Council of Learning’s report *Redefining how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learning* expanded notions of success based on the Indigenous knowledges of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis nations. The report presents wholistic models and understandings of success reflecting the IK of each group, ensuring respect, reciprocity, and relevance of defining educational success for each nation.

In articulating an Indigenous theory, one must also be informed of the limitations and delimitations of discussing various aspects of Indigenous knowledges within a public realm. Indigenous knowledges should be respected at the practical, personal, and contextual levels (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Marker, 2003). Within the researcher-community relationship, it is the responsibility of the Indigenous community to consciously determine the knowledge they wish to share, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to communicate that knowledge in a respectful way (Hill, 2000).

In defining and practicing Indigenous theory, one must also be aware of the inherent power relationships that exist when the marginalized push against hegemonic norms. Indigenous knowledges and theory can be viewed as counter-hegemonic ways of knowing from the dominant values and norms. Vine Deloria (2001b; 1985; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001) contends that continued racism in society, in particular in the academy, keeps Indigenous and other non-hegemonic beliefs, traditions, and views of the world on the margins. Non-hegemonic work is often viewed as subjective, with unreliable observations. This negation of counter-hegemonic work often places Indigenous scholars on the margins, their work discredited and overlooked. Counter-hegemonic movements are seen as having no place in the social reproduction of the dominant discourse. The hidden and blatant oppression of counter-hegemonic movements does indeed reinforce the authority and power of the dominant. Yet, those who position themselves as counter-hegemonic push against and pull apart re-defining the boundaries arbitrarily outlined by the pedagogic authority (PAu) of dominant society.

The Eurocentric perception of Indigenous knowledge, theories, and methods as “anti-theoretical” has been an attempt by the dominant hegemony to keep Indigenous work at the margins (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Haig-Brown, 2000b; Hill, 2000). Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) argue that labeling work as “atheoretical,” can be viewed as an attempt

to deny the validity of the knowledge shared by certain bodies who do not follow the conventionally accepted methods of theorizing -- that is, to discredit those who take a stance against the hegemonic social order. However, I will demonstrate from the literature how Indigenous scholars and researchers are pushing against the margins or, alternatively, creating spaces within the institution where Indigenous knowledge is valued. In this way, they are thus changing mainstream higher education.

Some Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars caution that writing can be dangerous because it reinforces and maintains a style of discourse of the dominant powers (Haig-Brown, 2000a, 2000b; Hill, 2000). In writing, we are exposed and sometimes our knowledges become misappropriated and commodified (Dei, 2000; Marker, 2003; L. T. Smith, 1999). Thus, the challenge to Indigenous scholars is how to use the dominant discourse to relate to the mainstream but to still maintain their integrity and to respect their Indigenous knowledge. Maintaining the balance requires researchers' remaining attentive that "language as a discourse does mediate our reality. It constitutes our ways of thinking about and ultimately constructing our worlds" (Haig-Brown, 2000a, p. 5). As a researcher, it is my responsibility to be critically aware of how the language in this dissertation represents Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous education. My responsibility also requires that I remain diligent in my own writing so it avoids tokenized efforts and the commodification of Indigenous knowledges as Western knowledge (Dei, 2000).

In grounding this dissertation in an Indigenous perspective, I am also actively engaging in the decolonizing project within the academy. As Dei (2000) suggests,

a decolonization project in the academy must be aware that the colonization process and colonizing tendencies accord a false status to the Indigenous-colonial subject through the "authority" of Western knowledge at the same time as Indigenous knowledges are deprived, negated or devalued. Of course, decolonization is also a project of self-implication. (pp. 116-117)

The next section privileges Indigenous knowledges and theoretical understanding of the concepts of *responsibility* and *accountability*.

## **Responsibility and Accountability**

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) described in detail how post-secondary institutions could improve Aboriginal post-secondary education through the “4Rs”: respect for First Nations cultural integrity, relevance to Aboriginal perspectives and experiences, reciprocal relationships, and responsibility through participation. There is further discussion in Chapter 3 of how the 4Rs transfer well to an Indigenous research process.

For the sake of this study, *responsibility* is being used as Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) defined it as occurring through participation. They indicated that universities are not neutral enterprises and consequently, they need to be active participants in changing power, authority, and control regarding Aboriginal education. Institutional responsibility to Aboriginal education means more than increasing access (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Institutional responsibility involves working *with* Aboriginal peoples in transforming policy, posture, and practice of universities. Lowe (1999) reminds us that

universities are artifacts of the society that creates them. They thrive in symbiotic relationship with their “worlds,” expecting that in exchange for various forms of support, they will do something important for the communities that depend on them. (p. 17)

Part of this shifting for institutions relates to Indigenous worldviews, which see responsibility as an integral component in relationship to others and the land. Institutional responsibility, therefore, relates to the relationships universities have with the communities in which they are physically located and their mission statements indicate they serve (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Kuokkanen, 2007).

In articulating Indigenous understandings of responsibility, it is also important to determine how Aboriginal peoples also discuss *accountability*. Within an Indigenous framework, accountability is inherently linked to responsibility. Gardner (2000) describes university accountability to Aboriginal education as a moral and ethical responsibility to “make accessible to all sectors of society an educational opportunity they afford. In this sense [universities] must compete creatively in order to respond to a sector of society that historically has not enjoyed the benefits of Western higher learning” (Gardner, 2000, p. 206).

As Aboriginal communities came to use educational pathways to actualize their goals of self-determination and self-governance, they clearly articulated, in the educational policy they developed, what they saw as institutional responsibility and accountability. For example, the National Indian Brotherhood (1972) strongly articulated their vision of Aboriginal education as including the involvement of parents, culture, and language. The common themes in policies such as *A Survey of Contemporary Indians of Canada, 1966-1967* (Hawthorn et al., 1966; Hawthorn et al., 1967), *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future: National Review of First Nations Education* (Assembly of First Nations, 1988) and *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) assists this dissertation research project to articulate Indigenous understandings and expectations of accountability. The themes presented in these documents continue to resonate across the Aboriginal educational landscape:

- The relationship of education to health and the economy and Aboriginal peoples’ full participation as citizens of Canada.
- Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education.
- The need for Aboriginal parental involvement in all levels of education, especially in terms of governance, administration, and curriculum design.

- The important role of Elders in the education of Aboriginal children and youth.
- Culturally relevant curriculum and Aboriginal programs in K to 12 and post-secondary education.
- The need for more Aboriginal educators/professionals and the cross-cultural training of non-Aboriginal educators.

Since the 1960s, many of these recommendations have not been addressed or fully implemented across Canada's educational system; hence, the ongoing challenge and disappointment in a structure that continues to fail Aboriginal peoples. Gains have been made in some areas, but the recommendations have not had nationwide implementation and success. A comparison of these recommendations with the findings of this study will demonstrate the themes that are still pertinent to the educational landscape of today. It is critical that in examining these commonalities, the discussion (and action) around Aboriginal education move beyond the rhetoric of repetition that can be part of the politics of distraction (G. H. Smith, 2000a). Part of this movement of going beyond the repetition of recommendations requires that I also examine current hegemonic discourses around accountability and responsibility.

### **Hegemonic discourses around accountability and responsibility**

Just as the Aboriginal position can be understood by its articulation in policy-response documents like *Indian Control of Indian Education* (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972), *Tradition and education: towards a vision of our future: national review of First Nations education* (Assembly of First Nations, 1988), and *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), so, too, can current hegemonic values and norms be gauged by a review of policy. For example, the federal government places its responsibility for

Aboriginal education, particularly K to 12, within its interpretation of the *Indian Act*,<sup>9</sup> and regards its transfer payments to the provinces for Aboriginal students who attend K to 12 public schools as meeting this responsibility. However, the federal government does not transfer this responsibility to higher education. They position their responsibility to post-secondary education as a social obligation rather than a legal one (Stonechild, 2006). In contrast, national Aboriginal organizations consider the Indian Act, coupled with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to be inclusive of all levels of education.

Current hegemonic understandings of accountability in education refer “to the practice of holding education systems responsible for the quality of their products [such as,] students’ knowledge, skills, and behaviours” (Nataraj Kirby & Stecher, 2004, p. 1). For example, The No-Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for the K to 12 system in the United States emphasizes accountability on student test results. The recent “voluntary” accountability system being developed for the U.S. post-secondary education market has been labeled the NCLB for higher education,<sup>10</sup> with its goal of being more accountable to the public. The 2006 report, *A Test of Leadership - Charting the Future of Higher Education*, examined five areas of the higher education system: (1) access, (2) finance (including financial aid), (3) learning, (4) transparency and accountability, and (5) innovation (Spellings, 2006).

These five areas highlight the perceived benefits of higher education and the urgency for reforms put forward by Spellings (2006). These reforms were strongly influenced by the neo-liberal and neo-conservative discourse of “keep[ing] [United States] citizens and our nation at the forefront of the knowledge revolution by increasing cultural and human capital and individual social mobility” (p. 5). There was direct mention of the responsibility of

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/I-5/> (accessed 04/11/07) for the Indian Act.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/0626/accountability> (accessed 26/06/07) for more information on the rationale and criticisms.



universities working more with the K to 12 sector to improve access and retention of minority and disadvantaged students. However, the focus on hindrances to participation of these groups (e.g., lack of academic preparation, information, and financial resources) highlights the student deficit discourse and fails to challenge the institutions to think about how their own gatekeeping policies and practices impede student success. Similar to the K to 12 sector, the higher education arena in the U.S. and, as I will later argue, Canada is being bombarded with standardized testing and a return to basics as measures of accountability. This discourse of standards and measures is typically framed as sustaining economic growth and social cohesiveness. Even though both of these objectives are indeed important, the challenge is understanding the hidden agenda of valued forms of capital and knowledge being rewarded within this neo-liberal, neo-conservative agenda.

The *Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead* (Plant, 2007) report on post-secondary education in British Columbia resonates with the discourse present in *A Test of Leadership - Charting the Future of Higher Education* (Spellings, 2006). In this report, Plant (2007) makes several recommendations based on the B.C. Provincial goal of having British Columbia be “the best educated, most literate jurisdiction in North American by 2015” (p.3). The recommendations are around a three-tiered system of public higher education that would include (1) research intensive universities, (2) regionally based universities, and (3) a college sector.

*Campus 2020 and the Future of British Columbia's Post-secondary Education: Critical Responses and Policy Perspectives* (Metcalf et al., 2007) raised concerns about the implementation of some of the proposed recommendations put forward by Plant (2007). Metcalf et al. (2007) argued elements of the suggested access and equity strategy might have a negative, rather than a positive, effect on the number of student enrolments and their distribution across institutions and among various social groups. This critique raises

questions regarding Plant's (2007) proposed goal that Aboriginal participation in post-secondary education should reach parity with the rest of British Columbia's citizens by 2020. This goal was motivated by the need for equity and the growing Aboriginal population in the province. Plant (2007) cited the *2005 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Aboriginal Post-secondary Education and Training* as an example of the initiative already occurring within the province to improve "levels of participation and success for Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education and training in British Columbia" (p. 37). However, Metcalfe et al. (2007) caution that these recommendations do not go far enough. Metcalfe et al. (2007) advocate a wholistic approach to education should be part of the 2020 plan. An educational strategy should include the broader economic and social circumstances of Aboriginal peoples along with an intergenerational educational plan that expands from pre-infancy to Elders (Metcalfe et al., 2007).

Educational policies exemplify the power relationships between Aboriginal peoples and mainstream educational decision makers. Policies are also indicators of whose vested interests shaped the policy direction and focus. In the policy arena of Aboriginal higher education, competing (and sometimes compatible) discourses of the mainstream and Indigenous peoples are placing more pressure on institutions of higher education to be more transparent and accountable to the public. As Apple (2004) stated,

The combination of the neo-liberal market and the regulatory state, then does indeed "work." However, it works in ways in which the metaphors of free market, merit, and effort hide the differential reality that is produced. (p. 34)

This differential reality gets played out in terms of race, gender, and social class, all of which influence whether students are valued commodities in this kind of market. Universities, like schools, exist in "a hierarchical ordering, a market, in prestige and reputation" (Apple, 2004, p. 36). Within such environments, the discourse of "best"

institution and “best” student are earmarked with accountability standards to the public.

Such language gives the perception that access to higher education becomes more equitable through accountability structures that are clear and objective. The reality is that not all have the opportunity to participate in such markets. A question that is raised for me at this point is “How do Aboriginal students become valued commodities within such markets?” And perhaps the more important question is, “Is there another way of conceptualizing education that is not based on neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideals but, rather, on Indigenous wholistic frameworks that value the cultural integrity of all students?”

An analysis of power in higher education is critical, as Marker (2000) believes, because it locates the discussion of Aboriginal education within the complexities of Indian-White relations. These complexities are not about race per se but more about respecting the opinions of the “other” (i.e., Indigenous) within mainstream education (Kuokkanen, 2007).

### **Influences of Power**

In exploring the role of mainstream education in terms of educational policy, curriculum, and pedagogy, Marker (2000) explains that Aboriginal education

with some exceptions . . . has always been about cross-cultural negotiation and power differentials. It is a complex landscape of colliding interpretations of fundamental goals and purposes across the cultural barricades. (p. 31)

The suggestions of Metcalfe et al. (2007) resonate with Battiste et al. (2002) and Dennison (1985), who also recommended that an analysis of power occur among education, politics, and economy in Aboriginal policy. For example, universities are under fiscal and political pressures as competition for students and research grants increase and government funding decreases. Facing budgetary constraints, their gaze turns inward as some critics of

Aboriginal-specific programs and support services question the value of providing these specific services to less than 3% of the university population. Supporters of Aboriginal education initiatives counter these critics, arguing that universities have social and moral obligations to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners. These justifications are supported, in part, by specific institutional recruitment, admission, housing, and financial policies for Aboriginal students.

The increasing Aboriginal populations in Canada continue to reinforce previous demands and expectations of the responsibility of the public education system to accommodate Aboriginal ways of knowing, history, and culture across the curriculum and mainstream educational systems (see Archibald et al., 1995; Battiste, 1998; Battiste et al., 2002; Brant Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; British Columbia Human Rights Commission, 2001; Charters-Voght, 1999; Cohen, 2001; Graveline, 1998; Hampton, 1995, 2000). This change acknowledges Apple's (1995) perspective that

it is at the level of our daily lives where the cultural, political and economic spheres are lived out in all their complexity and contradictions, not just in the more removed areas of high finance, federal government, and the like (though these cannot be ignored). Theoretic analysis, though essential, cannot substitute for concrete work in all three spheres at that level.  
(p. 159)

Indigenous knowledges and education intersect with the cultural, political, and economic spheres of Canadian society, and, as Apple (1995) suggests, it is critical to understand the influences of power within these realms. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) also recognized that accessing higher education means gaining access to power. They explained that "gaining access to the university means more than gaining an education...it also means gaining access to power, authority, and an opportunity to exercise control over the affairs of everyday life, affairs that are usually taken for granted by most non-Native people" (p. 11). This section, "influences of power," presents the work of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1982,

1986, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990; Bourdieu, Passeron, & De Saint Martin, 1994). His notions of *capital*, *symbolic violence*, and *agency* inform the analysis of power by clearly articulating the power dynamics within education.

Power is multiple and ubiquitous; as a result, it can not solely be identified as the privilege of a dominant elite class actively deploying it against a passive, dominated class. Instead, it exists in an infinitely complex network of micro-powers that permeate all aspects of social life. Therefore, to combat inequities in society, resistance must be localized and target interventions at specific sites of society (Fisher, 2003).

In understanding how power is created and maintained, we must also comprehend “who” has the power. Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, power and the potential use of power occurs within certain contexts that are influenced (and contained) by social structures. An historical example of power being influenced and defined by social structures is how Aboriginal peoples were viewed by colonizers as “not human,” which became a justification for domination and control (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Deloria, 1985). Power is also not a linear concept. Power manifests itself internally in groups, such as Aboriginal nations or communities. It also occurs externally and may be exerted by those outside positions of authority. The conception of power in terms of superiority and inferiority is based on Euro-Western values. Consequently, power becomes a useful concept when considering the hierarchical nature of epistemology that places Euro-Western ways of knowing and being at the top and Indigenous values and epistemologies at the bottom. Such hierarchies run counter to Indigenous understandings of relationships and the interconnectedness of these relationships, whether animate, inanimate, or spiritual.

Critical and social reproduction theories aid our understanding of the complexities and nuances of the micro- and macro-structures within society (e.g., Apple, 1995, 2000,

2003; Archer, 1985; Battiste, 2002, 2005, 2000b; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Codd, 1990; Edelman, 1988; Ozga, 2000; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997).<sup>11</sup> For example, Kaupapa Maori moves beyond critical pedagogy by developing pathways that result in active and transformative outcomes on existing conditions (G. H. Smith, 1997, 2000b). For transformation to occur, it is important to understand why current conditions continue to exist.

### **Pierre Bourdieu and social reproduction theory**

The theoretical work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is helpful in critiquing mainstream education for several reasons. First of all, the majority of Canada's Aboriginal people attend mainstream institutions; therefore, it is fitting to critique this system using the work of a sociologist who critically examines mainstream educational micro- and macro-structures. Second, Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction provides insight into the power of the educational system in reproducing the dominant values and beliefs about success. Third, Bourdieu's work related to universities explored how universities are "producers of knowledge" through their physical structures, academic discourse, and pedagogies that continue to reproduce what is valued within society and, at the same time, marginalizes the "other" (Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* covers all groups in a society and, hence, allows us to examine within the same theoretical framework, the educational outcomes for oppressed cultural, social, and gender groups (Battiste, 2000a; Harker, 1990; hooks, 1994).

Another component of this dissertation research is the Indigenous position from which I critique the educational system and Bourdieu's work. Deloria (2001a) supports the

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<sup>11</sup> While the work of Bourdieu has been influential in our understanding of the reproductive nature of schools, Apple and other critical theorists are furthering the *why* of reproduction and are beginning to ask *how* to change current schools systems.

anti-colonial project, a project that focuses on the Indigenous as the centre instead of focusing on the colonizer, by urging younger Indian scholars to use the Indigenous position to validate their work. Bourdieu (1990) supports the notion of using the master's tools to deconstruct his house proposed by bell hooks (1994). Bourdieu (1990) states,

You can think with a thinker against the thinker. . . to say that you can think at the same time with and against a thinker means radically contradicting the classificatory logic in accordance with which people are accustomed. (p. 49)

Simultaneously thinking with and against a thinker provides a position to think along with the theoretical concepts of Bourdieu while, at the same time, critically reflecting from a different perspective, such as Indigenous, that is not traditionally associated with his work. The relationship between schooling and the wider society is a dialectal one and can be read as another expression of the fundamental structure-agency dilemma in the sociology of education; that is, to what degree do schools function to produce and/or reproduce the state or, vice versa, to what degree does the state produce and/or reproduce the function of schools (G. H. Smith, 1997)?

Counter-hegemonic movements that are anti-colonial (i.e., place Indigenous first) are occurring, by "indigenizing" education for Indigenous peoples. A New Zealand example is the development of the Maori's Kaupapa Maori theory and praxis. Primarily an educational strategy, Kaupapa Maori evolved out of Maori communities "as a deliberate means to comprehend, resist, and transform the crises related to the dual concerns of schooling underachievement of Maori students and the ongoing erosion of Maori language, knowledge, and culture as a result of colonization" (G. H. Smith, 1997, p. 27). The work of Maori scholar Graham Smith, goes beyond explaining how schools and education reproduce society "by recognizing and exploring the complexities by which the dominant Pakeha (non-Maori) power and control is exercised "within" and "as a result" of schooling and

education from a culturalist and structuralist perspective” (G. H. Smith, 1997, p. 29). Michael Apple (1995) is also critical of the social reproduction theory for a couple of reasons. He argues: (1) “it views students as passive internalizers of pregiven social messages. Student reinterpretation of these messages is only a partial explanation and (2) it under theorizes and neglects the fact that capitalist social relations are inherently contradictory” (p. 13). For example, the contradiction in cultural accumulation and “need” to expand markets and profits creates a crisis in legitimacy that affects universities and their ability or willingness to change to meet the diverse needs of their faculty, students, and society at large (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004).

### Capital

The concept of *capital* is important to this study because it assists understanding mainstream values and knowledge perpetuated and reproduced within the educational system. Bourdieu (1986) defines *capital* as

accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. (p. 241)

Capital can be viewed as a set of actually useable resources and powers. One can be born into various types of capital. For example, a child is born into the economic and social capital of the family. As the child goes through the educational system and life they accumulate and build capital. It takes time to accumulate capital, and the structure of the distribution of the different types of capital (social, cultural, economic) at a given time represents the structures of the social world (Bourdieu, 1986). These types of capital can be translated into social networks (“who you know”), material possessions, educational credentials, social status, and financial situation.



### *Cultural capital*

*Cultural capital* is often described as linguistic and cultural competence. In this discussion of capital, it is important to recognize the delegitimization of Indigenous linguistic and cultural competence by colonizers (Marker, 2004). In speaking of education as a form of capital, Bourdieu (1986) believed that education was not simply a financial investment and return; education provides a conduit for the “domestic transmission of cultural capital” (p. 244). The institutionalized state of cultural capital can be best explained using the example of attaining educational credentials. Officially recognized or sanctioned learning is immediately viewed as more socially acceptable; it “institutes an essential difference between the officially recognized, guaranteed competence and simple cultural capital, which is constantly trying to prove itself” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

### *Social capital*

It is important to consider that *social capital* is never completely independent of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital because, in the daily interactions with others, the acknowledgement of each others’ economic, cultural, and symbolic capital “exerts a multiplier effect on the capital [a person] possesses in [his or her] own right” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Social capital establishes a network of relationships (either with individuals or groups) that can be considered investment strategies. These investment strategies are aimed at establishing and reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is nothing more than acknowledged and recognized forms of economic, symbolic, or cultural capital. Social space, such as a university, is then influenced by the acknowledgement and maintenance of social capital through the use of cultural, symbolic, and economic capital that maintains the symbolic power relations valued that constitute the structure of that social space (Bourdieu, 1990).

Consequently, education and, in particular, universities become integral to facilitating social and cultural capital (Andres, 1994).

The fact that Aboriginal peoples remain in the lower socio-economic status in Canadian society should not be lost in this discussion. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) observed that pupils from low economic backgrounds typically do not see post-secondary education as a realistic option for themselves and, consequently, refrain from even applying. These issues are important when thinking about the role and responsibility of the university to Aboriginal higher education.

Murphy (1985) puts forward two explanations for power based on class, which relate to Bourdieu's notions of cultural capital and agency. The first is the *structural exclusion account*, which explains class difference in educational representation in terms of structural bias. This structural bias is based on pedagogic authority (PAu) being maintained through pedagogic actions (PA), such as curriculum and pedagogical approaches, that are based on upper middle class values (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990). The second is the *cultural dispossession account*, which explains class difference in educational representation in terms of cultural handicap. *Cultural handicap* refers to not having the valued forms of capital to assist one in the progress of one's education. For example, working class youth do not have the "material instruction and paternal interest" when compared to the academic readiness and parental involvement of upper middle class youth (Murphy, 1985, p. 184). Neither the *structural exclusion* nor *cultural dispossession* account takes seriously class differences in educational aspirations (Murphy, 1985). This is where notions of capital, symbolic violence, and power assist exploring institutional responsibility and accountability to Aboriginal higher education.

### Symbolic violence and power

According to Bourdieu (1990), “there are always in a society, conflicts between symbolic powers which aim to impose their vision of legitimate divisions that is to construct groups. Symbolic power in this sense is a power of world making” (p. 137). Consequently, we must remain cognizant and critical of a world making that is defined according to the values and perceptions of the dominant hegemony. Within this social reproduction, the assimilationist agenda that historically dominated Aboriginal education continues to manifest itself in today’s educational system through the valuing of particular types of habits and forms of capital (Antone, 2000; Barnhardt, 1992, 2002; Battiste, 2000a; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Urion, 1999). The strategic planning to maintain power results in various acts of “symbolic violence”: the elimination of others from the educational system and the exclusion of different ways of knowing, alternative sets of rules, and “other” voices (Andres, 1994; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990; Robbins, 1993; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002).

The “hidden curriculum,” that is, the covert purpose of curriculum to maintain dominant power and value Euro-Western values, maintains social and cultural divisions within society through subtle controls. This control is exerted in the everyday, “taken for granted” values, norms, and beliefs that are inscribed in students through the rules, routines, and classroom practices of schooling (G. H. Smith, 1997). As Battiste (2000a) views it, education perpetuates the pedagogic authority of domination by

preserving class structures and selecting of ‘elite’ rather than sorting everyone out according to innate capabilities. This sorting also passes family or parental responsibility on to the states, leading to a disintegration of the family for the abstraction of the society. (p. 197)

For the Maori and other Indigenous peoples, this has translated into the existing inequalities and, hence, the preservation of multiple interests of the dominant society.

Symbolic violence occurs because through the ages, we can come to believe that this is the “way of the dominant world” (i.e., Euro-Western); however, it is not the only way. Therefore, it is critical that Indigenous education be thought of as multiple struggles occurring in multiple sites (G. H. Smith, 1997). Harker (1990) argues that if our system is to be multicultural or even bi-cultural in any real sense, then we should be engaging in fundamental reappraisal of the structural features of our schools. However, simply being multicultural does not acknowledge the complexities of hegemonic disrespect of Indigenous epistemes or the role education has played in the colonization of Indigenous peoples (Kuokkanen, 2007). Graham Smith (1997) advocates that

resistance and transformative strategies must go beyond linear approaches that examine one problem, one must engage with the multiple circumstances and shapes of oppression, exploitation, assimilation, colonization, racism, gender-ism, age-ism, and other strategies of marginalization. (p. 30)

*Cognitive imperialism* is a form of cognitive manipulation and symbolic violence. It has been used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values by denying people their language and cultural integrity by maintaining the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference (Battiste, 2000a).

In Canada, symbolic violence also occurs at the provincial and federal government levels. Although education for non-Aboriginal students is a provincial responsibility, federal jurisdiction of Aboriginal education historically has excluded First Nations participation in critical policy and decision making at provincial levels (British Columbia Human Rights Commission, 2001).<sup>12</sup> The current dynamic of government and Aboriginal power relationships is maintained through government policy and regulation under the *Indian Act*.

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<sup>12</sup> The exception to this is Bill C-34, passed by both federal and provincial governments. This legislation provides First Nations in British Columbia jurisdiction of K to 12 education in BC. See: <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?pub=bill&doc=C-34&parl=36&ses=2&language=E> and [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2006/02812bk\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2006/02812bk_e.html)

Although some Aboriginal nations are negotiating terms of self-governance with the federal and provincial governments, most do not have the autonomy once experienced during pre-colonization. This legacy of the Indian Act has resulted in a contentious duality whereby, on the one hand, First Nations are viewed as “special” citizens in their relationship with government, yet Aboriginal people remain on the margins of Canadian society in so many ways. On the other hand, Aboriginal peoples also see themselves as government to government, as self-determining nations within a nation. Regardless, the federal government is still responsible to the obligations of the treaties and policies the Crown entered into with First Nations, even if it is increasingly unwilling to be held accountable to such agreements (Henderson, 1995).

### Agency

*The pedagogic authority* (PAu) is the assumed position of power by the dominant group in society (e.g., Euro-Western) in asserting the dominant ideology through *pedagogic action* (PA) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990). Post-secondary education, and education in general, reinforces the views of the dominant society. However, it is important to understand the fact that the validated dominant voice is “culturally arbitrary,” and, as a result, the educational system can be transformed. The system simply continues to reinforce and perpetuate the current micro- and macro-structures and values (pedagogic action and pedagogic authority) that are valued by the mainstream discourse that keeps the dominant in power (Andres, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990).

This is complementary to the work by Indigenous scholars such as Harris (2002) and Battiste (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste et al., 2002) who, in recognizing the colonial history of education, argue the need for respect of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. The tenets of colonization and assimilation are based on the dominant

maintaining power (PAu) over what knowledges are validated in the educational system. For example, residential schools attempted to assimilate Aboriginal children into mainstream society by empowering Euro-Western values and culture and demonizing Indigenous knowledges (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996). Harker (1990) reminds us that Aboriginal agency is undermined in a system that does not value the forms of Indigenous capital students bring to public educational institutions. As a result, within the public education system, those who do not have the various forms of capital that are valued by the PAu have more difficulty “fitting-in” and, subsequently, getting through schooling (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990; Harker, 1984, 1990).

With this space, or Bourdieu’s notion of field, the actors exert their agency using various forms of social, cultural, and intellectual capital. For Indigenous students and scholars, “exercising intellectual agency means engaging in a process of recuperation, revitalization and reclamation of Indigenous knowledges as a necessary exercise in empowerment” (Dei, 2000, p. 125). This agency is exemplified in British Columbia where the provincial government and Aboriginal nations have partnered together on *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements* since 1999. The Enhancement Agreements (EAs) are working agreements between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education and local Aboriginal communities.

EAs are designed to enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students. The EA establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students. EAs highlight the importance of academic performance and, more importantly, stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to EAs

is the requirement that school districts provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located.<sup>13</sup> Such agreements are a testament to the transformation that can happen as a result of Aboriginal agency within education. EAs are certainly a progressive step in furthering Aboriginal student success based on the goals and aspirations of Indigenous communities. However, it is not clear what kinds of financial resources are targeted towards making the necessary structural changes within the K to 12 education system that values *Indigenous habitus*, *capital*, and *cultural integrity*.

### **Indigenous habitus, capital, and cultural integrity**

As institutions currently operate, Aboriginal student success has been discussed as an issue of “assimilation,” that is, how much Aboriginal students “adapted” to the valued forms of capital (Harker, 1984, 1990). The conflict in balancing different forms of capital has been experienced by many Indigenous peoples in their post-secondary education. This imbalance has at times had detrimental effects on their university experiences and success within such a setting (Huffman, 2001).

Aboriginal students bringing their Indigenous capital to a mainstream university “must first acquire and accept a new form of consciousness, an orientation that not only displaces but often devalues the worldview they bring with them” (Barnhardt, 2002, p. 241). Huffman’s (2001) metaphor of “cultural masks” alludes to the balancing First Nations students must endure in negotiating their way through mainstream education. He described cultural masking as “the process by which a person comes to construct a personal ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/> visited 05/10/07

identity. It also provides a manner in which an individual uses and ultimately projects that ethnic identity” (p.5). The four cultural masks (*assimilated*, *marginalized*, *estranged*, and *transculturated*) can be considered continuums of experiences. The *assimilated mask* refers to an Aboriginal person who is “assimilated” into mainstream society and has the same valued habitus and capital. This particular mask does well in negotiating mainstream education because values are not in conflict. The *marginalized mask* refers to an individual who, though semi-assimilated, still maintains strong Indigenous-valued forms of capital and, therefore, has some challenges in negotiating a system that does not value the capital he or she brings to the institution. This alienation is even more evident in the *estranged mask* student. The estranged student has strong Indigenous capital and strong resistance to any assimilation efforts of mainstream education (Huffman, 2001). This particular student often ends up withdrawing from mainstream institutions. The *transculturated* student has strong connections to his or her Indigenous capital and uses it as a social anchor to negotiate through mainstream education. This latter mask parallels Tierney and Jun’s (2001) notion of cultural integrity.

Most Aboriginal students encounter some form of initial alienation when they attend university (Huffman, 2001). The range of the experiences of Aboriginal student is best understood in terms of their emotional, intellectual, physical, and cultural encounters within the institution. Huffman (2001) did not describe a mask for students who have been disenfranchised from their Aboriginal heritage. I put forward the mask of “decolonized” to describe those students who reclaim and reaffirm their Aboriginal identity during their educational journey. Another consideration for Huffman’s model is the Indigenous student who attends Indigenous higher education institutions. Such facilities are culturally grounded and value cultural integrity. Understanding the range and diversity of educational



experiences these students might have is critical in any model developed for Aboriginal persistence.

Huffman's (2001) cultural masks can be further extended to the universities themselves. Universities also embody the *assimilated*, *marginalized*, *estranged*, and *transcultured* masks through their policies and practices. For example, an *assimilated* mask for a university reinforces the valued habitus and cultural capital of the dominant society. In such an institution IK is not respected or valued and Aboriginal students are expected to assimilate to the PAU. A university wearing the *marginalized* mask would value IK but only in certain areas of the institution. IK in a marginalized university would be defined and monitored by PAU. An *estranged* mask would give the pretense of respect for IK while fostering an environment that inhibits any meaningful engagement with IK. The *transcultured* mask would value the cultural integrity of all peoples on campus. The proposed *decolonized* university would center IK and decolonize its policies, processes, and practices to empower IK. In extending the notion of cultural masks to universities, two relevant questions emerge: "What mask are universities currently wearing?" and in order to become places of success for Aboriginal peoples, "What mask do they want (or need) to wear?" These questions will be revisited throughout the dissertation.

The link between class (habitus and capitalism) and success hinders minority student progress because contradictions between the expected behaviour necessary to make it in the academy is often very different from students' home behaviour (hooks, 1994). However, it is important to challenge current deficit discourses that suggest that Indigenous students lack certain forms of capital. Again, from an Indigenous perspective, retention or success in university does not mean assimilation (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

From an Indigenous perspective, it seems that "culture" in "cultural capital" needs to be redefined based on the Indigenous wholistic framework. Challenging notions of capital

require deconstructing the dominant authority over such concepts. While Bourdieu's notion of capital can be extended to include what is valued within Indigenous communities, the challenge is that within mainstream society, Indigenous forms of capital are often underappreciated or seen as a hindrance. Many Aboriginal people "in the Western education system, whether teachers or students, are excluded from the institutions' standards of success, wealth, and power because they are unable or unwilling to reproduce the ideology" (Harris, 2002, p. 192). Indigenous people have a way of knowing and understanding (a.k.a., habitus), and "culture," unfortunately, is not the same culture and capital that is valued by the mainstream. This is where the contradictions lie and where the systemic changes need to occur.

Cultural integrity calls on the dominant society, especially its education systems, to respect and honour the cultural capital and habitus of other groups (Tierney & Jun, 2001). Success from an Indigenous perspective involves the active living of one's traditions, values, and beliefs while co-existing and not assimilating with the dominant culture. At the post-secondary level, success can be defined as obtaining the credentials but, at the same time, holding onto one's cultural integrity. Institutions need to be conscious that definitions of educational success are subject to culture (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Danziger, 1996; Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2004; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996).

## Universities as Fields

According to Bourdieu, a *field* is the stage on which the forms of capital are accumulated and used (Bourdieu, 1982; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For example, within the context of this study, there are multiple fields at play. The predominant field is the context in which agents and their social context are located; for the purposes of this study, the field is the university. “A given institution and the people within it create a *field of forces* and a *field of struggles*, which tend to transform or conserve the field of forces” (Andres, 2005, p. 3). Fields enable or constrain the agency of individuals within these fields. The position within this field is negotiated based on individual habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The university is a field where the power of knowledge systems, values, embodied forms of capital, symbolic violence, and agency all relate to how institutions are accountable and responsible to Indigenous higher education. A particular area of interest within the institution for this study is Aboriginal student services because within these spaces, Indigenous forms of capital are valued and respected in ways that typically do not occur throughout the institution.

The university acts as a pedagogic authority (PAu) reproducing what is valued in society -- the credentials of a university degree and the subsequent economic and social capital derived from such an education. Bourdieu saw university education as going beyond providing students with specific skills or knowledge in a particular field. Ideally, a university education provides students with sets of generic intellectual skills that provide them with a form of distinction over people who have not been university educated and that translates into capital outside their immediate academic field (Bourdieu, 2000; Webb et al., 2002). Bourdieu (1990) explains,

[Higher education credentialing] is a piece of universally recognized and guaranteed symbolic capital, valid on all markets. As an official definition of an official identity, [a post-secondary credential] releases its holder from the symbolic struggle of all against all by imposing the universally approved perspective. (p. 136)

Those who do not “succeed” in obtaining this credential, which is based on the socially sanctioned criteria, become marginalized in society. The measurement of “success” through cultural capital is ultimately defined by the dominant in society (Urion, 1999).

Understanding the role a university plays in social reproduction is important to transforming universities as fields that value other forms of capital and habitus (Kuokkanen, 2007).

Another issue that needs to be discussed is that of Euro-Western and Indigenous values and epistemological similarities and differences. The binary of us and them is not helpful in creating a transformative space where both ways of knowing respect and reside with each other (Calliou, 1998). However, we must be cognizant of the traditional underpinnings of universities that operate on the “assumption that Eurocentric content, structure and process constitute the only legitimate approach to knowledge” (Hampton, 2000, p. 210). Universities are the primary institutions that train Western scholars to reproduce themselves in the Western cultural image (Harris, 2002).

Universities have their own forms of institutional habitus and capital that are reinforced through the physical structures, academic discourse, pedagogy, and discipline hierarchy. For example, academic language is inherently assumed in the institution, which presumes students attending already possess some knowledge of the type of language used within the institution and within a particular academic discipline (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). The language of the institution sets apart students from professors, and the university community from the rest of society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). This is especially true in disciplines that have specific academic discourse that would not be known to other fields of

study. For example, chemistry uses specific references for lab equipment or technical terms for chemical solutions that would not be known to other disciplines.

Academic gatekeepers are responsible for creating a “technical” language that creates a structural distance, physically and intellectually, between those inside and outside the academy (Deloria, 1995; Miheisah, 2004). This results in a hierarchy of knowledges within the educational system in which only certain groups have access to understanding. Part of the educational experience is learning the academic discourse within one’s field; however, students not having the predisposed habitus and capital to engage are set up as disadvantaged within a structure that values particular forms of knowledge.

It has been suggested that universities value a particular form of learning that is often not compatible with alternative learning styles (Wildcat, 2001c). For example, Aboriginal practitioner researchers propose Indigenous approaches to learning and teaching through observation and practice is not a commonly practiced teaching style in universities (J. Ball, 2003; Hampton, 1995). Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) suggest that success within the university is not simply a difference of learning styles but the successful progression through higher education is about understanding the language of teaching. The milieu of the university seems to provide a secondary linguistic setting which facilitates apprenticeship in the language of ideas (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994; Hampton, 1995). However, it is incorrect to assume that students come to the university with the predispositions and capital to translate the language of teaching and learning. So the question needs to be asked, “How is the institution helping students acquire this language?” and “Who is advantaged by this assumption and, as a result, gets ahead?” Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) also acknowledged that “any democratization of recruitment to university will need to be matched by a deliberate effort to rationalize techniques of communication, otherwise the linguistic and

cultural misunderstandings which today mark secondary education will reach the same acute levels in higher education” (p. 9).

The challenge in including Indigenous knowledges within the institutions is to avoid “the symbolic violence that can ensue after Indigenous peoples reclaim identities based on their histories, cultures, and traditions, and then, once they have presented these identities, Indigenous peoples have little or no control over how they are read, used, and manipulated” (Dei, 2000, p. 125). At this point in the literature review, it is important to bring into the discussion how Indigenous knowledge is present within higher education.

### **Indigenous knowledge in higher education**

Universities have tended to be spaces which have traditionally marginalized other ways of knowing and privileged Euro-Western perspectives, but, as Dei (2000) states, “knowledges are contested in terms of boundaries and spaces” (p. 113). It is from this space of contestation that this dissertation aims to understand the broader question of institutional responsibility and accountability. Cardinal (2001) asks how can we go back to the foundation of our Indigenous worldview, bring it forward, and implement it in education? The focus of this section of the literature review is on how Indigenous knowledges have been implemented in the discourses of higher education. Indigenous knowledges, theories, and practices are all part of this counter-hegemonic movement and an important aspect of the decolonization of the university. Battiste (2005) prescribes Indigenous knowledge as the remedy needed within education. The purpose of this section is to explore how the medicine of Indigenous knowledge is present in mainstream higher education.

In using the master’s tools (i.e., dominant language) to dismantle conceptions of theory and research, Indigenous scholars are creating a language and space within the margins that not only respects Indigenous ways of knowing but also relates them to other

frameworks. As Indigenous scholars “mov[e] into public discourse with conservative caution, neither trying to prove ourselves or look for approval, we must move in a unified manner in the pursuit of social justice” (Hill, 2000, p. 246). Once the door has been opened, institutions have little control over the agency of the actors, such as Aboriginal faculty, staff, and students in how Indigenous knowledges filter across and push beyond such defined boundaries. It is important to recognize that there is a constant pushing back by the pedagogic authority (PAu) through pedagogic action (PA) by imposing restrictions and limitations (e.g., faculty tenure process) that constrain how Indigenous agency is enacted.

As stated previously, Indigenous knowledge and its pedagogy are promoting decolonizing and rethinking of education for Aboriginal peoples (McConaghy, 2000). Despite sensitivity to the importance of Aboriginal knowledges, few universities in Canada have made Aboriginal education part of their institutional mission or even an institutional priority. Mihesuah (2004) argues that “colonial ideologies are still being perpetuated in higher education by ignoring Indigenous voice, publishing irrelevant research, graduating unprepared students and devaluing Indigenous programs and concerns on campus” (p. 31). Although institutions may be well-intentioned, their actions may not be serving the students or themselves well. As a result, institutions need to be evaluated. Universities, then, have a responsibility to continually “take stock of what they have done, learn from their experiences and aim to do better” (Lowe, 1999, p. 6). The purposes of this evaluation for improvement (or accountability) have to be grounded in meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities within and outside of the university. This responsibility can not be defined by the neo-liberal and neo-conservative influences discussed earlier.

Recognizing the interplay of knowledges and the dynamic nature of knowledge systems, Indigenous knowledges need to be an integral part of the ongoing co-creation and re-creation of academic knowledge and work. Indigenous knowledges are present within

universities in a variety of ways through academic programs, curriculum, and pedagogic actions (J. Ball, 2003; Barnhardt, 1992, 2000, 2002; Dei, 2000; Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998; Martin, 2001; Romero, 2002; G. H. Smith, 2000a; Tierney, 1996). Indigenous knowledges can be brought into the academy by advocating support networks, developing a sustainable community vision, and initiating political actions (Dei, 2000).

Institutional recognition of Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate pedagogic, instructional, and communicative tool through the curriculum can be a challenge (Dei, 2000). However, as the work of Jessica Ball (2003) will attest, students who engaged with Indigenous knowledges and pedagogical practices found the curriculum relevant and personally meaningful. Students and local community members were actively involved in designing a child and youth care program and its curriculum (J. Ball, 2003). This participatory process allowed for the development of meaningful curriculum that was culturally relevant and useful to the community based on their Indigenous ways of knowing. For example, the knowledge of Elders and community members was at the centre of the program as “lived” learning (p. 97), ensuring that the education “reflect[ed] the settings in which [students] live[d] and work[ed]” (p. 99). The developed child and youth care program “enabled graduates to work in their local communities in ways that sustained and revitalized local cultures. At the same time, graduates acquired credentials and knowledge that enabled them to develop careers beyond the local setting” (J. Ball, 2003, p. 87). Such programs provide Aboriginal students and their communities with “the best of both worlds, and enable [students] to walk in both worlds” (J. Ball, 2003, p. 87).

Indigenous knowledge is also brought into the academy through the hiring of Indigenous scholars. However, simply increasing Aboriginal presence on campus does not necessarily change how institutions respond to Indigenous knowledges (Kuokkanen, 2007). While Mihesuah (2004; 1998) agrees that Indigenous scholars add to the presence of



Indigenous knowledges within the academy, she strongly cautions that the politics of identity, or Smith's notion of a public-versus-privatized academic (G. H. Smith, 1997, 2000a), can play out in negative ways within the academy that discredit Indigenous knowledge and scholars.

*A privatized academic* is one who solely thinks of him or herself (G. H. Smith, 1997). Mihesuah felt that such individuals often seek Indigenous positions for the economic benefits and have little regard for representing Indigenous knowledge in an appropriate way. She further explained such individuals end up representing Indigenous voices at various levels of the institution and can have detrimental effects on hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, along with negatively impacting Indigenous student experiences or the curriculum as a result of misrepresenting IK (Mihesuah, 2004). Conversely, public academics, through their pedagogical practice and research, work towards supporting Indigenous ways of knowing in a respectful manner that provides reciprocal benefits to the scholar and community. I think that both roles need to be scrutinized. On the one hand, private academics are those individuals who self-identify as Aboriginal to garner and exploit financial gain. Yet, within the current hegemonic structure, such individuals accumulate the academic capital required for tenure and promotion. On the other hand, the principles of the public academic resonates more with those wishing to contribute to Indigenous peoples, locally or globally. However, these roles, if not carefully negotiated into the daily lived experiences of an academic (e.g., research, teaching, and pedagogy), can become additional responsibilities onto the work required for tenure and promotion. The politics of identity and what counts as scholarship or service to community creates tensions for many Aboriginal scholars that need to be negotiated in terms of the individual and institutional climate.

Several programs in North America at the undergraduate and graduate level are grounded in Indigenous epistemology and ontology. For example, the Native American

Leadership Program (UCB-NALP) at the University of California-Berkley is a doctoral training program for Native American students (Romero, 2002). In Canada, there are several examples that are grounded upon or include Indigenous knowledges. For example, since the 1970s, many universities have been providing Native Teacher Education and Native Studies programs. More recently, specific programs related to business, forestry, science, and other disciplines have emerged to meet the diversity of needs of Aboriginal learners (Stonechild, 2006). There is also the work of some Aboriginal faculty members who incorporate Indigenous knowledges into their own courses and research. These examples highlight how Indigenous knowledge and frameworks have been implemented and practiced within a comprehensive mainstream research university with aims to increase Aboriginal student participation and retention.

Creating space within the margins is about validating alternative ways of knowing and placing Indigenous epistemology within and across education. Indigenization of education involves Aboriginal people “making [Indigenous] educational philosophy, pedagogy, and system our own, making the effort to explicitly explore ways of knowing and systems of knowledge that have been actively repressed” (Wildcat, 2001b, p. vii). For example, one strategy employed by the University of Alaska in Fairbanks has been taking the “institution” (i.e., professors) to local Native communities to reduce cultural distance and the role dichotomy between the producers and consumers of knowledge (Barnhardt, 2002). Through this exchange of place and power, Barnhardt (2002) notes that “often times, it is in the act of teaching that we ourselves learn the most, and in the act of learning that we become most effective teachers” (Barnhardt, 2002, p. 244).

During this process, Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal instructors became engaged in sharing the role of student-teacher, offering the program in local communities, which changed how education was structured and delivered. In British Columbia, there are

examples of colleges and universities that continue to develop community-based education partnerships and practices with Aboriginal communities and organizations. For example, the teachers, schools, and communities of the Sto:lo nation in British Columbia actively worked together as partners of change to implement curriculum and support structures reflecting Sto:lo ways of knowing rather than reinforcing the pedagogic authority (Archibald, 1995). Another approach to changing the education system and contextualizing students' education within the real world is including community service as an integral component of students' experiential professional programs (Wildcat, 2001a).

One must be careful that academic practice and institutional politics do not feed on the marginality of Indigenous knowledge (Marker, 2004; Mihesuah, 1998), limiting, for example, the spaces in which IK is seen as valid or permissible. Dei (2000) also cautions that having separate spaces for Indigenous knowledges to exist creates exceptions of permissibility within the institution. Indigenous knowledges need to be centered within the academy through policy, programs, curriculum, pedagogy, research, and, most importantly, through relationships that acknowledge that different knowledges can coexist (Dei, 2000; Kuokkanen, 2007).

For transformative change to occur, Indigenous knowledge has to be part of the horizontal and vertical fabric in an institution (G. H. Smith, 1997). Through the horizontal or base of the institution, Indigenous knowledge exists through specific Aboriginal academic programs and supports. As part of the horizontal, Indigenous knowledge is interwoven within the broader fabric of the institution. Indigenous knowledge is built vertically into the institution through the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students, faculty, staff, and administrators. As Graham Smith states, "If you just build up and don't have a solid base, the vertical pole will fall; therefore you need to build horizontally and vertically" (personal communication, July 2007).

Maintaining diligence ensures that the aforementioned initiatives continue. It is important to acknowledge the role relationships play in creating spaces within the ivory towers for Indigenous knowledges. These examples of Indigenous academic programs simply would not have occurred without all stakeholders being committed to the goal of improving Aboriginal education. The institutions had to be willing to change to meet the needs of their constituents, the Indigenous students, and communities. Faculty members also had to be genuinely committed to expand and enhance their own experiences beyond the walls of the ivory tower (Barnhardt, 2002; Romero, 2002). Such programs are “testaments that through the transformation of the ivory towers of higher education, the cultural distances can converge on a shared vision - a vision of education that integrates and perpetuates Indigenous languages, cultures, knowledges and consciousness” (Romero, 2002, p. 254).

Of specific interest to this study are Aboriginal student services as sites of Indigenous knowledge within universities but also as agents in Aboriginal student recruitment and retention. The next section explores how mainstream retention theories relate to Indigenous student success, recruitment, and retention.

### **Retention theory & Aboriginal students: counter-hegemonic notions of success<sup>14</sup>**

As stated throughout this work, education, particularly university-level, is inherently linked to the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of society and notions of success. These notions of success are often based upon the majority or mainstream population’s ideas of what it means to be successful (i.e., financial status). This is a

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<sup>14</sup> The discussion of Aboriginal student experiences and retention theory has been submitted as part of an article I submitted to the *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* in January, 2007. This article has been accepted for publication in Nov, 2008.

dominant discourse that reinforces power and prestige to those that fit narrow definitions of “success” (Apple, 1995, 2000, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990; Bourdieu et al., 1994). Success from an Indigenous perspective transcends common notions of financial gain; education is a tool of empowerment for Aboriginal peoples. Not only do Aboriginal peoples benefit economically but they can use their university credentials to move forward goals of self-determination. Self-determination is a

goal of social justice which is expressed through and across a wide range of psychological, social, cultural, and economic terrains. It necessarily involves the processes of transformation, of decolonization, of healing and of mobilization as peoples. The processes, approaches and methodologies-while dynamic and open to different influences and possibilities are critical elements of a strategic research agenda. (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 116)

Astin’s involvement theory (1978; 1993) and Tinto’s theory of persistence (1975; 1986; 1988; 1993; 1999) are frequently used to explain retention and success (i.e., graduation) in higher education. Astin’s input-environment-output (I-E-O) model can be translated into notions of valued capital in terms of high school credentials (input) which affect the type of post-secondary institution to which one has access, students’ social experiences during university, and type of academic program entered. The chosen program and institution (environment) in turn relates to the probability of degree completion (output).

The purpose of the model is to assess the impact of various environmental experiences by determining whether students grow or change differently under varying conditions (Astin, 1978, 1993). Students from high socio-economic status (SES) families compared to low SES have more positive outcomes in university regardless of ability, academic preparation, or other characteristics (Astin et al., 1984). Kelly (1995) has found long-term persistence is based on early measures of academic performance and social

integration. This finding does not consider the complexities and nuances of capital inherently tied to socio-economic status.

Astin developed his I-E-O model on a student body that was predominately White, middle-class, male, and less than 21 years of age. This student population had the valued forms of capital and predispositions to successfully negotiate the university system. However, Aboriginal students do not fit easily within this model for several reasons. The K to 12 system often leaves Aboriginal students unprepared academically to meet entrance requirements of universities. Statistics Canada also shows that Aboriginal university students tend to be older than average (i.e., older than 21) and may have dependents along with other familial and community responsibilities that influence their experiences in university. Their experiences and, more importantly, successes in higher education are not immediately considered in Astin's model.

Many Aboriginal students begin their post-secondary education in a community college system and then transfer to university or another post-secondary institution (Montgomery, Miville, Winterowd, Jeffries, & Baysden, 2000). Tinto's (1993) description of various types of departure from system and institution can be used to describe Aboriginal participation in higher education. Instead of being viewed as stop-outs (complete withdrawal from the educational system), many Aboriginal students are either (a) institutional stop-outs because they withdraw from their institution for periods of time or (b) delayed transfers, where they withdraw from one institution to later enroll in another. Astin et al. (1984) found Native American students were more likely to pursue community college than university. This educational choice is similar to Canadian Aboriginal peoples' educational pathways. College is seen as a less threatening environment than university and is also often geographically closer to students' home communities (Archibald et al., 1995).

Transfer and academic support programs offered at local colleges also encourage Aboriginal student participation. However, as Andres (2001) found, the articulated transfer system in British Columbia is not without its problems. For example, students interviewed encountered several obstacles such as accessing useful information and understanding transfer policies, practices, and procedures (Andres, 2001). These structural barriers hinder those students who do not have the knowledge or capital to navigate transferring from college to university. Andres (2001) also found that students experienced a decrease in their GPA when they went from colleges to universities. The transition to university, whether from college or high school, continues to present academic challenges for students. This highlights the need for universities and colleges to provide academic support programs to ease the transition for students. It also alludes to the larger issue of the hierarchy of the mainstream educational system (Andres, 2001). Educational pathways, such as transferring from a rural community college to an urban university, have direct impacts on career choice and social status. Because first-generation Aboriginal students do not necessarily have cultural capital of prior family experience with higher education, their knowledge of negotiation is very different from a student whose parents are university educated and are able to transfer that form of capital to their children.

Researchers rely on Tinto's theory of persistence to explain student retention and experiences. Several scholars have written either in support of this theory (e.g., Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000; Terenzini, Lorang, & Pascarella, 1981; Terenzini & Wright, 1987a) or have critiqued various aspects of it (Andres & Carpenter, 1999; Andres & Finlay, 2005; Hawkey, 2004; Renn & Arnold, 2003; Tierney, 1992). Although Terenzini, Lorang, and Pascarella (1981) and Terenzini and Wright (1987a) found support for Tinto's notion of institutional and goal commitments, there was less certainty regarding student-faculty relations. Braxton, Miliem, and Sullivan's (2000)

work found that faculty teaching practices influenced active learning and decisions regarding the departure process. Hawkey (2004) described the academic integration process as multidimensional, and said that, over time, senior students benefited from social integration with faculty. Students who are members of racial-ethnic minorities receive less support for attending college and, consequently, find separation difficult, supporting Tinto's theory (Elkins et al., 2000). Renn and Arnold (2003) critiqued Tinto's model for not accounting for prior experiences of the students. There is also a lack of racial-ethnic considerations within the framework (Tierney, 1992). These critiques are important considerations when applying Tinto's model to Aboriginal students.

For example, Tinto (1993) rationalized that the differences between White and non-White students' rates of degree completion are partially due to differences in average ability test scores and SES. This difference in degree completion is also influenced by previous educational structures which hindered minority students from attaining the cultural capital necessary to achieve a post-secondary education. One has to also consider the variance in social class, intellectual capital, and social capital of various minority groups that influences these students' experiences in significant ways. Given that dominant culture lies at the core of the hidden education curriculum, students from lower social strata may not relate to the material being taught (Apple, 1995). Instructors assume students have certain prior knowledge, and the educational system presumes students come to school already possessing the cultural capital to receive, understand, and internalize the material being taught (Andres, 1994; Driessen, 2001; Dumais, 2002). This presumption of the types of knowledge students have when entering a university creates a barrier to further participation for those who do not have the types of knowledge validated within the university curriculum.



Tinto (1993) contends students must reject their attitudes and values from their previous communities to successfully negotiate the separation process and integrate into their new college environment. This integration means embodying the values and attitudes of their college environment. This particular aspect of Tinto's work is contentious because this assumes students come from the dominant culture and the values and forms of capital they are bringing to the institution are valued within the institution. Students coming from varying cultural backgrounds experience the mainstream educational system differently, according to how their own forms of habitus and capital "integrate" into the university setting. The work of Elkins et al. (2000), Huffman (2001), and Tierney (1992) argue that within this structure, there is no room for those who do not wish to relinquish their own identity (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) to assimilate into the cultural norms of the dominant society. In fact, Vine Deloria (1995) urges Native American students to remain diligent of the costs and benefits of pursuing a higher education, especially in terms of the sacrifices (or harms) to their Indigenous culture and identities. The fact is no group should give up their cultural distinctiveness, language, or values in the process of gaining full access to higher education and full social and economic participation in society (Astin et al., 1984; Deloria, 1995; Harker, 1990). While Elkins et al. (2002) contest Tierney's (1992) epistemological critique of Tinto's theory, I would argue support of an epistemological critique of retention theories. Such a critique acknowledges that there are different ways of knowing (e.g., Indigenous compared to Euro-Western) and the inherent power structures related to maintaining pedagogic authority. These critiques are critical to advancing the theoretical and practical discussion of Aboriginal student success beyond mainstream conceptions of success.

The assimilationist nature of Tinto's work has been criticized by Andres and Finlay (2005), Kuh and Love (2000) and Tierney (1992) for placing too much responsibility on the

students to adapt, while the institutions are absolved of their responsibilities to modify policies and practices to meet the needs of students. Andres (2005) further stated,

Students can not be examined in isolation from the multiple contexts within which they operate; in other words, it is critical that individuals, environments, and situations remain conceptually and analytically intact. Also, it is important to embrace the complexity of post-secondary institutions and the multiple societal institutions in relation to the quality of students' experiences within post-secondary institutions. (p. 3)

It is also important to envision from these critiques what a culture-based view of the Aboriginal student departure process would look like (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). Kuh and Love's (2000) and Huffman's (2001) works provide a cultural lens for understanding Aboriginal student departure. Retention theories are still based on the premise that the students must develop "strategies" to succeed within mainstream institutions. Moving away from student deficit thinking is vital in influencing institutions to consider their role in the Aboriginal student experience.

Research applying Tinto's model to Aboriginal and Native American student populations has found that the most important influences on post-secondary outcomes are family background, post-secondary intentions, and academic performance (Pavel, 1991; 1992; 1999; Pavel & Padilla, 1993). Family background has the largest and most consistent influence on student intentions prior to pursuing a degree (Pavel, 1991; Pavel & Padilla, 1993).

Although family is also important to non-Aboriginal students, it holds particular cultural significance in Aboriginal societies. It is a difference between Indigenous and Euro-Western epistemology. Two retention models that have incorporated the family at the core are HeavyRunner and DeCelles' (2002) Family Education Model (FEM) and Billison and Brooks Terry's (1987) retention model. The role of family and community relationships in

student retention are also considered within the Quality of Student Life model (M. Benjamin, 1990, 1994; M. Benjamin & Hollings, 1995, 1997).

Parental involvement in the post-secondary experiences of their children is becoming an increasingly important issue for universities and colleges. For example, a recent study *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2007*<sup>15</sup> conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles reported that the majority of freshman involved their parents in their post-secondary education choices and experiences. This report also found that minority students compared to their non-minority peers involved their parents in their decision making processes regarding several aspects of going to university, such as, their decision to go to college, applications to college, dealing with officials at college at which the student enrolled, choosing college courses, and choosing college activities.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, retention models will have to adapt to consider the role of parents in the higher education experiences of students. The role of parents alludes to the relationship between schooling and the wider society, particularly in terms of capital, whether intellectual, social, or economic.

Like Bourdieu, Graham Smith (1997) sees the relationship between schooling and the wider society as a dialectal one, which can be read as another expression of the fundamental structure-agent dilemma in the sociology of education; that is, to determine to what degree schools function to (re)produce the state, or vice versa; to what degree does the state produce and/or reproduce the function of schools? A recent focus on minority student success (or lack of it) has become part of the dominant discourse due to the increase in minority student participation in colleges and universities. The encroachment of minority groups into the dominant power structures and their impending role in the economic and

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<sup>15</sup> This information was accessed from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/01/24/frosh>

<sup>16</sup> College in this report refers to 4 year degree-granting institutions in the United States, which are similar to universities in Canada.

social structure of society has heightened awareness about minority issues (Apple, 1995; D. P. Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman, 1993; Simpson, 2001). This interest is also “catalyzed” by those Aboriginal advocacy groups foreseeing the future goals and directions of their peoples.

The student experience is now broadly perceived to be more than an individual in an institution; their capital, habitus interact to form who they are. Various factors outside the individual also influence retention, such as social integration with peers and faculty (Allen & Nelson, 1989; Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton et al., 2000; Elkins et al., 2000; Hawkey, 2004; Terenzini & Wright, 1987b), academic integration (Hawkey, 2004), level of institutional commitment, and class size (Ashar & Skenes, 1993; Terenzini et al., 1981). The Aboriginal student experience is further influenced by the historical factors and assimilationist agendas of (a) education and government policy; (b) institutional characteristics, such as First Nations content, curriculum, and Aboriginal mentors; (c) financial aid, including federal Aboriginal post-secondary funds, band funds, and student loans; and (d) external commitments that may involve the family, cultural responsibilities, and their community (e.g., Archibald et al., 1995; D. P. Benjamin et al., 1993; Falk & Aitken, 1984; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 2001; Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988; Pidgeon, 2001; TeHennepe, 1993).

The depth and diversity of Aboriginal nations and students need to be considered by institutions as they attempt to address their responsibilities to Aboriginal education. Based on the literature presented, it is obvious that the “one-size-fits-all” approach of providing programs, services, and even teaching practices limits accessibility and retention of Aboriginal students. This is not to say that each nation requires its own programs and services. What I argue is that within the services offered, whether Aboriginal student services or academic programs, providers and the institution see Indigenous knowledge

systems as informing their practices and responsibilities. As Dei (2000) warns, without these considerations, Indigenous knowledge as a counter-hegemonic practice can become part of the dominant hegemony. This alludes to the institution only “permitting” the areas of Aboriginal culture that the dominant sees as having value and worth. For example, institution representatives will gladly promote Aboriginal art in the hallways but may resist adding a critical discourse of Aboriginal art theory to the Fine Arts program or placing Indigenous perspectives into the sciences.

## **Summary**

Chapter 2 focused on setting the context of this dissertation by reviewing the literature. Indigenous knowledge systems are inherently about the interrelationships of the self to others (e.g., family, community, and nation) through the physical, emotional, cultural, and intellectual realms. This is the foundational theoretical grounding of this work, coupled with Kirkness and Barnhardt’s 4Rs (relationship, respect, relevance, and reciprocity). Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory provides important theoretical concepts that inform the analysis of this work. The reproduction of dominant hegemony through symbolic violence and the reinforcement of power through pedagogic authority assist in understanding the multiple barriers to Aboriginal participation in university that are linked to structure and not the student.

In moving away from student deficit theory, the notions of agency and structure are important influences on institutional transformation. Expanding Bourdieu’s notions of capital and habitus to reflect the Indigenous understandings is important in challenging the deficit model applied to those who do not have the same valued forms of capital and habitus reinforced within the mainstream. Valuing Indigenous forms of capital and habitus within

mainstream educational systems is critical in maintaining Aboriginal students' cultural integrity. An examination of power is another important theoretical tool used in this dissertation. Understanding notions of power explains how individual agency within a university structure can be sites of resistance and transformation.

The presence of Indigenous knowledges within higher education demonstrates the agency of Indigenous scholars through their curriculum and pedagogy. Even though some have argued that this presence occurs in marginalized spaces, Indigenous programs and services have created spaces from which authentic allies and collaborative actions continue to move Indigenous knowledges into other spaces in the institution.

Understanding the role of Indigenous knowledges in higher education as empowering Aboriginal students' cultural integrity was also discussed in this chapter in terms of current retention theories. The work of Astin and Tinto informs how institutions define success. These retention theories also set parameters of student engagement and experiences that have often excluded Indigenous students. Therefore, the last part of the chapter provided insight into how these theories need to adjust to be inclusive of the Indigenous experience. The next chapter extends the theoretical understandings of Indigenous knowledges systems further into an Indigenous research paradigm which defines the research process of this dissertation.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

During the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a shift in thinking among Indigenous peoples and researchers. This shift has necessitated changes in the way research is being conceived and implemented and has been articulated as an *Indigenous Research Paradigm* (Wilson, 2003). The Indigenous paradigm (IP) goes beyond other research approaches by clearly defining research from an Indigenous perspective and valuing Aboriginal ways of knowing and understanding. Building upon the work of Kuhn's (1962) scientific revolution and Lincoln and Guba's (2000) work on paradigmatic controversies, the Indigenous paradigm has arisen as Indigenous communities and researchers realized the limitations of other paradigms. The Indigenous paradigm theoretically and practically is important for many reasons. First, the Indigenous paradigm provides a tool in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers can use in their own works, based on the cultural protocol, needs, and contexts of the Aboriginal communities in which they work. More importantly, the Indigenous paradigm reclaims space that places Indigenous knowledge alongside other ways of knowing.

The challenges and successes of implementing the Indigenous paradigm within this research process provided "hands-on" application of the theoretical to the practical, illustrating the versatility and usefulness of the Indigenous paradigm. It is also important that the evolution of the Indigenous paradigm does not stop here; like Indigenous people themselves, this paradigm will continue to develop, grow, and change. The reclaiming and redefining of Indigenous research by Indigenous scholars is occurring through academic writing (e.g., Brayboy, 2000; Cole, 2002; Darou, Kurtness, & Hum, 2000; Hampton, 1995; Marker, 2003; Menzies, 2001; Nichols & LaFrance, 2006; Steinhauer, 2001; Weber-

Pillwax, 1999, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Worby & Rigney, 2005) and specific courses taught to new researchers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. As a result, a new phase in Aboriginal research has begun as bridges are built between Aboriginal communities, Indigenous knowledges, and research.

## **Indigenous Research Paradigm**

Indigenous peoples have been reclaiming research and redefining the relationship between research and themselves. As Blanchard et al. (2000) and Cardinal (2001) highlight, Indigenous approaches to research are not “new” or “unknown” to Indigenous peoples. However, within Euro-western academic settings, Indigenous approaches to research are challenging and transforming paradigmatic constructions of research.

Indigenous methodology is observed as something new. . . This is not the case. We are simply being articulated, as we must in the academic and western world constantly, a textual construction and practice utilizing Indigenous knowledge has always been present. (Blanchard et al., 2000, p. 225)

Indigenous research methods and methodologies are as old as our ceremonies and our nations. They are with us and are rich with ways of gathering, discovering, and uncovering knowledge. They are as near as our dreams and as close as our relationships. (Cardinal, 2001, p. 182)

The Indigenous paradigm can be considered a form of the transformative-emancipatory paradigm. The central focus of the transformative-emancipatory paradigm is those in society who are marginalized (Mertens, 2003). Researchers are aware of power differentials within society, and, as a result, the purpose of their work is movement towards social action and social justice. Mertens (2003) describes the ontological position of the transformative-emancipatory paradigm as one that describes the realities of participants within a historical, political, cultural, and economic context. Epistemologically, the



interaction between the researcher and the participants is essential to ensure that the points-of-view of all groups are represented fairly (Mertens, 2003). Mixed methods approaches provide useful venues to address diverse and complex issues of marginalized groups because they allow multiple contexts to inform and be part of the research process (Mertens, 2003). For example, in the context of this study, mixed methods allowed varying theoretical and epistemological positions to be brought together to understand Aboriginal higher education within the social, economic, and political history of colonial education in Canada.

The Indigenous paradigm focuses on Indigenous peoples and puts Indigenous ontology and epistemology at its core. The history, economy, and politics of colonization can not be ignored within this paradigm, neither can the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and languages. The articulation of the Indigenous paradigm is an active form of resistance to the oppressive, colonial representation of the past which resulted in inadequate policy, methodology, and theoretical applications against Indigenous peoples (Blanchard et al., 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999). The Indigenous paradigm becomes an effective tool for increasing the possibility that research with and for Indigenous people will be a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration. Another goal is to place control over certain forms of knowledge back into the hands of the Indigenous peoples themselves (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 38). Weber-Pillwax (2001) and Wilson (2001) agree that Western research methods are appropriate for use by Indigenous researchers -- as long as the researchers honor, respect, manifest, and articulate an Indigenous world view. Regardless of which methods we choose, we must consider the *motivation that guides our research* -- why are we doing the research, and who is going to benefit from it? (Steinhauer, 2001).

Archibald (1990) uses the story of “Coyotes Eyes” to illustrate the dichotomy of oral and literacy traditions.<sup>17</sup> In this story, Coyote ends up with mismatched eyes as a result of not respecting the teachings he was provided. With an eye from a mouse and another from a buffalo, Coyote wanders the world trying to achieve balance as we are now trying to achieve balance between Western literacy models and Indigenous oral traditions. I wish to extend this analogy to Indigenous and other research paradigms. The juxtaposition of oral tradition and literacy where literacy has more prominence in today’s society is similar to how “large-eyed” mainstream research tends to dominate “small-eyed” Indigenous research. Unlike Coyote, who still continues his journey with his mismatched eyes, the scientific revolution occurring within research seeks to find balance between mainstream and Indigenous research (Kuhn, 1962). The Indigenous paradigm can be thought of as a good pair of spectacles that balances out both eyes so both perspectives can see more clearly and, more importantly, can work together to achieve balance.

As Archibald (1990) articulates, “to achieve balance one must learn, understand and practice wholism” (p. 71). The storyteller in oral cultures plays a very important role as educator, whether the lesson is about social beliefs, family, tribal history, or sacred knowledge (Archibald, 1990; Cohen, 2001). The storyteller is the tradition bearer, teacher of values and morals, and the entertainer (Sterling, 2002). This role can also be extended to the researcher and participant. Both, I believe, have important roles in teaching. Storytellers and researchers are also educators, which requires skills that engage thought and spirit through orality and require accurate transmission of the oral teachings to text. The researcher has roles and responsibilities inherent in the storyteller as she or he listens and learns from participants. The researcher then tells a story with many meanings (Archibald, 1990).

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<sup>17</sup> This story was told by Terry Tafoya and printed in the 1989 special edition of the *Journal of American Indian Education* See: <http://jaie.asu.edu/sp/V21S2coy.htm>

Indigenous scholars, researchers, academics, educators, and storytellers also have the responsibility to “weave or synthesize the story, history, theory, poetry, epistemology, and creativity into a web” (Cohen, 2001, p. 140).

Archibald (1990) suggests four pathways to regain balance in our mismatched eyes by (1) strengthening orality, (2) maintaining autonomy, (3) converging pathways, and (4) creating a new world. These same pathways apply to the journey Indigenous and Western research scholars have been walking, although not always together or at the same time. While important work is being done to strengthen Indigenous research, in order to maintain autonomy, Indigenous scholars are also finding ways to converge pathways. They are learning to balance between Indigenous and Western techniques and to share this knowledge with others wishing to research *with* Aboriginal peoples. It has been a multi-layered and multi-path journey that continues with each research project undertaken with Indigenous peoples. The last pathway, “creating a new world,” parallels Kuhn’s (1962) notion of “scientific revolution” from which the new world of the Indigenous paradigm is forged and ever evolving.

An Indigenous methodological framework was used in this study. It framed the research from design through implementation, analysis, and dissemination. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) provided an Indigenous perspective on how universities could be more successful spaces for Aboriginal students through the 4Rs of respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity. The 4Rs along with the wholistic model presented in Chapter 1 will be used to examine how universities can become more successful places for Aboriginal peoples.

## **Guiding Principles and Practices**

The practices and principles of the Indigenous methodology within the Indigenous paradigm provide an instrument to measure research. The 4Rs as part of the Indigenous theoretical framework also contribute to the growing Indigenous methodological framework. Weber-Pillwax (2001) also draws attention to the fact that the relationships between researcher and community are just as important as the research itself.

Indigenous research methodologies are those that enable and permit Indigenous researchers to be who they are while engaged actively as participants in research processes that create new knowledge transform who they are and where they are. (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 174)

The transformation of the researcher, as Weber-Pillwax implies, is based on the reciprocal relationships the researcher forms with participants and, also the researcher's own role as an active participant within his or her research process. The researcher and the participants learn from each other in the research process.

The following principles guide the relationships between the researcher, participants, and the research process. Indigenous methodology is about privileging the Indigenous perspective. Regardless of the principles used, it is important that this paradigm not be used to expand the power and knowledge of the dominant society at the expense of the colonized and the excluded (Menzies, 2001). Being informed of these considerations, the following section will outline the "How" or "Rs" of the Indigenous paradigm: respect, responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, relationships, and reverence.

## Respect

Respect can be understood in terms of how one must negotiate a canoe with other paddlers and the water on which they paddle. Peter Cole explains that a researcher, like a paddler, needs to be respectful:

I know you will be respectful to the shapes and textures  
scents resiliencies resonances zoning bylaws stones  
native flora “driftwood mores ethics of the places we visit  
I know that you know how to act in someone else’s home  
where you are an invited guest not a tourist  
so grab a paddle or rudder or line and keep time i t indian time  
(Cole, 2002, p. 448)

The relationships between the paddlers, canoe, and rivers involved in paddling a canoe are much like the living processes that occur in research relationships. This understanding of relationships helps us to conceptualize the principle of respect. Menzies (2001) cautions that respect can be mimicked through the “technical form of respectful consultation but without the necessary depth and the real respect it becomes more tokenism and further colonization” (p. 21).

In Indigenous communities, there are protocols of being respectful, for example, showing or accepting respect and reciprocating respectful behaviours. These protocols develop membership, credibility, and reputation in Aboriginal communities (L. T. Smith, 1999). Lack of respect for Indigenous communities has resulted in researchers being rejected and not permitted access (Darou et al., 2000). Respect encompasses an understanding and practice of community protocol (e.g., ways of relating and acting within the community) (Menzies, 2001; Piquemal, 2001). Respect for Indigenous knowledge is a critical component of Indigenous research for it recognizes the inherent relatedness and interconnectedness of all living things. Researchers embody respect through their reflective and non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard and listening and hearing

with more than their ears (Cole, 2002; Darou et al., 2000). Researchers also embody the principle of respect by honoring the diversity of knowledges within Aboriginal communities. The principle of respect is connected to the principle of responsibility that includes the responsibilities of the researcher to the research, to the community, and to themselves.

### **Responsibility (to research; to self)**

*Seen face* is a Maori concept which conveys the sense that being part of the daily community life cements your membership within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained (L. T. Smith, 1999). The question of who can do Indigenous research is inherently linked to the principle of responsibility. Researchers must challenge conventional assumptions about the history and structure of the researcher's own cultural presumptions by engaging with and actually learning from the perceptions of the Indigenous people (Marker, 2003). This responsibility entails understanding the potential impact of one's motives and intentions on oneself and the community: "A good heart guarantees a good motive, and good motives may guarantee benefits to everyone involved" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 42). As the title of this dissertation suggests, a good heart or good intentions are not enough to transform research or education. The responsibility lies within the empowerment and actions of those with good intentions to rise above adversity for positive transformations.

Listening to and observing the self as well as the self in relationship to others is another important component or responsibility. Researchers must become self-consciously aware of their role in the social fields of power and reorient themselves toward effecting progressive change (Menzies, 2001). As Indigenous researchers, we, too, have a responsibility to be vigilant about our own biases and clearly spell them out (Brayboy,

2000). How we define our participants and ourselves influences the data we collect, analyze, and publish. If we as Indigenous scholars presume to come forward with a definition or a formal description of an Indigenous research methodology, we must also accept responsibility for how those words may be used (Castleden & Kurszewski, 2000; Dei, 2000; Mihesuah, 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 1999). Weber-Pillwax (1999), for example, articulates her responsibility for her own words and actions when she states that

thoughts expressed in this paper are solely mine and I do not in any way intend my words to be understood as claiming to define or describe Indigenous research methodology for or on behalf of anyone else. (p. 33)

It is the responsibility of authors and researchers to mind their words, accept responsibility for them, and communicate to others that their voice is not representative of all Indigenous peoples. The issue of authentic voice is tethered to the question of who has discursive authority for Indigenous knowledge. This concern has been raised by several scholars and needs to be considered as being both within the researcher's responsibility and that of the communities, who are sharing their knowledge (Dei, 2000; Marker, 2003; Menzies, 2001; Mihesuah, 2004).

Indigenous research is grounded in the integrity of Indigenous persons and communities. Any theories developed or proposed from the research should also be based on and supported by Indigenous knowledge systems (L. T. Smith, 1999, 2000).

Another responsibility of the researcher is the training of community members in areas of research. This is also part of the principle of reciprocity, as training future Indigenous researchers is a critical component of giving back to the community and, more importantly, contributing to the decolonization of research and researchers (Marker, 2003; Menzies, 2001; L. T. Smith, 1999). The decolonization of the research and researchers occurs when Indigenous knowledges and practices are at the centre, the impact of

colonization on the community is understood, and the community and researcher work together to empower and privilege Indigenous ways of knowing.

There are also several ethical responsibilities non-Native and Native researchers working with Native American communities need to follow (Piquemal, 2001). Piquemal (2001) outlines these responsibilities as going beyond standard ethical practices that may not be sufficient or relevant to Aboriginal community concerns. Central to her argument is the notion of free and informed consent, which is a circular process of ensuring at each and every stage of the research proper protocols are being followed. This involves confirming consent to ensure that consent is ongoing at each phase of the research. Finally, Piquemal (2001) viewed returning the data to the community and participants as completing the circle of research. As Linda Smith reminds us “sharing knowledge is also a long-term commitment. The responsibility of researchers and academics is not simply to share surface information (pamphlet knowledge) but to share the theories and analysis which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented” (p. 16).

### **Relevance**

The principle of relevance refers to the meaning and value the research project has to Indigenous people. The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Consequently, researchers need to consider the relevance of their work to the community and Indigenous people as a whole. Work that is relevant to the community will benefit the community and contribute to the community’s goals, whether they be related to education, economic development, resources, language, or self-determination. An example of a research project that used the principle of relevance was the *Aboriginal Housing Research Project* conducted in 2003-2004. Seven institutions in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia participated in this project. Negotiations of



participation involved the institutions and Aboriginal student groups that believed that urban student housing was a need and concern for their Aboriginal students (Archibald et al., 2004). This project was relevant to the post-secondary institutions involved because the institutions were attempting to access the housing needs of their Aboriginal student populations. It was immediately relevant to the students because of the shortage of housing and limited residence spaces. This project provided students with housing and community resources and also provided a venue for students to provide feedback directly to their institutions.

### **Reciprocity**

Two important issues not always addressed by scientific research have to do with “reporting back” to the people and “sharing knowledge.” Each of these issues rests on the principle of reciprocity and feedback (L. T. Smith, 1999). Reciprocity demands an accountability to the people for the people (Hill, 2000). Truth is constructed partly out of what researchers are willing to pay attention to and how they interpret what they are being told (Marker, 2003). Therefore, as Indigenous scholars, we can not ignore the reciprocal learning that occurs in working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers regarding building relationships and respect (Menzies, 2001). All involved in the research process benefit, it provides a sense of community for all who participate, and, it also provides workable and effective strategies that will enhance change (Blanchard et al., 2000). Integrity is an important value in obtaining information from an Aboriginal community. Researchers have to give something back to the community in order to reciprocate for the teachings the community has shared (Castleden & Kurszewski, 2000).

Another issue that transcends the personal-institutional-political boundaries of research with Indigenous peoples is the notion of “ownership” (Menzies, 2001). Although

institutions such as a university or organizational bodies like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) have “ethical guidelines” which protect the communities and guide the research process, the inherent rights of the researchers as part of a larger structure (i.e., institution, government) retain all ownership rights over the research. Working with First Nations requires a directly opposite arrangement; cultural ownership needs to be addressed. Menzies (2001) argues, because “such regulations perpetuate the colonial system of research where Indigenous peoples are constructed as the subject of the colonist’s gaze and the university re-affirms its view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge” (p. 25). Both cultural ownership and shared ownership of the knowledge that is shared with researchers are important considerations of the Indigenous methodology process.

### **Relationships (community; power)**

As Cole (2002) speaks of the inter-relatedness of relationships, one responsibility of the researcher is to negotiate meaning, agency, power, and privilege within research relationships. He said,

before the Whiteman our individuality  
was not the focus and resolve it is today  
ex/clusing self from selves selves from self  
life spindled spun and wove us together  
(p. 454)

When undertaking research, either across cultures or within a minority culture, it is critical that researchers recognize the power dynamic, which is embedded in the relationship with their subjects. Researchers are in receipt of privileged information. They have the potential to extend knowledge or to perpetuate ignorance (L. T. Smith, 1999). Visiting with community members and establishing a real relationship is an important part of the research

process because it is through these interactions that people come to know the researcher's intentions (Castleden & Kurszewski, 2000).

Understanding the interconnectedness of all living things and the ways of knowing of Indigenous peoples are fundamental to building relationships that honor their traditions and beliefs. From an Indigenous perspective, research truth needs to be placed within larger dimensions of history and power, and it must be experienced in actual places on the landscape (Marker, 2003). As a researcher, the relationships one engages in are based on the interconnections between all forms of life. Such relationships also embody notions of respect because to have such relationships requires more than just following basic rituals and practices as part of the protocols of interactions with Indigenous peoples. It means believing in and living that relationship with all forms of life, and conducting all interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty (Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

### **Reverence**

Reverence refers to Indigenous spirituality, and it is the least discussed of the Rs. This is partially due to its inherent relationship to the other Rs. This is especially evident with the principle of respect, in respect to Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the relationship between private and public knowledges. Reverence is the grounding of theories in Indigenous epistemology, in that the relationships between the earth, cosmos, and the individual are all interconnected components of Indigenous knowledge. *Axiology* is described as the ethics or morals that guide our search for knowledge. In following the principle of reverence, researchers have to ask the questions: what part of reality is worth finding out more about and what is ethical for me in order to gain this knowledge (Steinhauer, 2001; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2003)? The principle of reverence

expands the notion of axiology by including the relationship one has to the earth and the inherent responsibility one has to protect it.

The 4Rs provide the foundational understanding of the Indigenous research process being used within this study. It is now important to discuss how the mixed methods approach informs the theoretical analytical lens and data processes of this study.

## **Mixed Methods**

Much debate had occurred in the last 10 years over the term *mixed methods*. For some researchers, mixed methods means blending quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis as their research approach; other researchers expand the mixed methods terminology to a paradigmatic and praxis level (See Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003 for various perspectives).

Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) argue that paradigms and method processes can be applied to research in multiple ways. Mixed method approaches can simply be used at the research methods phase (i.e., using a standardized test and focus groups). It can also occur at several stages of the project from design to data collection to dissemination. Teddle and Tashakkori (2003) refer to this as “mixed model research.” Choosing to use a mixed methods approach is influenced by several factors such as (1) when other methods can not solely answer the research questions; (2) the project requires stronger inferences that can be gained from multiple data collection methods; or (3) the depth of diversity within a project is required (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2003). A mixed-method can also be helpful when answering confirmatory and exploratory questions that can help verify and generate theory in the same study (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2003).

Mixed methods are applicable to most paradigms. When using multiple paradigms, a question is posed by Green and Caracelli (2003): How are researchers mixing paradigmatic assumptions within their work? This question is pertinent to this work because understanding how the theory influences the method and practice of the research is important when using a mixed model process. In using an Indigenous theory that places the Indigenous at the center along with an Indigenous methodology process following the 4Rs, a mixed method approach requires that I consider both the epistemological, ontological, and practical applications of combining quantitative and qualitative methods within a mixed paradigm perspective -- one that privileges the Indigenous using Indigenous and non-Indigenous theoretical frameworks.

The principles of mixed methods approach to research are recognizing one theoretical drive of the project (e.g., inductive- qualitative; deductive- quantitative); recognizing the role of the important component in the project (i.e., how it informs the base project); adhering to the methodological assumptions of the base method; and working with as few data sets as possible (Morse, 2003). Therefore, mixed methods design, according to Morse (2003) is “about using supplemental research strategies to collect data that would not otherwise be obtainable by using the main method and incorporating these data into the base method” (p. 191). The mixed methods approach was used in this study because by combining and increasing the number of research strategies, I was able to, as Morse (2003) advises, “broaden the dimensions and hence the scope” of this project (p. 189).

There are tensions and advantages in using the mixed methods in terms of data collection and theoretical frameworks. For example, Indigenous and social reproduction may be viewed as epistemologically different theories. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, it is within these tensions that I find the applicability of these theories to the complex issues involved in Aboriginal higher education. Like Coyote’s mismatched eyes, different

theoretical lens inform the research process, particularly the analysis of the context of this study. In using both quantitative and qualitative data, the variables used within the *Undergraduate Baccalaureate Graduate Survey* (UBGS) data sets provide snapshots of the experiences of Aboriginal students who graduated from a British Columbia university. However, the UBGS was designed based on dominant hegemonic variables and, therefore, does not necessarily resonate with the Indigenous wholistic theoretical framework used in this study. This data set then reflects how Indigenous students negotiated university based on hegemonic understanding of success. Conversely, the qualitative data were grounded in the theoretical drive of the research process. The various stakeholder interviews and sharing circles, along with the site observations and document analysis, provide richer insight into the university dynamics and represent the diversity of perspectives on how universities are successful spaces for Aboriginal students. For example, the multiple lenses of theory and method also expose insights into universities, such as, power and Indigenous knowledges, that simply using one methodology or theory might not reveal. The next section of this chapter explains in detail the sites and the participants of this study.

### **Sites of Study**

I began developing relationships with institutions by inviting them to partake in this study and shape its development in the summer 2005. This aided the design of the study, ensuring that the proposed research questions and process were relevant. Data collection occurred between January 2006 and February 2007. The majority of the interviews and sharing circles were held between the months of January and April, 2006. Five universities in British Columbia were invited to participate in this project, and, in the end, three agreed to be part of this study. The two sites that did not participate indicated to me that they were

independently conducting similar projects and felt that the duplication of work was not necessary. No reports regarding these research projects have yet been published, so these institutional research findings could not be considered within the context of this study. To respect the confidentiality of the participants of this study, it is critical that the sites of study also remain somewhat ambiguous. This is being done to ensure that individual participants can not be identified.

**1) Northern University.** Located in the northern region of British Columbia, Northern University was a small research university with a student population of less than 5,000. Approximately 10% of the student population was Aboriginal. However, Aboriginal faculty represented less than 5% of the institution's faculty population.

**2) Central University.** Located in the central region of the province, it was also a small research university with a student population of less than 5,000. Unlike Northern University, the Aboriginal student, faculty, and staff populations of Central University represented less than 5% of the institution.

**3) Southern University.** Located in the southern region of the province, Southern University had a student population of more than 20,000. However, its Aboriginal student population was less than 5%, and Aboriginal faculty was between 5 to 10%.

Within the context of this study, *faculty* refers to tenured and tenure-track positions. It was not evident from the site visits how many sessional instructors might also be Aboriginal. All three sites had various course offerings with Aboriginal-specific content along with targeted programs (e.g., Native Teacher Education and First Nations Studies). The three sites also

offered some form of Aboriginal student support services; however, there was variation in staffing, resources, and physical location within the institution.

## **Participants**

Before I describe the participants of this study, I need to reiterate the importance of maintaining participant confidentiality. During some of the interviews, participants expressed concern about having their identities revealed, and others acknowledged that their role in the institution needed to be discussed within the context of their comments. To respect the concerns of confidentiality, I identified participants' comments where applicable by their role within the institution: student, Elder, faculty, staff, or administrator. I have highlighted quotations from those participants who agreed it would be appropriate to indicate whether they were from Northern, Central, or Southern University.

Several key stakeholders participated in interviews (semi-structured, face-to-face, or telephone) such as Elders and Aboriginal education committee/group members; administrators responsible for admissions and registration, recruitment, counseling, housing, and other related student services; Aboriginal student services providers and administrators; along with faculty and administrators of various programs. Sharing circles or interviews were held with Aboriginal undergraduate and graduate students who were enrolled in the academic year of 2005 to 2006. It was important to also acknowledge that some participants had multiple roles in the university. For example, some administrators were also faculty members. Some of the Elders and staff were either students or instructors. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to identify these participants by their primary role and the position with which they identified themselves. I only counted each person once in terms of



their participation; consequently, 92 participants reflect the actual number of people I spoke to, and no participant is counted twice.

Table 1

Participant demographics by position, gender, and ethnic identity

Participant Demographics (N=92)	Frequency	Percent
Students	24	25.8
Elders	18	19.3
Administration	22	23.6
Faculty	10	10.7
Staff	18	20.4
Female <sup>18</sup>	34	57.6
Male	25	42.4
Aboriginal	59	63.4
Non-Aboriginal	34	36.6

Table 1 provides a general description of the participants in this study. The total number of participants was 92, representing administrators, Aboriginal students, staff, Elders, and faculty. Approximately 60% of the interview participants were female; this percentage was raised to roughly 90% in the student sharing circles. There was also a high representation of Aboriginal peoples, particularly due to the active involvement of

<sup>18</sup> The numbers of participants by GENDER does not include the gender of students, Elders or Aboriginal advisory committee members who participated in sharing circles. Gender percentages only reflect the gender of interview participants.

Aboriginal students and Elders. The demographics are not further delineated (e.g., how many female, Aboriginal, administrators were participants) to protect participants' identities.

## **Interviews and Sharing Circles**

As outlined in Table 1, a total of 92 participants took part in this study. I had only one participant withdraw her transcript after it was returned to her. This transcript was not included in the analysis. Therefore, approximately 61 stakeholder one-on-one interviews and four sharing circles were conducted in total. Table 2 presents the interview data collected during this research process from each site.

Table 2

Details of data collected

	Interviews	Sharing Circles
Northern-U	21	1
Central-U	16	2
Southern-U	24	1
Total transcripts	61	4

The interviews and sharing circles resulted in over 55 hours of interview tape and approximately 570 pages of transcript. Although the sharing circles were predominately conducted with students, there was one sharing circle held with the Aboriginal Advisory Council at Central-U. Of the 61 transcripts, approximately five face-to-face interviews were done with students. I also received e-mail feedback from two students after the sharing

circles. Three interviews were conducted over the phone because during the time of my site visits these participants were unable to meet with me.

In one of my sharing circles, a staff member also participated in her role as student. This particular person was also interviewed one-on-one through her role as a staff member. Within the sharing circle transcript, I annotated this participant differently than the students so I could contextualize her comments as a staff participant. I did not include her in the count of participants in the sharing circle. This particular participant's insight into the history of student experience added to the student sharing circles, and students did not seem hindered in voicing their opinions. In fact, several students expressed to me that they felt comfortable with her there because the students were not talking about personal issues, but about opinions and experiences in the institution where this particular person played an important advocacy role for students. Other students because of scheduling conflicts participated in one-on-one interviews. The depth of these interviews added to the information gathered during the sharing circles.

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of transcripts quoted in the dissertation by institution. The analysis process is discussed later in the section "Analysis." I will note here that many of the Elders and one participant I spoke to did not want to be digitally recorded. In those instances, I took notes and then shared those notes with the participants. These notes were included in the analysis of the data with the other transcripts.

Table 3

Frequency and percentage of transcripts directly quoted in dissertation

	Total transcripts	Frequency*	Percent
Northern-U	22	20	90.9
Central-U	16	14	87.5
Southern-U	25	24	96.0
Total	63	58	92.1

\* frequency is based on having used one direct quotation from a transcript

The interview protocol was semi-structured (see Appendix E). This structure allowed for the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue and address issues as they arose throughout the discussion. There were six interview questions asked of each participant, regardless of their roles within the institution. To compare student responses with other participants, I used the same semi-structured protocol in the interviews and sharing circles.

In addition to the interviews and sharing circles, I also reviewed websites (e.g., recruitment, admissions, financial services, Aboriginal student services, academic calendars, and other related sites). As part of the research process, I spent some time at each campus exploring the campus climate and taking photographs. Again, due to confidentiality, these photos were used more as a visual aid in the analysis and are not shown in this dissertation. During my interviews, I had several participants provide me with institutional documents, such as course outlines, recruitment materials, or various policy papers. These documents were also used to interrogate lines of inquiry in the analysis of the interview data.

## Survey Data

To examine institutional responsibility and accountability, I felt I needed a better understanding of the Aboriginal participation in the British Columbia university system. This was done using available data from The University President's Council (TUPC) reports pertaining to Aboriginal student enrolment trends over the last ten years<sup>19</sup> (e.g., numbers, programs enrolled, graduation rates, and length of time to completion).

Since 1995, The University Presidents' Council (TUPC) in British Columbia has conducted a survey of baccalaureate graduates, both two and five years after graduation through the *University Baccalaureate Graduates Surveys* (UBGS).<sup>20</sup> As a sub-group, the Aboriginal alumni responses to these surveys have not been publicly reported with the exception of the 2003 survey of 1998 graduates and the 2005 survey of 2000 graduates (The University President's Council, 2002, 2003). These particular data sets provide trends in Aboriginal alumni participation in universities in British Columbia. The surveys had a variety of questions related to academic program experiences, institutional decisions, further education post-baccalaureate, employment, finance, and satisfaction with program and institution.

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<sup>19</sup> TUPC data was not consistently been collected each year regarding Aboriginal alumni, so analysis was based on available information.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.tupc.bc.ca/student\\_outcomes/index.html](http://www.tupc.bc.ca/student_outcomes/index.html)

Table 4

Aboriginal student participation to the University Baccalaureate Graduates Survey (UBGS)

Survey Year	Total <i>N</i>	Aboriginal (N)	% of Aboriginal responses of total population
1993 in 1995	3684	45	1.2
1996 in 1997	2951	42	1.4
1996 in 2001	5449	124	2.3
1997 in 1999	5711	120	2.1
1998 in 2000	6346	128	2.8
1998 in 2003	2522	121	2.2
2000 in 2002	7379	170	2.3
2002 in 2004	3915	64	1.6

Table 4 presents how many Aboriginal undergraduate alumni responded to the B.C. university alumni survey. The first column presents the graduating class and the year they were surveyed (e.g., 1993 alumni surveyed in 1995). The second column presents the total number of non-Aboriginal respondents to the survey. The third column shows how many respondents self-identified as Aboriginal. The final column presents the percentage of Aboriginal responses to the total responses. Statistics Canada data supports the general trend that Aboriginal participation in higher education increased over the years of 1989 to 2000; this increase in participation partially explains the increased alumni over these decades.

Comparing the alumni responses by gender showed that most of the Aboriginal graduates were female. The gender trends in B.C. resonated with the national gender trends reported by Statistics Canada, which found that more Aboriginal females than Aboriginal males attend university. Aboriginal males tended to pursue college and the trades (Statistics

Canada, 2003). The gender demographics of the student participants in this study also support these trends (i.e., more females than males)

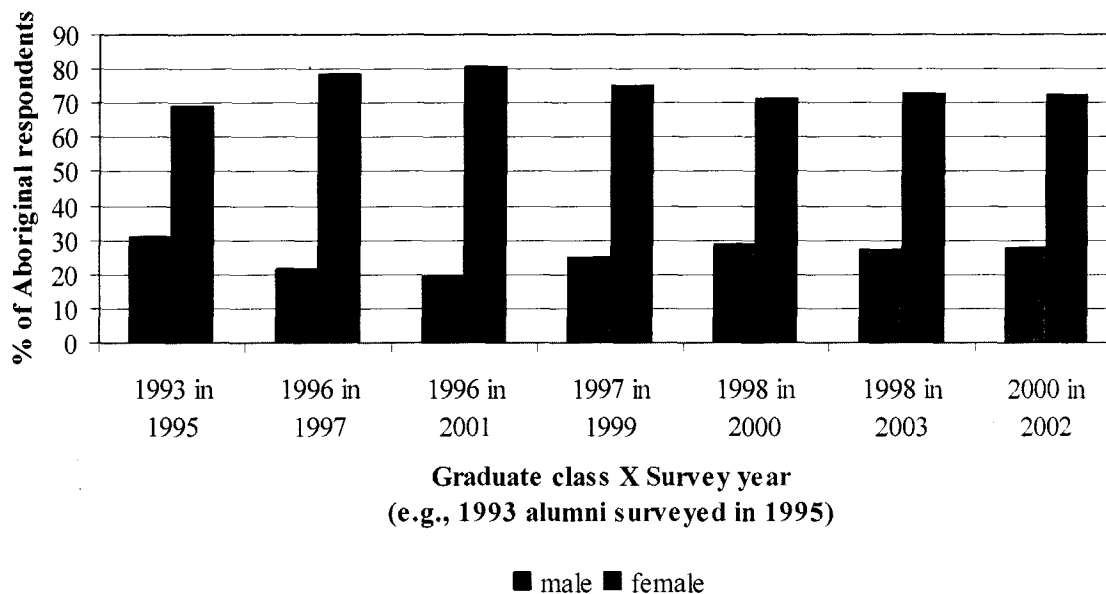


Figure 3

Gender of Aboriginal alumni who participated in the UBGS.

The UBGS was conducted with those students who have graduated from their program. Therefore, another survey is needed to understand the experiences of those students who are stop-outs or drop-outs (Tinto, 1993). There was no information available to gain a sense of the response rate for Aboriginal alumni (e.g., total Aboriginal alumni population compared to those who responded to the survey). However, these data sets do provide a picture of the Aboriginal student baccalaureate experience over time that has not been part of the public data record.

By contextualizing the participants' voices within this study with provincial research data, such as TUPC reports, a wholistic understanding of accountability and responsibility

of universities to Indigenous higher education in British Columbia was gathered and will be discussed further in the analysis chapters.

### **Indigenous Research Process**

The methodological process for this study was guided by the 4Rs (Archibald et al., 1995; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Pidgeon & Hardy Cox, 2002). The principle of *relevance* was important upon starting this project, which had to be meaningful to those with whom I wished to work. The first phase of this research involved discussing the project with the VP students, VP academic, and Director of Aboriginal student services to see if they were indeed interested in the research itself at five universities within British Columbia. Formal letters of invitation were sent to potential participating institutions explaining the project (see Appendix A for a copy of the institutional letter).

Upon receiving institutional permission (from both the VP students and the director of Aboriginal student services) to conduct my research at each site, personalized letters were sent to potential interviewees (see Appendix B for copy of the letter of introduction to individual participants). A follow-up e-mail and/or phone calls were made after an appropriate time had passed (minimum of two weeks). Site visits were part of this project where I spent a week to two weeks at each institution visiting with students, touring the campus, taking field notes, and conducting interviews and sharing circles. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to two hours. The sessions were digitally recorded with participants' permission. For those participants who did not wish to be digitally recorded, I either took notes during the interview or made notes after the interview was completed.

Honoring the principles of respect and reciprocity, after the interview, each participant was presented with a culturally appropriate gift (e.g., tobacco bundle and small



gift) to respect their sharing of knowledge and contributions to the project. Aboriginal students were recruited for the sharing circles with the assistance of Aboriginal student service staff, who posted information about the sharing circle and spoke about the project with students (See Appendix D for example of poster). The sharing circles ranged from six to 12 participants and lasted anywhere between one and half to two hours (See Appendix C for Sharing Circle consent form). The students who participated in the sharing circles were provided a pizza lunch and \$15 cash for their time and contributions. Some students who preferred to be interviewed also received \$15 for sharing their knowledge and time.

The principles of respect and reciprocity became a further part of the process when each participant was sent his or her transcript (either based on the digital recording or the notes) for review and approval. Returning the transcripts prior to analysis allowed participants to revisit their thoughts. It also provided them an opportunity to change, clarify, elaborate, or withdraw their transcript. Many participants appreciated this opportunity and approved their transcripts for use as is. Although some participants approved the use of their transcripts unchanged, they expressed concern about how their conversational speech did not translate well into text. It was negotiated with these participants to work with the original transcript and to re-send them relevant sections of the analysis where they were directly quoted so they could see the quotations in context. This was important for some of the participants to feel comfortable enough to continue their involvement in the study and a good example of the principle of respect. Five participants requested to see their quotations in context. Therefore, relevant excerpts from the penultimate draft of the dissertation were sent to these five individuals. They were given the opportunity to provide feedback on their quotations. It was also within their right to request that I remove direct quotations from the dissertation. All five participants verified their quotations for use in the dissertation. Two of these participants made small editorial changes to their quotations that did not change how I

used the quotation in context. Another three participants did not review their transcripts because they had left the university since their interview without forwarding contact information. After several unsuccessful attempts were made to locate these individuals, I included their transcripts in the overall analysis but did not directly quote from them because of the lack of verification.

Reciprocity also had to be followed with the use of The University President's Council (TUPC) data set. I had to present my proposal to a representative of the TUPC, who brought forward my request to the Council. Access to the data sets was contingent on presenting relevant data analysis chapters to the TUPC prior to the penultimate draft of the dissertation. This assurance was necessary for the TUPC to provide access to their data set. The relevant sections of the dissertation were sent to TUPC representatives and were approved for use in this dissertation in January, 2008.

The *responsibilities* of the participants were clearly outlined at the onset of this project, with the institutions and the participants themselves. My own responsibilities as researcher were also discussed throughout the project. My responsibilities included respecting the agreements which gave me entry to the sites of study; returning the transcripts to the participants for their review and approval; and writing the dissertation representing the various perspectives that were shared throughout this process. In addition, I also had the responsibility upon completion of this work to prepare a summary of recommendations that were institutional specific. This latter responsibility was something that was part of the negotiations for my entry into each site.

## Analysis

Eber Hampton (1995) used the Six Directions as a pattern or organizing principle for his data analysis of interviews. Like Hampton, I am using the wholistic framework (Figure 1) as my organizing principle as “a way of thinking about existing in the universe. This pattern organizes and clarifies thoughts. It directs us to think of [the research questions] as dynamic. This is movement. There is historical development” (Hampton, 1995, p. 16). The wholistic framework guided analysis of all data collected (i.e., interviews, focus groups, surveys, and policy). This analysis was informed by the theoretical frameworks being used for this study (i.e., Indigenous theory and social reproduction theory). “It is not sufficient to state that the world of education is complex and has multiple influences. The purpose of any serious analysis is to go beyond such overly broad conclusions” (Apple, 2004, p. 32). In combining these different theoretical approaches while privileging the Indigenous position, the analysis and recommendations from this study will engage with the various influences on Aboriginal education that will “enlighten a counter-hegemonic common sense and build counter-hegemonic alliances” (Apple, 2004, p. 13).

Figure 1 is a representation of Indigenous knowledge; this image became a template for the analysis of the qualitative data. For the first phase of the analysis of the interview and sharing circle transcripts, I read and hand coded each transcript for emerging themes in relation to each question. These emergent themes were then transposed into the wholistic framework as they related to each realm (physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual; individual, family, community, and institution). This assisted in hearing the important lessons each participant shared with me. The second phase involved using the qualitative software, Atlas.TI to analyze the interviews and sharing circle transcripts. The coding template developed in the first phase of coding was entered into Atlas.TI. A third round of

coding also allowed emerging themes to be added to the code list that were not identified in the first and second phases of the analysis.

Atlas.TI allows researchers to group codes into families. I was able to easily transfer the elements of the wholistic framework into Atlas.TI by creating family networks. Family networks are essentially codes that relate to each other. For example, I created a family called *4Rs* that included the codes of *respect*, *relevance*, *reciprocity*, and *relationships*. In addition to the wholistic framework families, I was also able to create families around each research question and the theoretical concepts. Such grouping provided an opportunity to see the interconnections between themes in the data (see Appendix F for examples of Atlas.TI family and code lists).

Another feature of Atlas.TI is that it can create families for the documents being analyzed. So in addition to grouping the codes, I was able to group the interview and sharing circle transcripts into families. For example, all the participants from Northern-U were included in a family called *Northern-U*. This permitted a comparison of themes by institution. I was also able to compile transcripts based on the participant role (e.g., Elder, student, administrator, and staff), that allowed for a comparison of how each stakeholder group responded to questions.

SPSS 13.0, a quantitative software package, was used to analyze the UBGS data sets. Due to the limited information in the UBGS data set, basic frequency tables and cross-tabulations by institution and gender were generated to tell the story of the experiences of these Aboriginal undergraduate alumni. For example, the data included in the dissertation examined the programs students completed and how they paid for their education. The analysis of the quantitative data did not utilize the wholistic framework. However, the information gained from the UBGS data sets does fit within the overall

wholistic analysis (e.g., how students financed their education relates to the physical realm).

The next section of this chapter presents my perspective on my role as researcher.

### **Experiences of Researcher**

The research process was filled with challenging and rewarding moments for me as the researcher. This project began with an idea of interviewing eight to ten people per site at a possible five universities. In the end, two sites decided not to participate in this project because of internal-review initiatives. However, the reciprocity and openness of the other three sites re-affirmed the value of this work. As word spread about the project, the participant pool of eight to ten grew to 30 to 35 participants per site. This growth was primarily precipitated by participants recommending others (e.g., snowball technique) whom they believed to have some contributions to make to the study. In anticipating some non-participants, I sent letters of invitation to a wide representation of each university community, including those names recommended by others. The fear of non-participants was abated by an overwhelming positive response of 98% acceptance to participate from those contacted for interviews. The participation rate for students was less measurable because of the general recruitment call and lack of direct contact with the total Aboriginal student population on campus.

There was also a delay in data collection because in addition to applying and following the BREB process of the University of British Columbia, I also had to apply to a local First Nations band for permission to interview local community members. This negotiation occurred six months after initial contact was made with these potential participants. Even though being made aware of this process earlier would have been helpful,

it did not present any major challenges as the process of transcribing interviews, verifying of transcripts, and reviewing the literature kept the process moving.

The honest and open exchange of most of the participants was an important reward of this work. Though the questions asked during the interviews were not personal in nature, I did recognize that participants were critiquing the structure within which they were employed. There was also a power differential as I, as a graduate student, was asking administrators, faculty, Elders, and staff participants to share their insights from their respective positions within the institution. Correspondingly, as a senior doctoral student, I was interviewing fellow graduate students and undergraduate students who came from a variety of age groups, personal, and cultural backgrounds.

Traveling to each site was facilitated by my role as the SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) provincial coordinator, a peer mentoring program designed to assist Aboriginal doctoral student enhancement. I was able to coordinate my research visits with attending local SAGE meetings across the province. Due to these concentrated periods of time in each site (minimum two visits per site), I was able to experience various aspects of each institution and put respective comments into context. As a principle of reciprocity, I intend to return to each site to present findings of this dissertation during the spring of 2008.

An important process for researchers is negotiating one's identity as a student, researcher, and a person of Aboriginal ancestry (Menzies, 2001). I always begin as I did in the preamble of this dissertation and the interviews, by acknowledging that I am a visitor to the traditional territories of the First Nations of British Columbia. My program has occurred within the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam peoples. I have followed the protocols of the Aboriginal nation of which I am a visitor. Coming from Newfoundland, my own Aboriginal ancestry is located within a colonial past and Irish-Catholic urban

upbringing. The journey to Vancouver was as much about pursuing doctoral studies as it was about reclaiming and decolonizing myself. In respecting my own history, I had positive and rewarding experiences working with other Aboriginal peoples on this project.

At times through this journey, I have had moments of questioning myself and the reasons why I am here. I found strength and encouragement from my supervisors, colleagues, and peers. The participants' transcripts also helped refocus my occasional navel gazing back to the bigger context of this work. Their transcripts spoke of the relevance of this project to their institution and surrounding Aboriginal communities. More importantly, their dialogue emphasized the responsibility of this work and researcher to the agenda of transforming universities to be inclusive spaces for multiple ways of knowing.

## **Summary**

The research process of this study is firmly grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and uses the 4Rs as guides to the research process through design, implementation, and dissemination. To define the research process as such, this chapter first presented the literature pertaining to Indigenous research methodology principles within the discourse of an Indigenous paradigm. It also reviewed the mixed methods approach employed within this study that reflected the different theoretical lens, data collection methods, and analysis frameworks used in this study. The second component of the chapter discussed the methodological process used specifically for this research study. It outlined how the research relationship was negotiated with each institution and how participants were invited to the study. Descriptions of the institutional contexts and participants set limitations and delimitations of this research process. This section also reviewed how the 4Rs were followed in the research process. For example, the principle of reciprocity was followed by

returning participant transcripts and gifting participants for their contributions and sharing of their knowledge.

The next three chapters provide an analysis of the data with respect to the major research questions of this study:

Chapter 4: How is Indigenous knowledge practiced within universities?

Chapter 5: What makes a university successful for Aboriginal peoples using Indigenous definitions of success?

Chapter 6: How is Indigenous knowledge and notions of success used to shape institutional accountability and responsibility to Aboriginal education? How can institutions be made more successful for Aboriginal peoples?



## Chapter 4

### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND UNIVERSITIES

In the 1960s, universities opened the door for Indigenous knowledges by developing Aboriginal-specific programs and courses.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, with federal support, universities established Aboriginal student services to meet the wholistic needs of their Indigenous student population. At the academic and student services level Indigenous knowledge has been a counter-hegemonic presence in mainstream universities. Such developments decolonize and transform spaces within the universities for Indigenous epistemologies. Through pedagogic action (PA), institutional bureaucracy continued to mitigate how Indigenous knowledges were represented in the university. However, counter-hegemonic agency pushed against the open door to expand parameters set by the pedagogic authority (PAu) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), that defined how IKs were present in the universities. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how Indigenous knowledges continue to persevere and push against the PAu within three universities in British Columbia, Canada.

The first section of this chapter, “defining Indigenous knowledge(s),” presents how participants defined Indigenous knowledges (IK). Indigenous knowledges were defined in complex and multiple ways resonating with the literature on Indigenous knowledges. Fifty-eight transcripts were coded for the question *How do you define IK?* Participants’ understandings of Indigenous knowledges were influenced by their relationships with Aboriginal peoples. The second section, “pockets of presence,” examines how Indigenous knowledges were present in the university primarily through pedagogy and curriculum.

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<sup>21</sup> Prior to the 1960s there were small numbers of Aboriginal students participating in higher education of course it is important that each of these students brought their IK to the institutions. However, the development of specific programs and services was an important structural and political change in universities.

The third section, “politics of negotiating space,” examines the spaces for Indigenous knowledges within universities through PAu and agency. This section presents the tensions some participants expressed regarding how Indigenous knowledge was present in the academy and how it existed in Aboriginal communities. Participants also discussed the politics of the current capital of academic Indigenous knowledges. In acknowledging the politics of IK, the fourth and final section of this chapter pays particular attention to understanding the role of First Nations Centres (FNCs) as sites of resistance to assimilation and facilitators of agency across the institution. FNCs resisted assimilation by fostering the cultural integrity of students. FNCs also enacted agency through broadening the university communities’ understanding of Indigenous knowledges.

### **Defining Indigenous Knowledge(s)**

A strong relationship existed between how participants talked about Indigenous knowledges (IK) and how Indigenous knowledges were represented in the literature. It was evident from both contexts that diligence is required when considering the nuances of Indigenous knowledges. Some scholars refer to Indigenous knowledges in the plural sense or as Indigenous knowledge systems because of these multiple nuances (e.g., Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). In fact, 23 participants indicated Indigenous knowledges were to be defined based on the Aboriginal population and culture. This demonstrates a consciousness among some participants of the diversity of Aboriginal nations.

IK is going to be specific and unique for all those 50 communities, some will be integrated, and some will overlap and some will be very similar and some will be distinct. I guess IK, as I see it, as the onset, it is a unique way to know and understand the world. (Administrator-16, Northern-U)

Other participants pointed out that in making *Indigenous knowledge* plural also respected the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples. As an administrator said, “I’m glad that you tacked on the ‘s,’ for knowledges. We are Aboriginal, First Nations communities-- whether you look at the urban or rural” (Administrator-8, Southern-U). Another participant also believed that “[IK is] culture specific in the sense of I believe there is as many Indigenous knowledge systems as there are Indigenous peoples” (Faculty-12, Northern-U).

Participants agreed that Indigenous knowledges reflected the diversity of places, languages, cultures, traditions, and contemporary understandings of Indigenous peoples. *Indigenous knowledges* were defined as the “knowledge that belongs to the original inhabitants of the land” (Administrator-11, Central-U). Variations on this definition included the following:

The epistemological systems that arise from Indigenous cultures and peoples -- not so much [from] individuals, but the peoples -- and the world-view and cosmology that is inherent in language, and ritual, and all of those things. (Faculty-5, Central-U)

Well, I guess I think about Indigenous knowledge as ways of knowing, ways of being that are specific to Indigenous people. I think about it in critical cultural elements -- like relationship to land, interconnectedness, our very much ... traditions of the past [which] are valued and part of the present. (Faculty-2, Southern-U)

Also evident in the reflections of participants was a wholistic understanding of IK that related to the cosmology, environment, and cultural practices of Aboriginal peoples. As a participant described,

In my mind, the knowledge is really personal, and it's not owned by a band, and it shouldn't be controlled by a band. And there's a relationship between the knower and the learner, where that's passed on. I mean, if we think about traditional knowledge, that's how it works. So that's one kind of Indigenous knowledge...to think about traditional knowledge, ...about medicine knowledge, ...about different kinds of spiritual knowledge, or if, you think about history. And then there's other, much more public kinds of knowledge, that are passed on publicly, and that it's important to be accessed publicly because they tell the history and the stories of the people, and they have an implication for legal rights of the people. And there's also contemporary knowledge that people have that I think about, and I'm just really excited by young people in terms of music and multi-media and performances and working with their contextually-based understandings of who they are and sharing that in contemporary ways. (Administrator-6, Southern-U)

Indigenous knowledges for 18 participants related to Elders passing on their traditional teachings and understandings to younger generations. For example, a staff participant said, "I think about knowledge from our communities passed on through the generations" (Staff-8, Southern-U). Other participants articulated the intergenerational process of IK as the following:

I believe ... local Indigenous communities to be quite well-connected, strong relationships within these individuals. They view themselves more as a family, and they share that knowledge on that informal basis. I think Indigenous people take advantage of or rely more upon that collective knowledge -- much more. (Administration-9, Central-U)

I find that [IK is] the passing on of stories from generation to generation, and I think that the preservation of that within the Aboriginal context and Aboriginal language. For myself -- Indigenous knowledge starts at the language -- it is the foundation for that. (Staff-3, Southern-U)

I think a lot of Indigenous knowledge is passed from Elders to Elders, [from] family to family, from parents and grandparents to children. So it's very much more of a verbal dialogue steeped with cultures and traditions. (Staff-21, Northern-U)

Sixteen participants emphasized the connection that IK has to place. For example, one administrator believed IK “is knowledge that has been gathered over centuries by a group of individuals that are native to a particular geographical location” (Administrator-14, Northern-U). Other participants also believed that place was an integral influence on Indigenous knowledges.

I guess my current understanding of IK is that they are tied to place, they are place-based and they are tied to culture. I think they can be what we call traditional, but they can also be a contemporary application of knowledge that has been passed down in contemporary contexts. (Staff-2, Southern-U)

Indigenous knowledge is knowledge that people have gained simply by living and being in a place. So it is a very broad understanding of nature and human. and ... natural interaction and social intercourse -- all those things gained by being part of a community, and it is very responsive to that place where they happen to be. (Administrator-4, Southern-U)

Place was dependent on context in that Indigenous knowledge from the traditional territory was different from Indigenous knowledges located in urban settings; both locations were viewed as valid representations of Indigenous knowledge. Therefore, Indigenous knowledges were also defined as fluid because IK manifests differently depending on context and place.

### **Relationships influence understandings of IK**

How participants understood Indigenous knowledges (IK) was enriched by their personal backgrounds and roles within the university. It was often the case that relationships with Aboriginal peoples, whether personal, work, or community based, informed how participants conceptualized Indigenous knowledges. For example, only 6 out of 92 participants had limited or no contact with Aboriginal peoples within the university or any prior experiences with Aboriginal communities. Consequently, these participants admitted

they had limited or no understanding of Indigenous knowledge. The fact that many non-Aboriginal participants defined Indigenous knowledges from the teachings they gained from interacting with Aboriginal peoples highlights the ineffectiveness of separating the participants into the binary of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (Calliou, 1998). Such a binary does not reflect or respect the diversity of understandings the participants brought to this study. Therefore, I have made a conscious decision to not identify participants by whether or not they were Aboriginal.

Based on participant conversations and my own observations during the site visits, it seemed the larger the Aboriginal community surrounding the university campus and on campus influenced how people in the university understood Aboriginal issues. However, data shared in later chapters of this dissertation demonstrate that simply having an Aboriginal presence in or around the university does not ensure individual comprehension; in some cases, instead of respect and understanding, racism and stereotypes were perpetuated. If universities are truly to change then we need to alter how we relate to each other. The relational nature of sharing knowledges within Aboriginal contexts highlights the importance of developing and maintaining such relationships within universities.

The defining of Indigenous knowledges raised some important questions related to how participants perceived IK in the university. For example, how do we maintain in the academy those conceptions that have arisen from the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples? How do we balance the understanding that IK exists in multiple realms within the embodiment of Indigenous peoples who negotiate between and within the university and community? These questions will be revisited throughout this chapter and in the conclusion of this dissertation. Before these questions are answered, it is important to paint a picture of how Indigenous knowledges had pockets of presence in the university.

## **Pockets of Presence**

Participants defined Indigenous knowledges with ease and grace and grounded in their personal experiences and relationships with Aboriginal peoples. However, they were sometimes at a loss as to where they saw that definition represented in the university. Very few participants thought that their institutions were indeed respectful of Indigenous knowledges. In fact, the presence (or absence) of Indigenous knowledges in the three universities was best described by a participant who said IK had “pockets of presence,” which referred to “areas of where Indigenous knowledges were talked about [though] it wasn’t across the board” (Faculty-11, Northern-U).

Indigenous knowledge systems on campus were manifested in a variety of ways physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually depending on the context and who was the holder of the Indigenous knowledge(s). For example, Aboriginal students from diverse nations brought multiple forms of IK to campus from their own respective cultures and traditions. Other forms of representation were the physical cultural markers on campus, such as Aboriginal art and cultural events. However, two predominant areas where IK existed in the university emerged from the data. The first was through the curriculum and academic programs focused on Aboriginal issues. The second was through the pedagogical practices of the Aboriginal administrators, faculty, staff, Elders, and students who were the seen face of IK on campus.

### **IK in the curriculum**

Sixty participants discussed how IK was present in their respective universities. Indigenous knowledges for most of these participants (n=29) existed in the curriculum and Aboriginal specific programs. For example, as one participant put it, “The existence of the various academic programs, I see as an indicator of IK at the university” (Staff-2, Southern-

U). All three sites had First Nations Studies Programs. The value of having such Aboriginal specific academic programs was also explained by a student from Northern-U, who said that

the Indigenous Studies program teaches various forms of Indigenous knowledge. I am currently enrolled in an Indigenous minor. I find it very helpful to understand why things are the way they are. Even something as simple as learning about how our minds have been colonized reveals how we have been impacted by colonization. (Student, Northern-U)<sup>22</sup>

The First Nations Studies program I think it is very much built on the premise that different ways of knowing and different sources of knowledge, and, in particular, [of]... Indigenous knowledge. And it makes it available not only to First Nations students, but also to others in the university. (Administrator-23, Southern-U)

The University Presidents' Council (TUPC) in British Columbia has conducted a survey of baccalaureate graduates, both two and five years after graduation through the *University Baccalaureate Graduates Survey* (UBGS). The UBGS reported most Aboriginal students had completed either a B.A. or a B.Ed. as their program of study. Tables 5a and 5b present the program of study completed by Aboriginal respondents to the UBGS.

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<sup>22</sup> Students' comments are not numbered. During the sharing circle and in the transcriptions, students were differentiated by gender but not by name. This was done to protect the identities of students.



Table 5a

## Program of Study of Aboriginal Graduate Respondents to UBGS

(1-2 Years after Graduation)

	1993 in 1995	1996 in 1997	1997 in 1999	1998 in 2000	2000 in 2002
Arts/Humanities/Social sciences	4.4	30.8	45.0	28.1	43.7
Education	6.7	23.4	29.2	19.5	16.5
Science- applied, life, physical	2.2	10.3	15	13.3	8.3
Commerce	2.2	3.7	4.2	4.7	6.6
Fine and Performance Arts	0.0	6.5	3.3	5.5	4.1
Health professions	6.7	5.6	2.5	7.8	4.1
Social professions	2.2	19.6	0.0	21.1	0.0
Law	4.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1
Forestry	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0
Health, fitness	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.1
Engineering	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other (unspecified)	57.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 5b

## Program of Study of Aboriginal Graduate Respondents to UBSGS (5 Years after Graduation)

	1996 in 2001
Arts/Humanities/Social sciences	50.0
Education	25.0
Science- applied, life, physical	5.6
Commerce	1.6
Fine and Performance Arts	4.8
Health professions	4.0
Social professions	0.0
Law	5.6
Forestry	1.6
Health, fitness	1.6
Engineering	1.6
Other (unspecified)	0.0

In Table 5a, a large percentage of respondents of the 1993 alumni surveyed in 1995 did not specify their program of study. It is not evident from the original data set, whether Aboriginal students were enrolled in Native Teacher Education, Aboriginal Law, or First Nation Studies programs. However, other research reports found that Aboriginal students are more likely to enroll in Aboriginal-specific programs, highlighting the important role such programs play in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal students (Human Capital Strategies, 2005) .

There was also recognition by participants that IK can be present within the curriculum in a variety of ways, such as the books and articles used, but also through the pedagogy of the instructor, the discussions of students, and through guest lecturers.

And [IK] can function here and does function here in a variety of ways. If we are thinking about it curricul[um], you give some kind of presence...If you are thinking of Indigenous knowledge as someone's traditional way of looking at things, or experiencing the world or navigating the world, then you know, it is possible to bring someone who has a particular way of doing that into the class to talk about it. (Faculty-1, Southern-U)

However, part of the challenge in bringing IK to other disciplines was partially attributed to the limited resources available for bringing Elders into classrooms and the hiring of Aboriginal faculty; consequently, IK existed primarily in textbooks for many Aboriginal students studying in non-Aboriginal-specific programs.

[Elders] certainly contribute in the First Nations studies program, not so much in some of the other programs. I mean Social Work tries to have a strong Aboriginal focus ... and have tried very hard to recruit Aboriginal professors, but there hasn't been a lot of success in either attracting or retaining those folks, and so, as such, a lot of the knowledge has to be derived from texts. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

However, another 15 participants perceived the presence of IK in the curriculum to be limited and more importantly, not available across *all* programs and disciplines. These participants from two different sites observed that

all the [Aboriginal-specific] programs as they exist are developing curricular [or] developing approaches to learning that are, ... appropriate to First Nations' ways of thinking, First Nations' ways of being. And that is, to some degrees, is being tolerated and in other degrees, it is being encouraged -- there we have the full spectrum. (Administrator-8, Southern-U)

I think that First Nations Studies, anthropology, history, I think that these are some places that it is working, working really well. There are some areas in science that it isn't working well, because, of the fact that the scientific -- what we term, or the White culture terms "scientific knowledge" -- is based on a certain type of methodologies and calling that the "right" way without looking at other methodologies. (Administrator-14, Northern-U)

While Indigenous-based programs incorporated Indigenous knowledges into the foundation, pedagogy, and curriculum of the program, other disciplines resisted relating IK within their own faculties and programs:

Our Indigenous studies program is doing that ... one of their mandates is to do exactly that, but in terms of your regular poli-sci intro 100 or whatever there's no consideration of that whatsoever. Even things like Indigenous science, my colleagues just get their backs up in the sciences and other areas, "well, it's not possible, there's only one kind of science, it's this kind of science." So it is a struggle for people to acknowledge there [are] other ways of learning, other ways of knowing, and indeed other ways of being. (Faculty-9, Central-U)

Student participants indicated that they were reading more Aboriginal authors in their courses; this was especially true for those students enrolled in Aboriginal-specific programs or who had Aboriginal professors. Consequently, IK in the curriculum resonates with the habitus and capital of Indigenous students. However, a student from Northern-U reminded me during our conversation that there was a stigma attached to First Nations programs and courses as being "easy" and "academically weaker" than mainstream programs. Unfortunately, the negative stigma associated with Aboriginal-specific programs also plays into the PAu and continued dominance of Euro-Western ways of knowing. This stigma will be revisited in Chapter 7 in the section "unresolved contradictions." The value of IK becomes jeopardized when such programs and courses are devalued in the university.

Obvious tensions existed for some participants around knowledge production with respect to the academic realms and Indigenous knowledges (Marker, 2003). Bringing

together the terms *academic* and *Indigenous* as “*academic Indigenous knowledge*” was problematic because these two terms do not “necessarily fit together really well sometimes” (Administrator-12, Central-U). This administrator from Central-U continued on to say,

I think there are some really huge conflicts that occur from time to time between the two. I’m not certain that is bad; it is a different way of going at it. (Administrator-12, Central-U)

As part of the research process, I reviewed university calendars and websites. In this review, I found Indigenous knowledges no longer remain solely within the Aboriginal Teacher Education and First Nations Studies programs. This finding resonates with the recent provincial review of Aboriginal post-secondary education program, services and strategies of higher education institutions in British Columbia (Human Capital Strategies, 2005). Human Capital Strategies (2005) surveyed public and private post-secondary institutions and found “a large, growing and diverse amount of Aboriginal programs and partnerships. The challenge is to sustain and build on these and move into new areas of need” (p. v). In this study, a review of institutional calendars along with participants’ interviews identified specific courses and academic programs in a variety of disciplines such as arts, sciences, forestry, and graduate studies. Participants described a variety of courses that supported IK. For example, IK existed in “some formal courses, whether it be language or specific historical representations or an understanding of policy between two organizations” (Administrator-1, Southern-U).

This expansion of IK into other fields is to be commended; however, many of these courses were electives at the undergraduate level. There was an obvious lack of Indigenous courses or courses with some Aboriginal content across all programs. For example, Aboriginal Teacher Education has been a program of study since the 1970s but only one of the three sites participating in this study had a mandatory course on Aboriginal education

for all education students. The need for all students to come away from their university experience with some understanding of Indigenous knowledges and Aboriginal peoples was clear in this administrator's observations:

I think, similarly, there are areas that may have a better understanding of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge than others. . . We would like our students at the end of their second and fourth years or how many years they will be with us, to have a broad appreciation of Indigenous knowledge, or Indigenous ways of knowing. (Administrator-13, Northern-U)

For many Aboriginal students, Indigenous knowledge was not part of their academic program because some professors resisted incorporating a wholistic worldview within their classrooms. As a student explained,

In my experience, the profs don't accept looking wholistically at things -- they are so constrained by their disciplines that they don't want to see out of the box. (Student, Northern-U)

Both of the students quoted below experienced little to no IK within their academic programs. One of the students explained how she had found some IK within the Faculty of Arts courses but none within the sciences:

I'd say I don't see it present in my program. The only time I have seen it present is in some of my Arts elective programs, like anthropology, but in the science program -- none. I don't think not even once. (Student, Central-U)

In my particular program, I found it really difficult because where I really got stuck in my own writing was bridging the divide between an Aboriginal world view and what is required in an academic setting or in an institution. (Student, Northern-U)

The absence of IK across the curriculum was an important issue discussed by participants. There are inherent assumptions in a discipline of a knowledge base and language that is unique to that discipline (Bourdieu et al., 1994). This academic capital in a

discipline does not necessarily value IK and therefore, creates tensions for professors who are engrained in the discourse of their discipline.

Another issue related to IK in the classroom was the resistance some Aboriginal students encountered from professors when they included Indigenous knowledges in their classroom discussions or course work. For example, a faculty participant said that some Aboriginal students in a fine arts program encountered challenges when they went beyond commonly accepted Aboriginal art forms (e.g., carving to multi-media). Students shared examples of being penalized or challenged when they cited Elders and oral tradition as sources in their bibliographies. Oral tradition as a source was resisted by non-Aboriginal faculty because it was not provable or measurable based on standard research practices of the university. Student experiences were corroborated by Aboriginal faculty participants who negotiated with non-Aboriginal faculty, particularly those in non-Aboriginal programs, about how Indigenous knowledges can be incorporated as primary sources in research papers.

Sometimes there is a lot of ignorance still. . . When a student wrote a paper citing their Elders, [the instructor] gave that student a really low mark because it wasn't published material. One of the things that is difficult for Indigenous students is that different concept of what is knowledge and the Western knowledge concept that has to be written. So those are some of the aspects of, some of the things that [our program] tries to enlighten the other programs about: how to look at Indigenous knowledge and appreciate it, and name it properly. It's an uphill battle and it will continue to be, because those people come with their mindsets and it is pretty darn strong, so it is an ongoing process. (Faculty-13, Northern-U)

The ignorance some colleagues demonstrated to IK illustrates the politics of educating others about Aboriginal knowledges; this responsibility often fell to those who were First Nations themselves or who were in Aboriginal-specific programs.

An administrator acknowledged that although his institution was respectful of First Nations people, many faculty members needed to make "a paradigm shift to understand how

they can incorporate knowledge into their practices, whether it be teaching practices, research practices, or in their day to day interactions with First Nations students” (Staff-18, Northern-U). Curriculum changes or even the structure of the classroom does not change the university for Aboriginal students. Professors need to infuse these changes in their pedagogical practice. Indigenous knowledge may be “integrate[d] into core courses, and so we’ve done that on all the 1<sup>st</sup> year courses, and some of the upper level courses, so that has actually been quite an accomplishment. It’s up to the profs though to use that material. . . So some profs don’t use the material at all, but some use it” (Faculty-1, Southern-U). Some participants thought that some faculty members and staff of the university hesitated incorporating IK into their practice because they

don’t know how to connect with Indigenous students, and they don’t know how to respond to the Indigenous perspective that is put forth in the work of Indigenous students, and so, in terms of Indigenous knowledge in the institution, you can’t effectively assess its expression if you don’t understand it, right? (Administrator-13, Northern-U)

The willingness to include Indigenous knowledges into all programs occurred on a continuum from “being tolerated and, in other degrees, it is being encouraged” (Administrator-8, Southern-U).

Graveline (2001) encountered challenges when she attempted to incorporate Indigenous cultural practices in her classroom. For example, she had to deal with fire regulations and campus security to hold a smudge. In this study, a participant shared a similar experience in his attempt to include a talking circle in his classroom. The challenges encountered were not resistance from fellow faculty members or students, but the actual structure of the course time table. He explained that in a typical course



you have from 6:30 'til 9 o'clock in an evening, say, to have [the talking circle] unfold, and, often times, you have to fit much more into a class than just that. So it makes it very contrived, really in a lot of ways, and, of course, that's contrary to the philosophy and spirit of the circle as well. So there are a lot of challenges to being able to incorporate that learning, that knowledge. (Staff-13, Northern-U)

If indeed an institutional goal is that students leave their university experience with a broader appreciation of Indigenous knowledges then curriculum reforms need to be part of institutional plans. The above quotation also highlights the issue of time. If we are to incorporate IK in the classroom and build relationships, more time is needed than the typically classroom time schedule or even the structure of a semester allows. This responsibility to reform curriculum will be discussed further in Chapter 6. For the most part, participants acknowledged that IK was not across the curriculum of the university and that more curriculum changes were needed for more meaningful inclusion. These experiences relate to the next section, "seen face of IK."

### **Seen face of IK**

Linda Smith (1999) uses the term *seen face* to emphasize researcher involvement within Aboriginal communities. For the purposes of this work, I am using the term to refer to universities having Aboriginal faculty, staff, and students present on campus. An Aboriginal presence or seen face also occurred within the curriculum, cultural programming, and physical spaces of the institution.

Twenty-two participants observed that Indigenous knowledge exists in the academy through the presence of Indigenous faculty, staff, administrators, Elders, and students. Aboriginal faculty members located in disciplines outside of the traditional First Nations studies and Aboriginal Teacher Education programs also contributed understandings of IK to the broader campus community. Faculty and student research was recognized as another

form of inclusion. Elders were seen as important contributors of Indigenous knowledges to the campus through their mentoring of students, sitting on committees, cultural advising, or teaching roles.

Elders play an important role in what happens at the [FNC] for example smudging and talking circles. For some students may never [have] had that before and are eager to learn. It's good to have the culture present. (Staff-22, Northern-U)

Now especially, Elders can share that they didn't have that in school -- quick in and out to work was how it was when I went. The boys were taught to be carpenters, there were no machinists at that time, and girls were taught to be nursing aides. But now everything is available through the north. (Elders-3&4, Northern-U)

Our Elder, he comes in and offers prayers at the [FNC], he teaches us about good work from the [tribal name] perspective, he evokes the history and the sense of place and he speaks [Aboriginal language]...and he tells about how these words in the language work to make people, to knit people together -- the wholism. (Faculty-3, Southern-U)

Indigenous knowledges existed in the university based on what Aboriginal Elders, faculty, staff, and students chose to share within the academy.

Students observed that there was an absence of IK in the demographics of the classroom in that their peers or professors were non-Aboriginals. A student enrolled in a non-Aboriginal program revealed,

I don't know of any other First Nations in my program, or at least within my year or the year behind me, 'cause we have lots of the same classes, and it's mostly White people. And [Indigenous knowledge] is not really integrated into it, really. (Student, Central-U)

Advancing the place of Indigenous knowledge within the curriculum and classroom requires more than simply adding Indigenous authors to the curriculum. This did little to challenge the status quo if the nature of instructor pedagogy and classroom engagement remains unchanged.

Indigenous knowledges within the university was not “a really coherent, organized kind of presence that [was] omni-present” (Administrator-5, Southern-U). This administrator continued to describe Indigenous knowledge within his campus as being “a little scattered. It is a little episodic,” because he was not “constantly running into people [who reminded] him that there was an Aboriginal population in [the] student group. It [was not] always evident” (Administrator-5, Southern-U). This quotation relates to students’ experiences in classrooms that Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff were not a “visible” presence on many campuses.

In this particular study, each site varied in terms of the presence of Aboriginal in the campus community (e.g., at Northern-U approximately 10% of their student population was Aboriginal, where Central-U and Southern-U had less than 5%; in terms of Aboriginal faculty and staff, Northern-U and Central-U had less than 5% and Southern-U had 5-10% faculty and staff who were Aboriginal). I am urged at this point to reiterate the limitations of “seeing” Aboriginal peoples as a group with homogenous physical characteristics. Aboriginal people are not unified by one “look,” consequently, identifying who is Aboriginal or not based on physical features is difficult. However, the administrator from Southern-U was not simply referring to the physical presence of Aboriginal peoples but a lack of presence of an Aboriginal community on campus, aside from the on campus Aboriginal student services. For example, he did not see on a regular basis, advertisements for Aboriginal on campus community events or gatherings. This presence, in some instances, was related to having the right social and economic capital to facilitate relationships across the university structure. The politics of the location of Aboriginal knowledges in certain spaces within a university (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, and Aboriginal student services) relates to the next section, “politics of negotiating space.”

## Politics of Negotiating Space

The previous discussion on the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in the university brought to light that negotiating spaces for IK occurred along a continuum from encouragement to toleration to resistance. Faculty members who continue to believe that “Indigenous peoples are the natural subjects of their academic research done within the Western modern view” (Administrator-8, Southern-U) resisted the inclusion of IK in their teaching or research. However, acceptance was evident from non-Aboriginal scholars and Aboriginal research institutes who were “in the position of saying here is how we [as Indigenous peoples and allies] want to do things and role modeling how IK is within the academy and research” (Administrator-8, Southern-U). The politics of negotiating place was articulated by another participant who revealed that

one of the challenges that Indigenous peoples face at this university is sharing that information. Not only with the university in a larger context but also with other Indigenous peoples, there is this sort of negotiation of space for different value systems [because of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples within the university]. . . And Indigenous knowledge at the university, I think it depends if you are inside looking out or outside looking in. I think you have to take it on a case-by-case scenario when you are talking about Indigenous knowledge and in what context, and with who. And who is sharing in that dialogue. (Staff-8, Southern-U)

Relationships and context influences how sharing knowledges occurs with non-Aboriginal and other Aboriginal peoples on campus. Indigenous knowledges take on multiple representations. The Aboriginal community within the academy practices Indigenous knowledges in multiple ways contrary to PAU attempts to limit IK. The practice of IK in the academy will be further elaborated on in Chapter 7. Some participants linked Indigenous knowledges to their research, teaching, and practice; others embodied Indigenous knowledges just by being an Aboriginal person in the university. Participants through their

definitions of IK also discussed the politics of IK. For example, who has legitimacy to represent IK in the university?

### **Who gets to share IK?**

The issue of authority to speak for IK presented in the literature review (Dei, 2000; Marker, 2003; Menzies, 2001; Mihesuah, 2004) is extended by participants who reflected on the issue of IK in the university. The teaching of Indigenous knowledges within the university brought to light several tensions around who was responsible for teaching Indigenous knowledges? For example, an administrator asked the following questions:

What does it do to the roles in our communities when universities become responsible for teaching Indigenous knowledge, for working with students to find ways to validate Indigenous knowledge, all of those things? And how does that change when it's recreated and represented in the form of an academic paper? Are we in fact undermining the vitality of knowledge creation of communities when we bring it to the university, I think that is a huge question? (Administrator-6, Southern-U)

An important message within the above quotation is that the practice of Indigenous knowledges in the academy should not undermine community agency over their knowledges and traditions. This builds upon the notions of private and public IK and acknowledges that some forms of Indigenous knowledges should not be "taught" within the walls of the academy (Marker, 2003). Public and private IK is important for Indigenous peoples to maintain their Indigenous capital and cultural integrity.

Approximately eight participants perceived Indigenous knowledges in the academy evolving differently from Indigenous knowledges in the community. A participant who questioned the location of Indigenous knowledges in the university stated,

What does it take away from the power of people in communities to express themselves and express their understandings of the world and their place in the world, and their relationships in the world, when we, the university, talk about [Indigenous knowledge] in the way we do?  
(Administrator-6, Southern-U)

The articulation of IK in academic writing and textbooks does empower IK but at the same time, like a photograph, such encapsulating can make IK seem static and unchanging. This academic IK can become tokenized and misrepresentative of the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, a critical examination needs to be part of the inclusion of such materials in university courses.

The construction of IK by the academy narrows how the practice of IK is valued on and off campus. For example, a participant who was actively engaged in the cultural practices of her community experienced resistance from some of her Aboriginal peers because they perceived her as unengaged with on campus cultural activities. In this case, the academy had set expectations of what it means to be a cultural person; however, these expectations excluded many other forms of IK, particularly in the community.

### **Academic capital of IK<sup>23</sup>**

Indigenous knowledges currently carry certain academic capital value within universities (Mihesuah, 1998). The current capital of academic IK further opens up the university by creating multiple spaces and representations of IK. The development of Aboriginal academic programs, faculty positions, targeted research grants, and student services programs indicate the value of IK in the academy. The financial capital tied to IK supports and in some ways hinders the concientization of the university community to

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<sup>23</sup> The discussion of the current academic capital of IK was predominately present in the discussions of participants from Southern-U. However, based on my discussions and observations at the other two sites, I feel that it was an issue at all three sites.

Indigenous issues. The current intellectual capital of IK is contentious because “many of the people who talk about [Indigenous knowledge] really alienate it from its lived context” (Administrator-6, Southern-U). This alienation becomes more problematic as non-Indigenous scholars take up positions in Indigenous scholarship without having the critical consciousness to be authentic allies. Another faculty member cautioned that when Indigenous knowledge “gets analyzed and sort of put into boxes, it’s hard to see sometimes the difference or what makes it so important. And so that’s you know the classic dichotomizing models which sometimes simplify things too much” (Faculty-4, Southern-U).

Another issue related to capital relates to what a participant described as “the indigenous knowledge of the university” (Administrator-5, Southern-U). This statement resonates with Bourdieu’s suggestion that universities have their own way of knowing and understanding the world (Bourdieu et al., 1994). As a result, the “intersections of these two forms of knowledge” need to be explored (Administrator-5, Southern-U). However, the statement “the indigenous knowledge of the university,” also provides an example of how the academy takes up the language of IK but does not acknowledge the inherent power differentials within the academy. In some regards, one can say that this is an example of symbolic violence for naming the canon knowledge of the university as *Indigenous*, minimizes the actual location of power within the academy and the historical colonial subjugation of Indigenous epistemology, ontologies, and axiologies (Bourdieu, 1982, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The true challenges of transforming higher education are addressing these intersections that are located in a history of colonial subjugation and resistance to the presence of “other” (Apple, 1995, 2000; Battiste, 2000b; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, 1990). The next section discusses how sharing Indigenous knowledges within the university often occurs through the filter of the PAu.

### **PAu: IK through Western lens**

The PAu influences what forms of Indigenous knowledges were present (or absent) within the university. Some participants sensed that Indigenous knowledge was rationalized through a Western lens resulting in contradictions in how IK was represented in the university. For example, one staff person said that although Indigenous knowledge was present through “some excellent resource people and there are a few programs that incorporate components into their curriculum,” the same individual also stated that “there [was] no system-wide, integrated, inclusive, comprehensive, universal approach, and understanding” (Staff-13, Central-U). To present Indigenous knowledges beyond these boundaries created tension and resistance for Aboriginal faculty balancing between their own ontologies and justifying their positions in reference to the Western framework. An administrator reflected that he was

trapped in an environment where it is hard not to present an Indigenous knowledge based on our ontology, but there is always a pressure either to justify it or describe it with reference to Western-modern terms or show.  
(Administrator-8, Southern-U)

This filtered representation of IK influenced the broader university campus acceptance and understanding of IK. As a student depicted, “there are certain things like the president will acknowledge that we are on traditional territory, there [are] certain protocols that they do take, but the student body, [most of whom] are non-Aboriginal, there are a lot of myths and stereotypes” (Student, Northern-U). These representations assisted the PAu to maintain control over where and how IK was present. The “incomplete view” of IK within the university did not

take into account all the interconnectedness or interconnected nature of the world. So everything appears in boxes... So in that way, they're very controlling, and because the institution is set up in that very particular regard, it's still very, very colonial, because it's trying to shape and control the way you think. (Student, Southern-U)



Other participants argued interconnections need to be made between IK and the academy to decolonize current hegemonic power within the university.

Participants shared many examples of tokenism, pan-Indianism, and lack of respect for Indigenous knowledges. The inclusion of Aboriginal cultural protocols in a university ceremony as an afterthought or not following protocols in a consistent and meaningful way were two examples of tokenism. For example, none of the three sites had specific policies related to smudging, a cultural ceremony of cleansing using sweet grass or sage for some Aboriginal groups. Although some participants cautioned that assuming all Aboriginal peoples practice smudging buys into PAU attempts to see all Aboriginal peoples as homogenous (i.e., pan-Indianism), most agreed that cultural practices and protocols needed to be a more integral part of the institutional fabric.

If designed in consultation with the appropriate Aboriginal stakeholders on campus (e.g., Elders, Aboriginal community, faculty, staff, and FNCs), policies related to cultural protocol and practices can facilitate structural changes that support Aboriginal education. Such policies are important for several reasons. First, the policy provides guidelines and boundaries around cultural ceremonies and protocols that honor the principle of reciprocity and respect. Second, policies can identify the stakeholders who need to be involved in the ceremony or protocol and clearly articulate their responsibilities. The third important role policies play is preventing the loss of institutional memory. For example, smudging on campus is typically taken on by a particular Aboriginal faculty or staff member who has the appropriate Indigenous cultural capital to conduct a smudge. This individual also has developed social capital to mitigate any potential problems with other university departments, such as campus security, facilities management, and the fire department. The challenge is when this particular Aboriginal person or one of their contacts leaves the institution and the relationship building (i.e., social capital) needs to be reacquired. Policies,

such as a smudging policy, would help establish the practice as a norm rather than an exception. However, the data also showed the politics of conducting an Aboriginal ceremony in the university highlighted the covert racism experienced by those wishing to smudge within their FNCs or classrooms. An Elder from Northern-U explained,

I don't think that there is [a policy]. I know that some places do that, but like you say, they have to fight for it. The thing is that a lot of people are saying that they are allergic to the sweet grass or say that they are allergic to...the fungus or whatever we are using to smudge at the time. I know [federal prisons] were bringing smudges into the institution, they had [the smudge materials] all tested to see if there was anything hallucinogenic or that they could create allergies and there was nothing. So how come is it in the [prisons]...that the inmates are allowed to smudge [but not in the university]? (Elder-2, Northern-U)

The contradiction for this Elder was that a highly regulated institution like a prison valued the presence of smudging for inmates yet an educational institution failed to recognize the wholistic benefits for Aboriginal students. There are also issues of agency in the above example which will be explored further in the next section.

### **Issues of agency**

The institutions often absolved their own responsibility to Indigenous knowledges by relying on Aboriginal people on campus to enact IK, rather than implementing strategic campus-wide plans. Institutional missions and goals regarding Indigenous education were present at all three sites. However, administrators acknowledge being in a transitional phase in relation to implementing their strategic wide plans. This transitional phase or slow progress to change was viewed by some participants as a hesitance or resistance to change. For example, one administrator pointed out the contradiction of viewing some changes as progress. He saw the acknowledgement of the traditional territory as a

step upward, but then [the institution] goes back to doing things the same way [they've] always done them. So that was just sort of like a formality to me. [Institutions] continue to do things in a European-based system. What I read was "thanks for having us on the land, but we're going to do it the way we want to do it anyway." To me that's not real progression. (Administrator-5, Central-U)

Another participant recognized that a lost opportunity to honor Indigenous knowledge set a precedent for how the institution acts and as a result, to make any institutional changes would take a much longer time. A few other participants shared examples of instances when they had to justify or defend including Indigenous knowledges in their classroom or research. Such experiences accumulate and provide strong evidence of resistance, biases, racisms, and "White" guilt reactions to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in their institutions.

The institution, or this organization, wants to create a space for safe Indigenized presence, and by "safe," I mean one that doesn't fundamentally question or challenge the structure of power. They're happy to have drumming at opening ceremonies, but to have the questioning or criticism that comes along with that fact that where this institution exists. . . So you have an institutional setting, . . . at least on paper, and it creates kind of enough attention to the push, so that even though they may want to try and control that, by opening the door, they can't necessarily control that. So there's a creative tension, and both tensions [are] in that space. I think there's also, at the practicing level, there are problems. (Faculty-4, Southern-U)

An administrator observed Aboriginal student engagement (e.g., student governance, hiring committees) had a positive impact on the broader university community. He also perceived Aboriginal students tended to "cocoon" with each other within the safety of the First Nations Centres:

It's good we have an Indigenous group and identity where those students can get a sense of belonging but it would be a tragedy if they were isolated and there is a tendency for that...In my observation of these people, not individuals, but a wider representation is a new phenomenon that I see. I think there is a tendency for those people to cocoon, almost like international students, stick to themselves. Stay where you are comfortable, and there is some awkwardness in trying to bring [them] out and that is a shame and it is really encouraging for me to see that, even I can see that there are bridges here. (Administrator-9, Central-U)

This statement is intriguing for several reasons. This administrator viewed creating community with peers inside the academy but outside the mainstream as both a helpful and a hindering factor for Aboriginal students. Although he saw that such “cocooning” provided students with safety within their cultural group; this cocooning also did little to educate the broader university community. In a longitudinal study comparing international and domestic student experiences in Canadian universities, Pidgeon and Andres (2005; 2006) also found that international students cocooned in their own cultural groups for cultural safety where they shared cultural frames of references (e.g., slang, language, and cultural practices). The onus of responsibility for creating bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal university community seems to fall on the Aboriginal students, who, even while negotiating their own way through an already challenging system, are expected to educate others. Yet, this particular administrator seemed unaware that cocooning was an act of self-protection and a way for students to successfully negotiate a system that did not value what these Aboriginal students were bringing to the institution.

Aboriginal students often experience being “singled-out” to represent the Aboriginal perspective or speak for all Aboriginal peoples (TeHennepe, 1993). Aboriginal students, faculty and staff participants experienced “signaling out” in a variety of ways over 10 years after TeHennepe’s original work.

As a student, as an Aboriginal student being a minority in the classroom- I'm always [being] looked at. I know other students [are] being looked at as having this pan-Indian knowledge, like we are the only ones that know anything and we are the ones that have to stand up for everything. And the professors sort of leave it up to us and don't engage in, you know, it is easy for them to hand it over to us -- but it also makes us a target within institutions, like separate classrooms. (Student, Northern-U)

The student-professor and student-student relationship could be negatively influenced by imposing the role of "educator" onto Aboriginal students. As a student elaborated, standing up for the Aboriginal position as a minority in the classroom had consequences beyond the classroom. Such acts may affect how the student is judged by the faculty and consequently, supported for scholarships and reference letters:

Intellectually, in the courses I have taken a lot of times, if you are the only Aboriginal person in the class you become the educator. And that really puts us in a precarious position because we not only end up educating others] but we also end up defending [ourselves]. And, then, we end up kind of being scape-goated in the class. And then if the professor, [if] there is a statement made by the professor and as an Aboriginal person we don't feel that information is being put out properly and then we challenge the opinion or statement, then we are blacklisted sometimes and that is not very good because the university promotes freedom of speech but we are put down, and we are kind of shut out. (Student, Northern-U)

Some Aboriginal faculty members had experiences of being educators to their peers, similar to the experiences of some Aboriginal student participants:

I find it very exciting when faculty come to me and say, "You know I would like to include Indigenous authors or Aboriginal authors in my course." So I see it at a curriculum level, starting to make that change, we are starting to be more inclusive, more aware. People are thinking about it. (Faculty-1, Southern-U)

Aboriginal faculty balanced sharing their knowledge as experts in their area and creating an environment where their peers took responsibility for their own education. Sharing of knowledge should not be discouraged. In fact, this particular faculty viewed her peers' willingness to incorporate Indigenous authors in their courses positively. However,

the lack of initiative on the part of non-Aboriginal faculty is problematic because it puts additional work on the Aboriginal faculty member to research and locate sources, work that the non-Aboriginal faculty person could do themselves.

The presence of Aboriginal staff also has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the Aboriginal staff person can broaden awareness and understanding of Aboriginal student issues. This is assuming of course that these staff peoples are willing to and feel safe enough to share their experiences and knowledge. Their presence, however, can result in other staff people feeling absolved of their responsibility to be more aware of Aboriginal issues and how these issues relate to their respective positions. Cross-institutional awareness of Aboriginal understandings does not occur solely by the presence of Aboriginal peoples. The following quotation speaks to the tensions that a staff grappled with in balancing these contradictions:

We have at least someone in our office who can remind us. On the other hand, I always wonder if we are just leaving all things to [them] by saying, that every publication we put out, we assume [they] are looking at it from the Aboriginal perspective --does it [meet] the Aboriginal needs? So it takes the pressure off us, so we don't have to think about that because there is someone else to think about it. (Administrator-10, Central-U)

An administrator participant questioned how institutional policies get implemented in ways that were not dependent solely on the good graces of those committed to the vision but become part of the institutional fabric and practice:

Right within our mission and mandate—the notion that we are here to serve Aboriginal peoples -- that is one of the reasons that we exist. Again, having it built into one of our six core academic themes of the institution. . . I'm trying to say that this is part of our fabric in a conscious way. It is not part of our fabric in let's hang it on the wall and look at it thing. It has to permeate through everything -- the physical space, interactions, and the special supports are very critical right now. I'm hoping that in 20 years, we don't need these special supports. We will have created an environment that Indigenous students are just, you know, very integrated totally into everything that is done. I think we are in a transitional phase right now. (Administrator-13, Northern-U)

The above quotation also highlights for me the vision this particular participant had of his institution. On one level he is talking about the institution becoming a transcultured institution that values and respects IK by integrating IK into the fabric of the institution. Yet, there is also a hint of assimilation in the undertones of his language. The danger is if the institution fails to move beyond the transitional phase to one of permanence in terms of IK, Aboriginal students will simply asked to conform to a structure that tokenizes IK.

The presence of Aboriginal faculty, staff, or students engages the academy (willingly or not) with Indigenous knowledges and hopefully influencing a transformation of what is valued within the ivory tower (Barnhardt, 2002). However, simply maintaining the space gained as a result of these transformations can be a challenge. The loss of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and Elders often puts the initiatives or programs which they spearheaded in jeopardy due to a lack of institutional commitment. In such cases, it becomes clear that these programs were seen as individual projects and not as part of the larger department or institution. The inclusion of Elders in the institution relates to the larger issue of Aboriginal community agency within universities.

Community agency within the universities varied greatly across the three sites. For example, some institutions had memorandums of understanding with local Aboriginal nations directing cultural protocol and educational needs of the community. Despite such agreements, there was little evidence of ongoing community involvement on campus. Some participants related the current absences of community members resulted from a history of tokenism. For example, when Elders were only called up to campus for token representation at a ceremony, it fostered little faith within Aboriginal communities of their rightful place in the institution. Participants provided examples of tokenism such as universities only engaging with communities in particular areas or having Aboriginal faculty or staff sit on committees with no voice. One participant questioned: "They're fine with bringing in all the

token faculty in each department, but, gee, would they ever put us in a position of authority? And how much authority would we really have? And how much influence could we actually have in the decision making, y'know?" (Staff-6, Southern-U). Another example described how the initial support for involving Elders in the university waned when it came to establishing a policy and funding for Elders' programs.

The discussion of community agency and IK in the academy raises important questions that will be revisited in Chapter 6 through the discussion of institutional responsibility and accountability to IK: Were representatives from the universities going out to the communities being present, having that *seen face* (L. T. Smith, 1999)? Was there evidence the institutions were engaged in meaningful, respectful community relationships (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991)? The final section of this chapter looks specifically at Aboriginal student services as sites of IK in universities in their role in (a) empowering cultural integrity and (b) being agents of social justice across the institution.

### **Aboriginal Student Services: Sites of IK within Institution**

This section focuses specifically on the role of Aboriginal student services or First Nations Centres (FNCs) as sites of institutional change and transformation in mainstream universities. By design, FNCs embody Indigenous knowledge within universities. They incorporate a wholistic approach to service provision, balancing students' intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs (Pidgeon, 2001, 2005). Due to their mandate, FNCs also tend to have the highest proportion of Aboriginal staff on campus. In most cases, Elders are also directly involved with the FNCs governance and service provision. Participants were asked to reflect on (a) the role of Aboriginal student services in facilitating success of



Aboriginal students and (b) broadening the understanding of Aboriginal issues across the campus.

### **Empowering cultural integrity**

Previous research on the role of Aboriginal student services in facilitating Aboriginal student success has indicated that First Nations Centres (FNCs) provide key supports by incorporating culturally relevant programs with academic, emotional, and social supports (Martin, 2001; Moore-Eyman, 1981; Pidgeon, 2001; Wright, 1985). FNCs provide a unique model of student services within universities because these wholistic service providers are grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and understanding.

FNCs empowered the cultural integrity of students in a variety of ways. As a focal gathering point for students, FNCs were described as a “home away from home” (Administrator-7, Southern-U). FNCs typically offer academic support and resources providing students with “an identifiable place where [they] could go to get action, where they can get answers to questions, where they can get plugged into resources that are available” (Faculty-1, Southern-U). Elders and Aboriginal staff at the FNCs created safe space for cultural ceremonies and traditions; therefore, the FNCs reflected aspects of some students’ home or community cultural practices. Elders, according to many students and other participants, provide support for the cultural and spiritual needs for students. As a student revealed,

I more or less see [Name of elder] as a role model for the spiritual side, of Indigenous First Nations knowledge, because he does the sweats [and] sweet grass ceremonies some of us go down to the friendship centre for.  
(Student, Northern-U)

Elders were also seen as important emotional supports for students. Peer tutoring and counseling programs at some sites also met the academic and emotional needs of students.

The notion of seen face also came up as an important component of the FNCs. “It is important that people see themselves in the administration and that on some levels they see themselves being successful in a particular faculty...and that is dealing with specific issues and negotiating with particular student services” (Administrator-1, Southern-U). Aboriginal staff, faculty, and Elders were seen as important role models of traditional leadership and successful presence of Indigeneity within the academy for students.

FNCs also bridged the classroom experiences of Aboriginal students by providing academic support programs within the centre. An Elder saw the FNCs “really moving from the student support role like whether it’s personal support of students, academic support in terms of getting through course work, to one which really brings and puts that academic experience into context” (Elder-1, Northern-U). Students spoke of the FNCs as key to their continued presence within the institution. FNCs facilitated the system for students by assisting them to negotiate the bureaucracy of the academy.

The FNCs bridged relationships between various groups on campus such as non-Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff with Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff. FNCs also helped bridge relationships between the intergenerational and diverse Indigenous nations at the university. The FNCs were a gathering space for non-Aboriginal students as well. This safe space was facilitated by recognition of and space for Indigenous knowledges on campus. As an administrator clarified,

by having the Centre you are acknowledging that there is a different culture on campus. You are respecting that campus by allowing a culture to have a home. And based on that home, being within the university, the university can learn from it. I see the [FNCs] not just for Aboriginal people but a Centre for the university that everyone can make use of and learn from being there. (Administrator-14, Northern-U)

Elders and other participants saw the FNCs also having an important role with the broader Aboriginal community:

I'm also part of the peer-support network which incorporates a bicultural model of Western counseling and, so far, we have tried to incorporate IK and wholistic manner in looking at things, because our target population is a bicultural one, it isn't just for Aboriginal students, although the [FNCs] does fund a lot of the program. It has Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and it's definitely...inclusive. We try to make inclusive groups, so we are trying to break down barriers within this institution and the student population. (Student, Northern-U)

FNCs created awareness of the possibilities within the university for local Aboriginal youth.

FNCs also role modeled positive examples of engaging within the institution while at the same time maintaining cultural integrity.

Although FNCs provide many helpful services and supports, there was also evidence from the data of difficulties within the FNCs. The first obvious challenge was the requirement of balancing the multiple demands of wholistic service model with limited budgets and, more importantly, scarce staff resources. As an administrator noted, "there are a lot of soft dollars" (Administrator-8, Southern-U). Soft budget lines indicate the level of commitment the upper administration have for Aboriginal student services although the majority of FNCs services in British Columbia have been in operation since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

So the biggest battles were around let's try to provide support services for students coming in. It was not about having a group of Aboriginal students that were inferior. What we really have is lots of Aboriginal students who were coming to a completely new environment. We would have students that had zero family history in the K to 12 system, let alone the post-secondary and all the stuff that comes with that. That isn't about skill development. It is not about whether you can write an essay. It is about whether you know what is going on here. Do you understand what the system is? Do you understand what happens if you fail a mid-term? All of that kind of stuff. So we tried to make sure we put in place some of those kinds of supports for students. We have had really sort of spotty luck with that, given the resources that are required. (Administrator-12, Central-U)

The challenge of course is that university particularly, like, particularly in student services... So it's meant that it's put huge pressure on these centers, and, I know, even on, like, [FNC], from talking to our colleagues there, just to keep your head above water, never mind to be able to do the kind of preventative and support stuff that you know could work and would be really helpful, but you just don't have the time to do. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

The lack of consistency in staffing (e.g., retention of Aboriginal staff) limited the stability of programming and service provision.

Another challenge FNCs encountered was providing their wholistic model to a heterogeneous student group; as a result, FNCs could not assume homogeneity or impose a unified agenda, unlike the pedagogic actions of universities where by they impose homogenous assumptions of Indigenesness in order to maintain their pedagogic authority. Although participants recognized the FNCs provided key services and were critical to Aboriginal student success; some participants also deemed FNCs were not meeting the needs of all Aboriginal students on campus. For example, a staff participant indicated that “only 25% of Aboriginal students use the [FNCs]” (Staff-22, Northern-U). A faculty member from Central-U had made similar observations and acknowledged,

I think [FNCs] actually had a really important role. With students especially studying in the Indigenous studies kind of programs, and the more academic programs. However I see our students [in other programs] not really linking into that, and I'm not sure exactly why that is. I've just noticed that as an observation. I have four or five students from different areas [and diverse Aboriginal nations], in my classes right now, and they don't link into that at all. I'm not sure why that is. (Faculty, Central-U)

As students and Elders saw it, FNCs could be seen as isolating and unwelcoming when someone did not provide a friendly invitation when new comers first walked through the centres' doors. An Elder provided a comparison of his first impressions of the FNCs and how the FNCs through leadership changed over time to be more inclusive space.

When I first came here, the [FNCs] was not friendly at all. It was just basically one First Nation guy -- you didn't feel very welcome if you were Métis or anyone else. Ever since [there is a new director] ...you really see, the Elders and more of a community and its opening up more. More and more non-Aboriginal people are coming in there. You will see a lot of people from different races being there and being comfortable there and that is a big change. And that is a really big positive. (Elder-1, Northern-U)

However, “cocooning” in the FNCs was perceived by some participants as hindering the concientization of the broader university community, as another administrator affirmed,

[FNCs] provide a lot of good services, they provide a home and they do a lot of good things -- but the other thing about that is it allows the rest of the community not to have to deal with the “Indians” because they were over there doing their own thing. And as long as they stay there, everyone is happy. (Administrator-11, Central-U)

In other words, when Aboriginal peoples keep to the designated space of the FNCs one possible consequence is that the rest of the university can continue to ignore the Aboriginal population on campus. Although cocooning may support the cultural integrity of Aboriginal peoples, it also plays into the continued PAu domination over how IK is present, perceived, and understood across the university.

The next section further explores the important roles the FNCs and its staff have across the institutions.

### **Agents of social justice across institutions**

A key responsibility of the FNCs within the institution was bridging relationships across the institution: “An important role for Aboriginal student services is to bring the university’s attention to the needs of Aboriginal students and help students find their way through the organization” (Administrator-3, Southern-U). This included increasing awareness and understanding of Aboriginal issues with non-Aboriginal faculty, staff, and administration. The involvement of FNCs across the institution occurred at the governance,

administration, and faculty level. This relationship building also included facilitating discussions and initiatives with other student service providers (e.g., counseling, housing) regarding Aboriginal student needs. Such involvement created space for dialogue across the institution and opportunities for reciprocal learning and understanding.

The location of the FNCs in the organizational chart of a university varied. In addition, Aboriginal student services staff resided outside the FNCs. For example, at the faculty level, Aboriginal academic advisors claimed space within the institutions bridging to the FNCs and fostering a sense of community and belonging for students. One administrator explained that the Aboriginal advisors related to the broader university the experiences of their students so that administration could act upon their recommendations.

I think within a faculty having someone that is in your home, in your faculty, to tell you what services are available to you, to reassure you that the experiences you are having are the same or they are not the same and so maybe we have to do something about that. (Administrator4, Southern-U)

In two of three sites of this study, some of the FNCs staff and administration held faculty or sessional positions within the university. FNCs also facilitated Aboriginal faculty's establishing community with their students outside of the classroom setting. Aboriginal faculty played an important role in bringing the academic and student service realms together through the FNCs.

Despite the positive relationship building FNCs did across the campuses, many spaces in the university were unaware of the FNCs and its mandate. This lack of awareness stems from the challenge of sustaining a positive dialogue across the multiple spaces of an institution. Consequently, a lack of communication between administration, faculty, and staff hindered improving on campus relationships. The politics of territory also hindered networking with faculty and other student services. At the Southern University "a lack of

communication and not a lot of consultation” (Faculty-2, Southern-U) impeded the important work that needed to be done.

Although there was evidence that some of these territorial politics were a result of personality differences, the theme resonated strongly enough in the data to merit a discussion of the legacy such negative relationships can have within an institution. For example, a participant shared a common misconception that FNCs positioned themselves as “enterprises unto its self” (Administrator-5, Southern-U) or had to “be in control of everything Indigenous on campus” (Faculty-2, Southern-U) which limited what other student services practitioners could do within their own units outside of the FNCs. Participants recognized that a sustained dialogue needed to occur and that the FNCs were not solely responsible, as was acknowledged by this administrator who saw the need to “take responsibility to be part of some sustained dialogue-- that is way overdue I think” (Administrator-5, Southern-U).

The awareness of politics was not limited to administrators and staff. Students also believed that

maybe at university you’d be able to get over [fighting with each other] and it doesn’t seem like that at all. Like they’re spending more time bickering amongst each other than focusing on the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students. That’s what I’ve found. (Student , Southern-U)

Relationship building was hindered by unwillingness to share the field for the common purpose of supporting students’ wholistic needs, academically, physically, emotionally, and culturally.

Another question discussed by participants was how to be part of the fabric of an institution in an uneven playing field of power. The disconnectedness of the FNCs from the power of decision making at the administrative level highlights some of the politics within institutions:

We have recognized that notwithstanding all of the good will, there is still a bit of disconnectedness, especially at the level where big decisions at the university had been made and [at the level of] the feedback, and not only feedback but feed forward from the Aboriginal community on campus.  
(Administrator-7, Southern-U)

Recognizing the PAu within an institution, a student from Southern-U perceived the role of the FNCs across the institutions was “whatever [the institution] allows it to be.” This quote speaks to the lack of agency within a power structure that did not value the role of FNCs across the institution. So while FNCs are breaking traditional boundaries in terms of IK in the academy, the PAu through pedagogic action and symbolic violence continues to assert control over the presence and actions of the FNCs. For example, FNCs are expected to support Aboriginal students wholistically, while, at the same time, also to assist them in meeting university expectations of academic performance and graduation standards.

Therefore, the subtle message is that FNCs are somehow involved in conforming students to PAu notions of success. As this student observed,

the [FNC] is supposed to be a link for Aboriginal students to kind of come together. It's also supposed to grease the wheels so Aboriginal students to feel as part of the greater community. However, the people who have been running the [FNC] for the last little while, are appointed, in part with the university. So they're really kind of pushing the university line on the students, and being like “oh y'know, you've gotta fit in,” which is what they've been telling us for 500 years -- and we haven't been listening. And there's a reason why we haven't been listening. So it's a link that's not all that strong. I'm kind of looking at the Longhouse leadership going “Okay, y'know, what are you doing for us?” Well, we offer this and we offer that, but they're not offering a gateway to kind of get into the university, whether it be to participate in student government or to kind of get to know people. (Student, Southern-U)

This observation also alludes to the role the FNCs have in fostering relationships (i.e., social capital) and building gateways to the rest of the university.

FNCs attempt to bridge Aboriginal culture and academic regulations; however, such attempts pushed the PAu-imposed boundaries on the roles of the FNCs at some universities.



For example, FNCs were seen as a cultural broker to the academic side of the institutions (e.g., advocating for oral tradition and inclusion of Elders in the classroom). However, the actions of some non-Aboriginal faculty in penalizing the prolonged absence of Aboriginal students from class when there was a death in their community demonstrates how PAu was asserted to push back on the agency of the FNCs.

There was also a tension within some of the interviews around the role of Aboriginal staff and the FNCs in institutions. While some participants saw the FNCs as an important safe space for Aboriginal students, others cautioned that the FNCs could also potentially create spaces of isolation and marginalization. Some participants considered the FNCs were marginalized by their physical location on campus; for example, all three sites were located at the back of campus or in the basements of buildings. Others highlighted that having Aboriginal staff only deal with Aboriginal students did not help other student service staff members gain awareness of Aboriginal student needs and how to facilitate support. FNCs were sometimes token representations of Indigenous knowledge for the political purposes of the administration (e.g., a good show for government officials). Some participants perceived the administration and general university community were unaware of the positive impact of the FNCs across the institutions (e.g., non-Aboriginal student involvement within the FNCs). The lack of resources and “let’s do it gung-ho” (Elder-1, Northern-U) support of the university community hindered the positive impact FNCs could have within the institutions.

## Summary

Chapter 4 explored how Indigenous knowledges (IK) were defined and present within the academy. In articulating the ways Indigenous knowledges were defined, this section demonstrated congruence between Indigenous scholars' definitions of Indigenous knowledges and those of the participants. Both the academic literature and the participants iterated several cautions regarding the presence of IK within the academy. First, Indigenous knowledges within the academy were different from IK lived within Aboriginal communities. Secondly, the relevance of IK within the academy was articulated and problematized. The academy as a structure attempts to define IK through PAu. However, in opening the academic doors to include IK, Indigenous knowledges manifests themselves in ways that the institutions can not control through pedagogic authority (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Within the Western academy, "Indigenous knowledge can be presented as counter-hegemonic knowledges, however, it must be cautioned that counter-hegemonic discourses can also become hegemonic" (Dei, 2000, p. 123). This caution rang from several participants who questioned both the intellectual capital of Indigenous knowledges in the academy and who has the right to speak for Indigenous knowledges within this space. These cautions need to remain part of our consciousness as we continue to broaden how Indigenous knowledges are used in universities. Therefore, it is important to articulate how Indigenous knowledges currently exist within the academy through the wholistic framework presented in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

Participants identified Indigenous knowledges existing within the academy primarily through the physical presence of Aboriginal administrators, faculty, staff, students, and Elders. The intellectual realm engaged Indigenous knowledges through Aboriginal-specific academic programs (e.g., First Nations Studies, law, and education), Aboriginal-content

courses or the inclusion of Aboriginal authors. In terms of the physical realm, Indigenous knowledges were present through the architecture or art that represented Aboriginal cultures. Culturally and spiritually, the FNCs played an important role in providing culturally relevant programming and services to students. The direct involvement of Elders also supported Aboriginal students in a culturally appropriate way honoring the intergenerational nature of Indigenous knowledges.

In this chapter, the FNCs balanced providing services to Aboriginal students with limited resources and having the responsibility of educating non-Aboriginals across campus. These sometimes competing roles created political tensions for many participants inside and outside the FNCs as a result of some departments or individuals absolving themselves from being aware of Aboriginal issues. However, participants also presented evidence that these cross-institutional relationships provided opportunities for FNCs to be active agents of change within institutions by role modeling to others how to engage across institutional structures, policies, and procedures.

FNCs also play a key role in broadening understandings of Aboriginal issues across the institution from policy to practice; the challenge is differentiating between genuine respect and token acts. The institution influenced through PAu how Indigenous knowledges were discussed and created a censored notion of what Indigenous knowledges represent. Participants were clear that some aspects of Indigenous knowledges ought to remain private within the community or nation. The public face of IK in the academy is represented by the Aboriginal faculty, staff, administrators, students, and Elders on campus. Such individuals play a key role in how Indigenous knowledges are articulated, defended, and practiced within the academy. The next chapter articulates notions of success from a wholistic perspective.

## **Chapter 5**

### **SUCCESS AND CULTURAL INTEGRITY**

Chapter 5 expands the discussion of Indigenous knowledges in a university context by exploring the concept of success from the wholistic framework presented in Chapter 1. Current measures of success in university are determined by the pedagogic authority (PAu) which values certain forms of capital through pedagogic action (PA) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For example, a student's educational experiences are shaped by the accumulation of social networks, financial resources, and educational achievements (i.e., capital). These forms of capital help negotiate societal markers of success, such as improved socio-economic status (SES) and career advancement. The issue for Aboriginal students attending mainstream institutions is that these institutions do not value or respect Indigenous forms of habitus and capital (Harker, 1984; 1990). Consequently, the critical question is how does Indigenous capital become valued within a mainstream structure that continues to reinforce the PAu of mainstream society? This dissertation attempts to place Indigenous knowledges, habitus, and capital alongside the mainstream to understand how both forms of knowledge can flourish within the academy.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how participants defined Indigenous student success as a counter-hegemonic discourse within mainstream universities. All participants were asked to describe a successful Aboriginal student and an institution that is a successful place for Indigenous students. The nexus between student success and institutional success created spaces for different philosophies and epistemologies, allowing for the creation of multiple constructions of success within mainstream universities.

The first section of this chapter presents how participants defined a successful Aboriginal student. The similarities or differences between participants' definitions from the

university and local Aboriginal community understandings of success identified ways Indigenous capital was and was not valued. Five main themes emerged from the data in this discussion: (1) maintaining cultural integrity, (2) finding gifts, (3) wholistic balance, (4) reciprocity to community, and (5) “just like any other student.”

The success of Aboriginal students in mainstream institutions is inherently based on a reciprocal relationship with the success of institution; consequently, it was also important to define how universities are successful for First Nations students. The second section of this chapter presents what participants identified as markers for an institution that is successful for Aboriginal students. Moving away from the deficit-model, which tends to link failure with students’ lacking certain attributes, this section highlights how universities are facilitating or hindering Indigenous understandings of success. Components of the *Undergraduate Baccalaureate Graduates Surveys (UBGS)* were also used to contextualize how universities responded to Aboriginal students needs (e.g., service provision) and the experiences of students in university. Four themes discussed within this section are (1) seen face, (2) relevant programming and services, (3) respecting commitments to change, and (4) reciprocal relationships.

### **Defining Aboriginal Student Success**

Several diverse themes emerged from the data that extended the definition of success beyond measures of economic capital. Going beyond commonly held understandings of success to include an Indigenous perspective is important because, “when you draw a picture of a successful university graduate, it doesn’t include the furtherance of Indigenous knowledge or the acceptance into the structure of society” (Faculty-5, Central-U). As a result of the diversity of the discussions, success needs to be viewed in multiple ways. One

I would also like to request the assistance of a [institution] staff member who works with Aboriginal students to help in disseminating information about this project, particularly information about the Aboriginal student sharing circle.

If [name of institution] agrees to participate in this research project, please complete the attached consent form required for the UBC Ethics process and return it using the provided addressed return envelope. I will follow-up this letter via telephone in a few weeks.

I would be pleased to discuss with you the details of any aspect of this study, and upon completion of the study I will be providing you a copy of the findings. If you require more documentation or information about this project, please contact me via e-mail [pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca), or call 604-XXX-XXXX. I thank you for your interest in my study and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

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participant was of the opinion that a successful Aboriginal student needed to have more than just a focus on intellectual achievement:

A balance between mind, heart, and spirit and body. . . there is some sort of component in there that makes me think that for an Aboriginal student, they need to be able to reflect and think that it was a good experience. So what constitutes as a good experience, it has more dimensions to it than just an intellectual achievement. (Staff-10, Southern-U)

The challenge becomes balancing individual definitions of success with the university and local community's definitions of success. Most participants related universities' definitions of success to external measures and performance outcomes related to intellectual achievement. For example, GPA, courses completed, and graduation are measures used by universities to identify successful students. By mainstream standards, a successful Aboriginal student would be like any other student, by completing his or her course work with a high GPA and graduating from his or her program in a timely manner.

Some participants sensed the university's traditional measures of graduation and GPA were changing to incorporate other measures of success, particularly around students becoming global citizens. Yet, the notion of global citizen is strongly influenced by neo-liberal notions of global capital and not on the interconnected relationships of the Indigenous wholistic framework. Consequently, another way universities could define success is based on identifying and defining various competences within the Indigenous wholistic framework understanding of global citizenship. Defining student success based on the number of Aboriginal students who graduate places emphasis on academic success. This focus results in an imbalance within academic programs, with little attention given to the physical, emotional, and cultural realms. One administrator, even though he believed the university was changing its definition of success, observed that success was still "about how

well students do in coursework, the level of research, the type of being able to fit the mould of a successful academic person” (Staff-5, Southern-U).

Understanding how Indigenous forms of capital relate to Indigenous student success assists moving forward the discussion of institutional responsibility and accountability to Aboriginal higher education. Universities need to recognize that current benchmarks for progress through to a degree have limitations. This participant acknowledged the following with respect to admission requirements,

and also grading and graduation, there are certain established criteria, and the reason for that is the need to have some benchmarks for determining who is successful and who can move on. The downside is sometimes the criteria are so narrow in defining what success is, it prevents people from reaching their potential and demonstrating what may be success for them. Success is relative to one’s culture as well and may be defined quite differently by different societies. (Staff-12, Central-U)

The themes presented here highlight an expanded wholistic understanding of success for Indigenous students compared to common conceptions of success that focused on graduation and GPA. Again, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants expressed awareness of these differences. The themes also resonate with the recent report *Redefining how success is measured in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis learning* by the Canadian Council on Learning (2007). Based on extensive community consultation, this report presented three life-long learning models that were not only culturally relevant but also grounded in the IK of each group. These models also acknowledged that the models were works-in-progress and needed to be adapted and revised for any particular Aboriginal nation. The wholistic framework employed in this study is just another example to the growing literature broadening understandings of success based on Indigenous ways of knowing.



## **Maintaining cultural integrity**

The first characteristic of a successful Aboriginal student identified by over 31 participants was a student who maintained his or her “cultural integrity.” Tierney and Jun (2001) defined *cultural integrity* as having a sense of oneself and keeping hold of one’s Indigenous understandings. A faculty member from Northern-U clarified that this meant that “successful students are ones who go through that process and remain strong and confident in their cultural knowledge and are able to articulate it as well and finish and graduate” (Faculty-13, Northern-U). A Northern-U student noted that Aboriginal students who maintain their cultural integrity while pursuing studies in non-Aboriginal specific programs also need to be commended. She declared that a successful Aboriginal student was

someone who is confident in articulating who they are, their reality, their view and perspective within all these different disciplines. There are a lot of students who pick up different disciplines and that is great -- I mean trained sociologists, trained psychologists, trained whatever -- I don’t think they lose focus on. It’s...so much been about fitting into the box I don’t see much complemented by the outside of the box. (Student, Northern-U)

From other participants of this study, especially the students, cultural integrity meant “surviving intact as a human being” (Faculty-9, Central-U). Though it may seem a simple generalization, “surviving intact” as a description of Aboriginal experience in university arises from the colonial history of education and the legacy of harm education has had on Aboriginal peoples (Battiste et al., 2002). Consequently, surviving the university system has a lot of significance to Aboriginal peoples.

Participants often linked cultural integrity or “surviving intact” to the wholistic teachings of the medicine wheel. A successful Indigenous student not only excelled in the intellectual realm but also in the physical, spiritual, and emotional realms. Success was

measured by “how one acts as human beings” (Student, Northern-U). “Balancing between two worlds” was also a common phrase participants used to define Aboriginal student success (Faculty-2, Southern-U).

Honouring one’s self as Indigenous and gaining life skills extend current notions of capital. Aboriginal communities value education but also want their students to maintain their Native identity. However, the politics within some contexts proved to be a challenge for some students. For example, “a double standard” that exists in some communities encourages youth to get their post-secondary education; however, students are then harshly judged for going into higher education.

[Aboriginal communities] can be that sort of harsh judgment stuff or maybe you could go as far as to say it’s that internalized oppression stuff, where [students] are getting judged on two standards -- you’re not Native enough, or you’ve forgotten, you’re learning that book stuff. (Faculty-12, Northern-U)

This quote exemplifies how power disparities within and outside Aboriginal communities can hinder Aboriginal student success. The interplay of these disparities is a good example of how Graham Smith (2000a) conceptualizes the *politics of distraction* in Aboriginal education. For example, band politics and economic circumstances may impede or hinder Aboriginal student participation in post-secondary education in terms of access to sufficient band funding. Carl Union (1999) reminds us that such politics between Aboriginal peoples continues the colonial project and distracts us from the larger goal of self-determination.

Participants demonstrated their awareness of the current power disparities within education through their discussions of decision-making processes. Evidence of an anti-colonial voice was present in some definitions of success that focused on the Indigenous perspective. For example, a student from Northern-U defined success as “retain[ing] your language and culture.” He also believed he had to prove to non-Aboriginal peoples that he

“was on their level or above their level because sometimes they are threatened if you have more education than they do.”

### **Finding gifts**

The second most cited characteristic of a successful Aboriginal student was best described by a participant as

finding what your gift is, what you enjoy doing and whether or not it supports the Aboriginal community or not -- whether or not you're giving back to the Aboriginal community. I don't think it really matters as long as you are following your heart and you're representing, and as long as you identify yourself as being Aboriginal, so that is still just as beneficial.  
(Staff-3, Southern-U)

More generally, 31 participants thought that the success of a student should be judged “on the goals students have for attending” (Administrator-2, Southern-U). For example, a participant articulated that “success [was] really reaching a point where you can go on to do whatever the next step you envision for yourself. It does not necessarily mean in my mind meeting someone else’s criteria for success, i.e., completing a degree” (Staff-2, Southern-U). Another administrator from Northern-U suggested success “had to be that person’s assessment of their own experiences with success” (Administrator-13, Northern-U). In some regards, this relates to the hegemonic understanding of success in that it is individually based and goal-driven (to be discussed under the section “just like any other student”). However, within these conversations, personal goals were not limited to graduating. In fact, participants recognized the diversity of students’ backgrounds, experiences, Aboriginal identity, and other factors that influenced their goals and aspirations.

Well, for me it's mostly just like overcoming obstacles and stuff that people say First Nations can't do it. To just push through those and open up doors and just, like, role model for other people. Like, I come from a small community as well, where a lot of First Nations didn't even graduate high school, and I just didn't wanna be stuck in there, with kids and stuff like that. So I wanted to get out of there, but defining your own philosophy, like I'm going into personal training and stuff like that and to find a personal teaching philosophy, like I was doing a practicum and I finally just kind of realized that school is totally different from the real world. (Student, Southern-U)

The diversity of students is huge, across backgrounds, ethnicities, prior experiences, and age, and economics and family background. I mean all of these things contribute to who the person is who shows up to university -- and success for one student may very well be the completion of degree not necessarily meeting a network of acquaintances and colleagues, not necessarily...having participated in things outside the classroom, not necessarily having left with an "A" record, and that may be because of competing demands, and they are fully integrated into another community and receiving a ton of experiences that are all related to strong engagement in a community somewhere else. And I think there are traditional definitions of success that we gravitate to that are about the student being as academically successful as they can be, being socially integrated into the university, being able to be part of diverse communities and multiple kinds of communities, and being able to feel as though they really do belong. (Administrator-1, Southern-U)

Success for approximately four students basically meant "just being here" at university. This statement resonated with several students from Central, Northern, and Southern-U who judged simply getting into university as a success. This in part acknowledges the hurdles many Aboriginal students have already encountered to just be a university student. Simply being at university as a measure of success resonates with earlier work by Danziger (1996) who found the personal goals of Aboriginal students of higher education were met by merely attending university, which students viewed as successful. Aboriginal student participants attended university based on their individual goals; they also wished to graduate from their programs. It was also evident that these individual goals did not exist in isolation from the individual but "in a kind of frame of community" (Student,

Southern-U). Individual goals for Aboriginal students were often linked to their relationships with family, community, and nation. Therefore, the definition of a successful Aboriginal student is based on the “individual, depending on what the student defines as success, and this is in part, culturally determined” (Staff-13, Central-U).

Success was also grounded in the strength garnered from their individual experiences and backgrounds:

But to me it's really if those students who come in here, if what they have to bring is recognized as valuable and they're able to contribute to whatever is going on -- like that reciprocal kind of relationship kind of thing -- and they're able to achieve the goals that they wanna achieve in their own life, most of which are to do with contributing to their communities, and they're able to gain the skills and knowledge that they need to really be successful in whatever area, I think that's what I would call success.  
(Staff-6, Southern-U)

For example, Aboriginal students who related their academic work to their cultural backgrounds or experiences were viewed as doing better within the institution. As this faculty member from Central-U observed,

the [students] that seem most successful are the ones that kind of merge their traditional understandings from their families and stories and things like that, with [their courses]. It seems to be that when dealing with the kind of cultural themes, things that are closer to the [students]...[things] coming out of their own personal experience, and things like that [help].  
(Faculty-6, Central-U)

This individual experience relates to cultural integrity but is strongly influenced by the individual student choosing to share his or her IK in the university context. This choice may or may not be made by students. The important lesson in this discussion is the safety some students experienced in their academic programs and classrooms to integrate their Indigenous knowledges into their work. It is important to reiterate that this sense of safety did not exist for all Aboriginal students.

Many Aboriginal students had to balance their personal goals with community and university expectations. Although community support can be a positive reinforcement for students, an over-commitment to community responsibilities can impede student success.

As this student clarified,

So it's really difficult. We find it so hard to find balance, because inside our families, we're being told one thing, inside the university we're being told another. And we feel those forces pulling us apart. And we've gotta find a way to walk between, you know, so we've gotta define our own success. And that's a real difficult thing. (Student, Southern-U)

Some participants were mindful that student success "is also determined by their home life, meaning what does the family value" (Administrator-10, Central-U)? This habitus of success for Aboriginal students was linked strongly to their sense of connection to their family, community, and larger Indigenous populations. This sense of responsibility to others relates to the third characteristic, "responsibility of reciprocity."

### **Responsibility of reciprocity**

The third most prevalent theme defining a successful student honored the principle of reciprocity (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). This was more contentious than the other two descriptors of success. Nine participants suggested that a successful Aboriginal student gave back to the community and maintained "continued engagement with their community" (Administrator-10, Central-U). Successful students become positive role models for their communities. Some of the Elders from Northern-U believed students had the responsibility to share what they learned at university with the community and also to remain humble despite their education. Though many participants assumed Aboriginal students return to their own communities, several others acknowledged that contributing to the broader Indigenous community was also a valuable form of reciprocity. Reciprocity for some

participants, like the student below, entailed moving forward the agenda of Aboriginal peoples:

If you are really successful there is something that I can put out there that is going to help all Aboriginal people...So to me that is what success is for me -- it is moving forward the agenda of Aboriginal population and combining the two. I find it hard being totally academic and not taking care the other side of it. (Student, Northern-U)

“The other side of it” for this particular student referred to balancing her studies with her other roles as a mother, wife, and community member. This student measured her success by the contributions she made to her immediate family, her local Aboriginal nation, and to the broader Indigenous community. Other participants also agreed that a university education “assists [Aboriginal students] further a community’s agenda,” linking back to a university education being relevant to Aboriginal community needs (Faculty-5, Central-U). The university degree legitimizes “what that community needs and wants to do through scholarly or academic credentials” (Faculty-5, Central-U).

Giving back to the larger Indigenous community provided an opportunity for students to honor their responsibilities. Other participants from Southern and Central universities considered that reciprocity to community was an unfair measure of success to be imposed on or expected of a student: “How dare they put that kind of trip on them! ... Aboriginal peoples need to be individuals, be responsible to ourselves and to others” (Staff-11, Southern-U).

I don’t wanna tell ANY young person what they should be doing, or how they should be doing it. I’d like the institution to facilitate their growth, so that they can figure out what things are good for them to do. And if they’re coming in with ideas about what things are good for them to do, then to facilitate that. (Faculty-7, Central-U)

Again, this is especially true where students' personal goals and career objectives were not sustainable within their communities.

The community perspective on success adds further complexity to the definition of a successful Aboriginal student. Although most participants were of the opinion that they couldn't speak for communities, the discussions of many participants resonated with the following participant who stated,

I guess it would be hard to say how communities would be describing success when it comes to post-secondary education. I think most people would agree that it's a wonderful thing for the individual, that they've managed to succeed in their personal life goals. I'm not sure they'd see it as success for their community. They may see it as a success for Aboriginal people in general and see that as part of a process that might inspire other people, and I think that's where I've seen it very successful amongst young people. (Faculty-11, Northern-U)

Most students deemed that giving back to the larger Aboriginal community, not necessarily their own was an important component of their career choice and educational success. As this female student from Central-U believed, "I know I'm successful when I'm helping" improve the health not just of her own community but also of all Aboriginal peoples.

Another student defined her success as

performing tasks to the best of my ability. Generally, I find that the Aboriginal community supports me in what I do. I have had people come up to me and tell me that they are proud of me. They seem to define success as accomplishing something, and they are always supportive of people. In the Aboriginal community, there seems to be less of an emphasis on grades and more of an emphasis on completion or on obtaining a goal. (Student, Central-U)

The challenge of isolation was recognized by this participant from Northern-U, who thought

that's the real dilemma for a number of communities and for a number of individuals who are of Indigenous or First Nations origin, to find that path for themselves that doesn't sort of isolate them from their communities by virtue of the learning that they've had. (Staff-18, Northern-U)



Part of this isolation from community is created when students return to their communities with a different form of capital than what is valued in their communities. In that regard, sometimes in working with their own community or another Aboriginal nation, Aboriginal university graduates need to “help people in their community appreciate the knowledge that they have gained [at university]” (Administrator-9, Central-U). Elders talked about students returning and not being modest with what they learned or not being willing to share their intellectual capital with the rest of the community. Isolation from the communities also relates to the habitus of the community and maintaining cultural integrity of students so they are not isolated when they return to their communities.

Most participants agreed that defining success by the end result of completing degree requirements was narrow and limiting. The participant quoted above went on to explain later in her interview that she believed her own understanding of success was more inclusive, and she also thought that Aboriginal communities needed to be more flexible in defining criteria of success. Thinking of success inclusively was discussed by many participants as “wholistic balance.”

### **Wholistic balance**

The fourth theme is connected to the cultural integrity of students, but also relates to the wholistic framework. This theme was discussed by approximately 15 participants. Successful Aboriginal students maintained a wholistic balance between the intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional realms. Many participants, such as participants from Central-U and Northern-U, defined a successful Aboriginal student as having harmony and balance in their lives. An administrator described success as a “big picture sort of thing,” in that

they are doing well academically, home is in a good place, their relations and relationships are in a good place. They are healthy -- their mind is healthy, their body is healthy. They have a good network of social relationships. (Administrator-11, Central-U)

A faculty participant suggested success was a matter of balance.

I would have to look at it from what I consider an Indigenous perspective -- that their lifestyle is somewhat balanced, that they're succeeding academically. I'm starting with that because it is a university, and that's what we're here for, but succeeding academically doesn't have to be the 3.8 or the whatever. They're being successful here in their definition of success. They're learning. They're learning here it's useful for them, but they are also balanced, they are connected to their community or their family, if they come from that place, you know some people have been disconnected by history. (Faculty-12, Northern-U)

Students from Central-U and Southern-U expressed their success was more than material possessions, but more about how one acted and what one did with one's education. The two students quoted below specifically drew on their Indigenous understandings of wholism to speak of success.

I guess to me is to try to keep balance. For me through university that's been the biggest struggle. I've got so much homework, and I'm not doing other things, like I'm not exercising, and I'm not spending as much time with my family as I'd like or just things like that. Just trying to keep all those things...and I guess that's more of an Aboriginal worldview, that I'm going to try to keep all those things, that I'm not just going to focus on my education, like I need these other things in my life in order to feel normal, to feel like a person. (Student, Southern-U)

Obtaining an education, it is essential to remain as balanced as possible. The Medicine Wheel concept informs us that we must have physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components in our lives/learning in order to be balanced and to be in harmony. This means that we must take time out of studying to exercise, eat properly, sleep, and be involved in our culture (Student, Central-U)

The wholistic balance was not, however, seen by all participants as an even distribution of balance between each of the realms. Participants from Central-U and Northern-U agreed that since students were in university, then their priority needed to be on their intellectual development, though not at the expense of the other realms.

[A successful Aboriginal student is] a student who can prioritize their school work and academic life really high on a level, but also have a very balanced approach. It's still looking after self, looking after family, keeping connected with home but really making the academic work a priority. (Staff-4, Southern-U)

Being prepared, not only academically to handle the challenges of university courses, but also socially and personally. Someone who's successful would be able to understand things like budgeting, having bank accounts, if they're on student loans how to manage those kinds of life skills. (Staff-20, Northern-U)

Wholistic balance was also discussed in terms of relationships between the individual goals of students and the needs of their Aboriginal communities. As stated earlier, this does not imply that all Aboriginal students need to return to their communities, but it is important that students have the knowledge to work in Aboriginal communities or arenas. This Northern-U staff person reminded us to think about the connections between the individual student and the larger Aboriginal community in British Columbia and Canada.

For me, I think it is important for Aboriginal students to come out with the knowledge skills expected of any student, but, over and above that, we have needs at the community level that are really quite different than what might be expected in [a rural northern town] or what might be expected down in [a large urban city], so it is also a matter for us to prepare our students to work effectively in an Aboriginal community or Aboriginal arena. (Faculty-11, Northern-U)

This latter quote differentiates the notion of Euro-Western individualism and Indigenous understandings of an individual's interconnections with others. This is notion of individuality was also part of the discussions of a few participants' responses to defining a successful Aboriginal student.

### **Just like any other student**

The fifth theme "just like any other student," refers to hegemonic understandings of a successful student, that is, someone who attained his or her personal goals. While aspects of this theme connect to the "achieves own goals" theme, the lack of connection to a wholistic understanding of success merited a separate discussion of the hegemonic understanding of success.

The implications of this theme relate back to the discussion in Chapter 2 that extended Huffman's cultural masks to universities. In this instance, the desire to have Aboriginal students become like any other student parallels the *assimilative* institutional mask that sees students with a sense of homogeneity based on a set of norms and behaviours (i.e., PAU valued forms of capital). For instance, an assimilative institution would expect students to be successful based on their academic performance and completion of degree requirements.

The strong desire by five participants to view success for Aboriginal students "just like any other student success" (Administrator-10, Central-U) relates to what some participants saw as the purpose of the university being completing a university degree program. A successful Aboriginal student simply was someone who convoked from their program.

I mean there is a way we would define success for any student. We have exposed them to a certain program of studies, they have absorbed from that, took away things. Hopefully, they have been influenced by that experience, they have changed. They are more informed, they are more mature about things, they are better citizens, as a consequence, and maybe they have taken away some specific skills that they can apply towards their career. I would say that if an Aboriginal student took away any of those things, they would be defined as successful. (Administrator-3, Southern-U)

However, as previous sections have discussed, while an Aboriginal student may be considered “similar to any successful student, [in that they are] working towards whatever their academic dream or career dream or goal is” (Staff-16, Central-U), his or her individuality, as with the individuality of any student must “be somehow acknowledged within the system” (Staff-16, Central-U).

The challenge for a university wearing the *assimilative* mask is that individuality is only possible if Aboriginal peoples fit the set of norms and behaviours valued by the institution. Consequently, viewing Aboriginal students through an assimilative frame that sees them like any other student is problematic in that the given structure only values mainstream notions of success and achievement. In contrast, a university wearing a *transculturated* or *decolonized* mask would respect and honor multiple interpretations of success and individuality.

The fluidity of success and the intertwining of individualism and collectivism were also demonstrated in the students’ linking their success to employment outcomes.

For a person to be successful, they need to follow a path, or even a career path, that makes them happy. And whatever they choose to do that can be anything. (Staff-4, Southern-U)

For example, while this Aboriginal student believed maintaining her cultural values was important during her university program, the reality of obtaining relevant employment was also important. She considered herself successful “if I get a job at what I’m doing, not just

any job, but a job in the field that I'm studying. My goal was to be a certified accountant and if I succeed in getting a job in that area I will know that I was successful" (Student, Northern-U). Therefore, for these Aboriginal students success for them relates to the cultural mask of a *transcultured* student (Huffman, 2001).

Individualism does not consider how previous experience of a community or family with higher education impacts the success of the student. The general consensus by participants was that "a lot of communities don't have that kind of understanding" of the "institutional workings in universities" (Faculty-2, Southern-U).

I think those are the most fundamental things. I think it is students who [decide] whether it is a success for them if you find a safe way of doing it. There are other people who sometimes sponsor and support students. It would seem based on my limited knowledge for some Aboriginal students, there is a community that stands along side them or behind them -- hopefully in positive ways. Occasionally that too can feel like a burden or an issue. But there is maybe the student and the institution to feel some accountability to those sponsoring communities also. (Administrator-5, Southern-U)

Similarly, backed by Statistics Canada data, many Aboriginal students are the first in their family to attend university and do not have the benefit of prior family knowledge of how to successfully negotiate the system. However, this perceived lack of habitus and cultural capital regarding the university does not detract from the responsibilities of the institutions, which have been supporting non-Aboriginal first-generation students for decades.

The UGBS asks respondents how satisfied they were with their program overall. Figures 4a and 4b show that the majority of Aboriginal alumni were satisfied with their program choice. Despite this high satisfaction level, there were indications that students experienced racism, financial barriers, and systemic barriers while going through their programs.

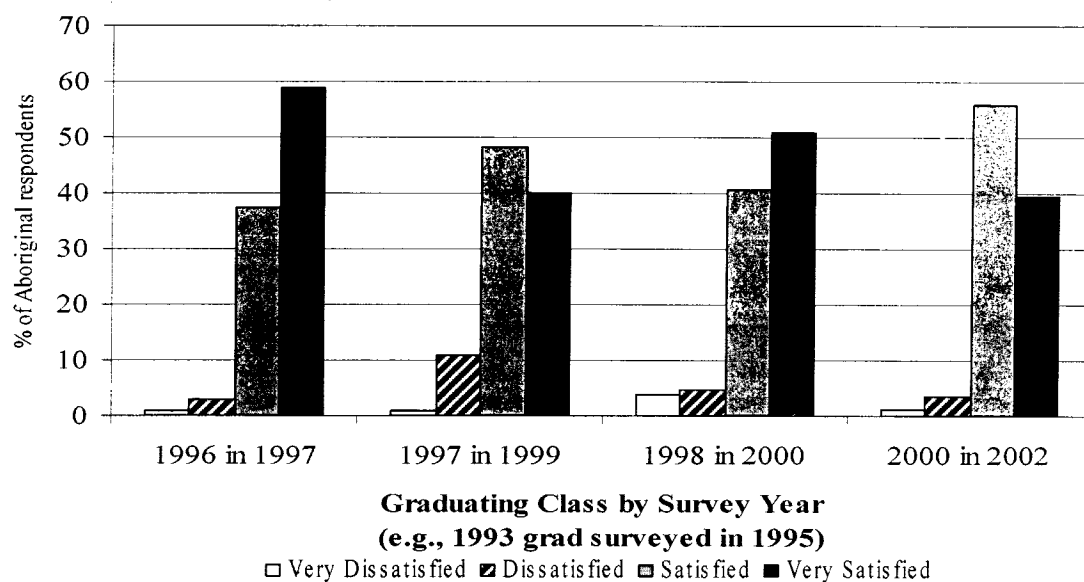


Figure 4a Aboriginal respondents' satisfaction with program of study (UBGS 1-2 years after graduation)

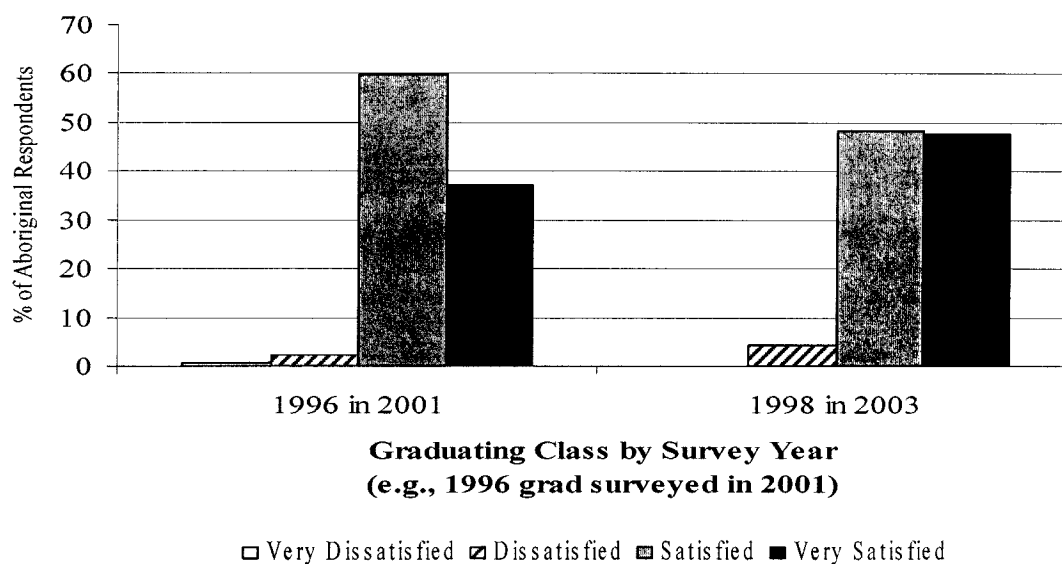


Figure 4b Aboriginal respondents' satisfaction with program of study (UBGS 5 years after graduation)

The institution has a responsibility to meet the needs of all its students and become places of success for them. The next section outlines characteristics participants identified as making a university a successful place for Aboriginal students.

## Defining a Successful University for Aboriginal Students

The principle of reciprocity implies a two-way relationship between the university and students. Therefore, in defining a successful Aboriginal student, it is also important to articulate what is a successful university for Aboriginal students.

How participants viewed a successful institution for Aboriginal students informs the types of services, programs, and practices that help (rather than hinder) Aboriginal student success. The description of a successful university and an Aboriginal student also identify institutional responsibilities to Aboriginal education to be further explored in Chapter 6.

In terms of defining a successful university, four key themes emerged from the data. The most common theme was the notion of *seen face* (L. T. Smith, 1999); referring to a visible Aboriginal presence on campus. The second theme was relevant programming and services. Relevance was connected to institutional awareness of Aboriginal student and community needs. The third theme was the need for clear intentions and strong commitment to change. Some participants saw the theme of *seen face* relating to the fourth theme of reciprocal relationships. Reciprocal relationships entail university partnerships and relationships to Aboriginal communities. Given these themes, a successful mainstream university can be best described as wearing a *transculturated* mask (Huffman, 2001).

### Seen face

The first prevalent theme was *seen face*. The value of having Aboriginal peoples on campus and within the curriculum was important for students to feel appreciated and respected. This sentiment resonates with a staff person's view that Aboriginal students,



as with any group, distinguishable group, you need to see yourself at that institution, being successful. You need to have images of yourself, you need to have space that speaks to you, programs that speak to you. People who reflect your look. You need to see diversity, to feel that I guess your contribution is appreciated and taken in. (Staff-16, Central-U)

The pedagogical impact of IK broadens the intellectual and emotional understandings of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. A faculty member compared his experience of teaching a course in an Aboriginal community and in a predominately non-Aboriginal on campus classroom. This particular example illustrates the additive value of Indigenous capital to the university. In this case, Aboriginal students brought to the classroom their lived experiences of Indigenous knowledges; the absence of Aboriginal students in the on campus classroom required more explaining and defending the existence of Indigenous knowledge.

I think one area that is huge for me, to see [IK]. to experience it, to live it, is with some of the [regional] teaching that I have done...what makes it different is ... that the majority, if not all the students are Aboriginal and in those environments ... I really see a hunger even just for the acknowledgement of the knowledges [that] speak to them that reflects their experience. And...one of the courses I teach for all students ...[who] are non-Aboriginal,...it really becomes a matter of having to justify [IK] rather than [them] just accept[ing] that there is more than one way of knowing and more particularly when it comes to education. (Faculty-11, Northern-U)

This faculty member experienced resistance from non-Aboriginal students to the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledges in the classroom, particularly in non-Aboriginal-focused courses. He believed that these students were resistant because they “haven’t been exposed to it. And it’s, like, they’d rather do that standard -- I’ll just sit here, I’ll just go, you know, you speak to us” (Faculty-11, Northern-U). The perception that Aboriginal courses are solely for Aboriginal students also hinders developing understanding of non-Aboriginal peoples. For example, a faculty participant encountered resistance from non-Aboriginal students when

she was recruiting for students in her class. Resistance was articulated as a question of permissibility, that is, were non-Aboriginal peoples allowed in a First Nations topic course.

She disclosed that

the question that I got, every single time, was “is it open to non-Aboriginal students?” Yeah! Duh! Is women’s studies open to men? Right? And it was so prevalent, it was so regularly asked, that it just really clicked, that there is no place in academia for what would come out of an Indigenous studies program, other than for Indigenous people. (Faculty-9, Central-U)

A successful university was defined as “a place where people genuinely care about, appreciate, and respect each other’s differences” (Staff-13, Central-U). This definition resonated with the comments made by participants from other sites. Universities committed to increasing their Aboriginal student enrollments needed to also recognize that they “needed to increase the number of staff members and faculty and research” (Staff-1, Southern-U).

Some participants were aware that a visible presence of Aboriginal peoples in the institution was not enough to transform the university. Simply having an Aboriginal person present does not mean that all Aboriginal students will relate to that individual’s own cultural background and experiences. Some participants suggested institutions have a tendency to view Aboriginal peoples as a homogenous group, which hinders institutional provision of services for the diverse Indigenous student population. Institutions needed to be sensitive to the fact that while a familiar face supports students, there has to be diversity among those faces present to meet the different needs of students, faculty, and staff. As one administrator from Northern-U clarified,

People want to be around people that they know -- the fact that someone else is a First Nations person, doesn’t necessarily mean that they are one big happy family. You need to have that sensitivity within the university to provide that environment. (Administrator-1, Northern-U)

Many participants believed institutions need to have “a better appreciation” of the diversity of Aboriginal nations. An administrator from Central-U explained the institution has to provide opportunities for him as a non-Aboriginal person “to gain a better appreciation of whatever slice you want to take of our students,... more opportunities for me to understand and appreciate more where First Nations students come from, what the social aspects are” (Administrator-9, Central-U). The need for more cross-cultural awareness throughout the university resonated with calls for more sensitivity and cultural awareness from participants at Northern and Southern-U. For example, this staff member from Northern-U believed that

a lot more education that could occur for staff, administrative and support staff, with respect to, you know, Aboriginal lifestyle, worldview, and values...I think that would change how people maybe react to, or interact with Aboriginal students...help the non-Aboriginal staff to understand maybe a little bit more of the social and personal context that students might find themselves in. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

The seen face is also connected to the second characteristic of a successful university for Aboriginal students: relevant programming and services.

### **Relevant programming and services**

A successful university for Aboriginal students had an institutional awareness of Aboriginal needs at the student, faculty, and community level. The following quotation exemplifies the human relationships that are foundational to any institution being successful for Aboriginal peoples:

The university is both an institution, it is the people who are in positions at the institution. You will often hear people refer to “the university,” -- well, the institution doesn’t make decisions; people in that institution make decisions. (Administrator-1, Southern-U)

Participants recognized that universities need more support services, such as transition programming, to foster student success. A successful university was described as one that had the goal of meeting the needs and expectations of the students. For example, some participants deemed a successful university imparted more than an intellectual education; it also enhanced students' life skills.

Other participants described a successful university as an institution that was welcoming and personal. This welcoming campus environment creates “a home, and [a place where students] can feel comfortable and in a space, where they don't feel like they have to educate the professors” (Staff-10, Southern-U). Going to a classroom where one was not signaled out to speak for all Aboriginal issues provides a concrete example of how institutions can change pedagogical practice to create spaces of inclusion. Institutions demonstrate their awareness of Aboriginal diversity by respecting Indigenous knowledge systems and establishing living communities of practice on campus. In stating “the institution needs to be welcoming,” an administrator from Northern-U went on to elaborate that

[the university] has to acknowledge equity. It has to acknowledge that there are different ways of knowing, ways of understanding the world, perceiving the world, and that there are different knowledge sets. There has to be respect for all these different things and incorporated into a safe environment. (Administrator-2, Northern-U)

Another administrator from Central-U suggested that “if you know what your typical student is like, then creating services and programs, and academic programs that can support that student” (Administrator-11, Central-U) is achievable. He also thought a successful university was one that was “accessible for that student.”

Some Aboriginal student participants believed developing students wholistically within the academic world would make an institution a successful place for Aboriginal

students. The student sharing circle discussions also identified a welcoming environment as a measure of a successful university. A Northern-U student explained,

It is necessary for an institution to ensure that the Aboriginal students that attend here have a place and a venue for everyone to be comfortable and to celebrate their different cultures and identity. I think that is really important -- because that really promotes the strength and integrity of the individual, and I think we really need that support and development in an academic world. (Student, Northern-U)

Successful institutions also provided relevant programming that empowered Aboriginal students to work within their own communities. An administrator from Southern-U believed these expectations were best met by “a university that understands what [Aboriginal students] need and somehow able to reconcile the expectations of the academic world and the university world out there with the expectations of the people” (Administrator-7, Southern-U). The next section of this chapter portrays another aspect of a successful university that concerns institutions honoring the commitments they make through policy and practice to Aboriginal education.

### **Respecting commitments to change**

Decision making within the institutions requires a critical engagement with notions of agency and pedagogic authority (Apple, 1995, 2000; Bourdieu, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Decision-making structures and organizational charts are based on relationships and power. The third descriptor of a successful university relates to relationships of power and universities renouncing some of their power by respecting their commitments to change. As an administrator from Southern-U stated, “Another way of saying it would be that the university needs a clear intention, resources, and we need to be

organized. Those are three things. It needs to be an inclusive approach. It can't be an all stand-alone thing" (Administrator-5, Southern-U).

In participants' interviews and sharing circles, evidence existed of the contradictions between university policy on Aboriginal issues and hiring practices. Some participants expressed policy as "empty promises." All universities who participated in this study expressed a desire through policy to improve relationships with Aboriginal communities and to increase Aboriginal student recruitment and retention. However, contradictions in policy and practice were described at all three sites. For example, the mandate of recruiting Aboriginal students was contradicted when Southern-U hired an individual in a position of prominence who held the belief that Aboriginal peoples were not entitled to land claim settlements. Hiring such an individual communicated the empty promises of commitment to Aboriginal education and the mandate of recruitment. The sentiments of the Aboriginal community are explained in the following statement regarding the hiring:

Doesn't make sense, that doesn't, when you have his history of what he said and what he did, why would you want to be associated with the school with him there?...It just seems like it's empty. (Student, Southern-U)

The institutions' failure to implement current policies raised doubts amongst participants regarding the institutions' commitment to change. Administrators from Central-U also admitted that they were not sure if their university had clarity about how to address the institutional mandate of Aboriginal education or how the mandate was implemented in their institution:

Clarity [in terms of] an institutional role [is] what we want to do. Other than that we have a long list. There is nothing between these really, really fundamental occupational or operational goals and this vision. The real strong connecting links between the strategic imperatives and actions that are implemented are not there. (Administrator-5, Central-U)

I know when the university started, there was the five pillars -- one of them was Indigenous studies and Indigenous peoples. I would hope that faculty are really taking that on board and incorporating that into their classes somehow. (Administrator-10, Central-U)

Northern-U had been established based on the support of the local Aboriginal communities. As a result, Aboriginal education became a pillar of their institutional mandate and mission.

Serving the needs and interests of the Aboriginal community in the north is one of them. And there was support throughout the north for the institution, and now, then, it becomes a matter of, now that the support is not needed as much, the institution has found its legs, so to speak, and I wonder sometimes if it is rising above those pillars that it set for itself. (Faculty-11, Northern-U)

So I think that whole mindset has to shift, and we have to be able to see that kind of programming that I'm talking about as being a core part of what we do as an institution funded by society, by our federal or provincial government. To provide those services in the longer term and not be subject to the coins and budgetary cutbacks and restraints that all the programs are going to be put under, particularly here in the north. I think our provincial government, in particular, has a responsibility to fund seats to a greater degree in our university because we do have a special relationship with Aboriginal people, and we can foster a better relationship and a greater presence in the communities and amongst Aboriginal people but we can't do that without proper kind of funding. We had our northern allowance, which was a northern grant, which helped establish [this institution] that was removed last year or the year before. Those things don't help us to be able to do the job that's necessary and don't help us to support that pillar of the university that is Aboriginal studies and being here for Aboriginal people. So without that kind of support the university can't do what it needs to do, so that has to be there. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

The lack of resources for Aboriginal focused programs by the institution indicated to participants and the Aboriginal community that the institutions were no longer committed to the original mandate. Furthermore, the lack of political support and pressure from the provincial government facilitated the autonomy of the institution to move away from the founding pillar and mandate of Aboriginal education.

Programming or services that type cast Aboriginal students limited the development of a successful university. As a Southern-U staff person explained,

There are a lot of different students at the institution and being a successful institution for Aboriginal students means having a breadth of how you approach [those] issues that you are not trying to pigeonhole people. That is probably a very bad phrase, but that you are not trying to put people into particular positions of who they are when they arrive. (Administrator-1, Southern-U)

FNCs administrators also indicated that limited programming and services was connected to limited financial and personnel resources.

Articulating policies and implementing resulting strategies will develop the university into a more successful place for Aboriginal students. However, focusing only on student resources (e.g., scholarships) institutions lose sight of the balance required in other realms to ensure wholistic success. Universities can increase their capacities to support Aboriginal students in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways by “increasing the kinds of resources that students need. It is about increasing the number of faculty... I think it would be helpful if the institution adjusted policies that would allow for greater access and opportunities” (Faculty-2, Southern-U). For example, a number of participants discussed how limited financial resources hindered students progression in university. Therefore, a policy change that would make universities more successful places for Aboriginal students relates to financial services.

Some participants talked about the issues of linking band funding with the academic achievements of students. There was a perception amongst some participants, like the staff person quoted below, that band policies and practices related to educational funding were narrow and rigid, not the institution’s own financial policies.



I think [Aboriginal communities] are sort of rigid in their view of what they term successful. They want them to pass of course, they want them to do a certain course load. They don't want [students] to run out of money half way through the year -- that kind of stuff. (Staff-20, Northern-U)

There was some discussion about how universities and band education coordinators interpreted the criteria for a full course load. For example, generally a full course load based on university definitions is based on three courses or a minimum number of course credits. However, some educational coordinators of Aboriginal bands defined a full course load as five courses. In addition to a minimum number of courses, some band policies also added the contingency of a minimum grade point average for students to continue to receiving funding. These differences in interpretation of reasonable requirements limited the access to band funding for some students. However, some participants held the perspective that institutional financial policies also hindered their success when rules and regulations took weeks if not months to negotiate. This was especially true for band-funded students who lost their band funding and ended up applying for student loans.

Several questions were asked in the *Undergraduate Baccalaureate Graduates Surveys (UBGS)* regarding finances, particularly how students paid for school and debt related to school. Approximately 34% of the 1996 alumni (surveyed in 1997) and 58% of 1997 alumni (surveyed in 1999) indicated they incurred debt during their university program. Respondents were also asked to indicate how they paid for their education. For the 2002 and 2003 surveys, First Nations funding was a separate category; in previous surveys, however, it was considered under "other," (e.g., band funding, DIAND, and co-op). Figures 5a and 5b show that the primary source of funding for Aboriginal students, who responded to the UBGS, was either First Nations funding (e.g., band and DIAND) or financial aid. The increasing reliance on financial aid was reflected in increased debt loads reflecting

inadequate funding from the federal government. The issue of inadequate funding levels with the federal Aboriginal Post-secondary Student Support Program were also raised by Mayes (2007) in *"No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-secondary Education in Canada."*

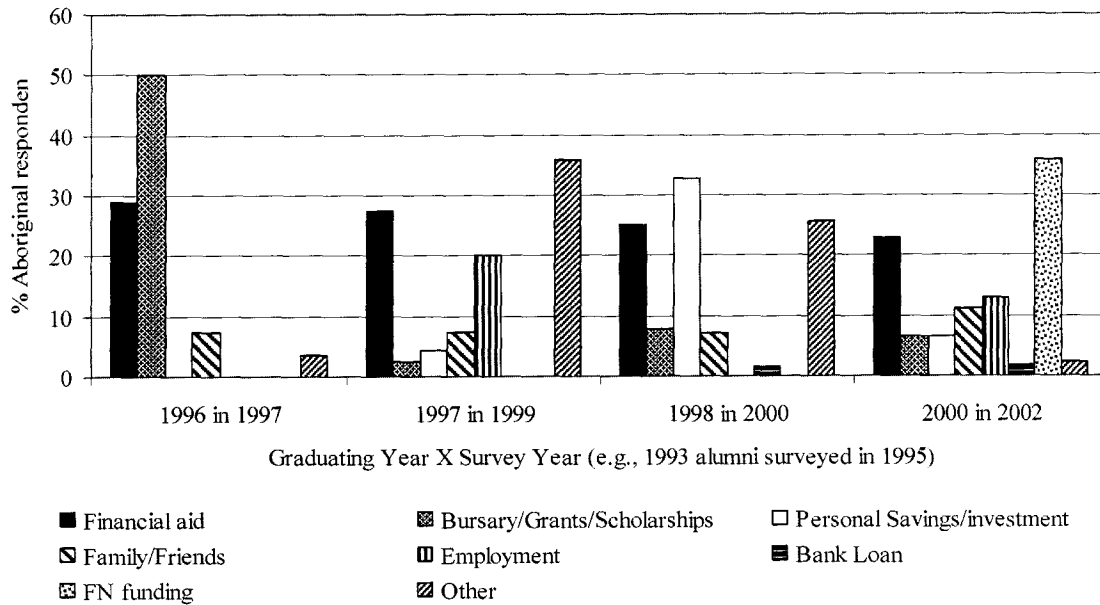


Figure 5a Types of funding Aboriginal respondents used to finance their education (UBGS 1-2 years after graduation)

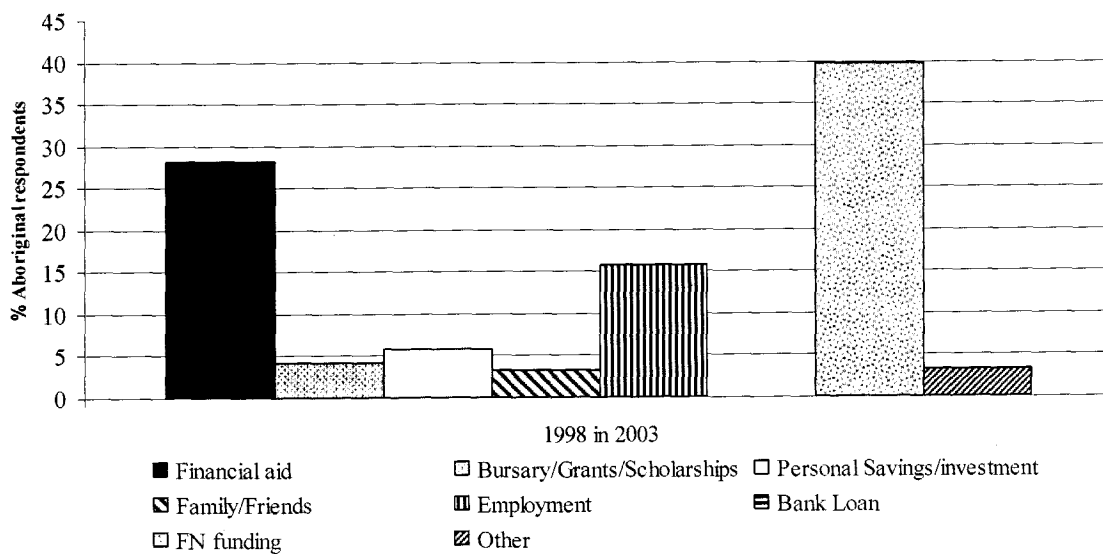


Figure 5b Types of funding Aboriginal respondents used to finance their education (UBGS 5 years after graduation)

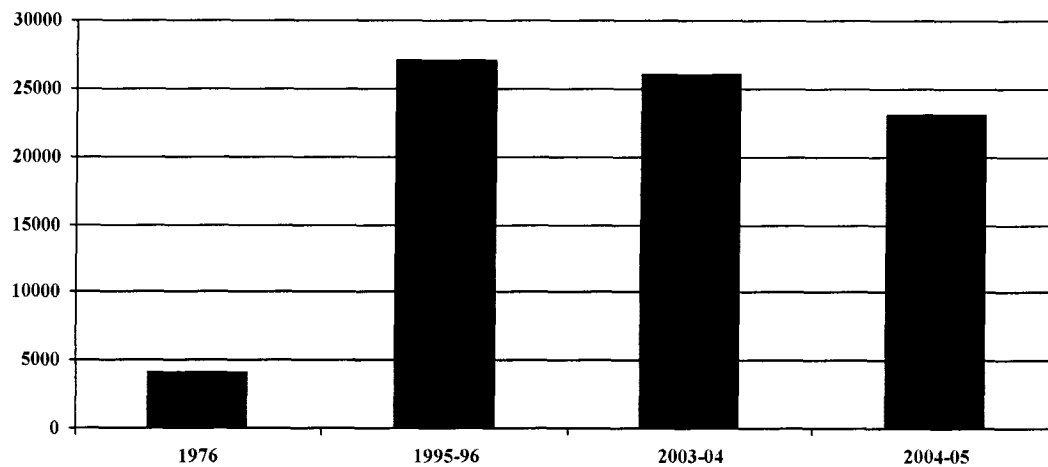


Figure 6

First Nations enrolment in PSE who received federal funding<sup>24</sup>

Figure 6 illustrates the decreasing trends in PSE enrolments since the imposed cap in the late 1990s. These numbers represent a downward trend in Aboriginal students receiving funding since 1999. For example, approximately 23,000 First Nations and Inuit students received funding from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in 2005 to 2006. In 1995 to 1996 27,000 First Nations and Inuit students received funding for their post-secondary education (Mayes, 2007). Mendelson (2007) reported INAC officials attributing this downward trend to the fact that the Post-secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) operates on a fixed budget, but tuition and other costs have increased.

The issue of institutional policy led to questions regarding authority within the university. Some participants implied that the lack of policy development was a result of poor institutional leadership; as a result, institutional objectives and goals for Aboriginal education were unclear. Consequently, some participants questioned who directly speaks for Aboriginal issues in the institution. Institutional commitment to Aboriginal education

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<sup>24</sup> This table was created based on the numbers presented by Mayes (2007) p.6-7.

through policy and objectives was related to who was represented at the table when such policies were designed. Participants recognized that the institutional leaders did implement changes permitting Aboriginal voices at the tables; however, it was also clear that Aboriginal agency was limited at the higher administrative levels. This manifested itself in a variety of ways. The most striking example that occurred frequently at all three sites was the lone Aboriginal representative on a committee being silenced or hindered by those who were unsupportive of the Aboriginal agenda. This act of silencing is another example of symbolic violence that occurs in universities to maintain the power of the dominant group (i.e., PAu).

Institutional transformation requires incorporating Indigenous knowledges across the institution. Incorporating Indigenous knowledges, as discussed in Chapter 4, was limited at all three universities. The marginalization of Aboriginal knowledges hindered the universities becoming successful spaces for Aboriginal peoples. Nevertheless, such spaces for IK within the university resulted in more opportunity for growth. The seen face of the Indigenous across the university challenges the Euro-Western canon on which the university was founded. As a result, institutions need to rebalance themselves, like the mismatched eyes of Coyote (Archibald, 1990), to value both ways of knowing.

### **Reciprocal relationships**

The final characteristic of a successful university for Aboriginal peoples related to reciprocal relationships. Successful institutions established partnerships and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal communities. This type of relationship means “that [the university] not only try to fulfill to meet their own academic goals, but they do their best in partnerships with the communities” (Administrator-16, Northern-U). Similarly to there

being pockets of presence of Indigenous knowledges within the university, there were only pockets of university presence within Aboriginal communities. Participants observed that universities were not as present in Aboriginal communities as they could be. In fact, “one of the biggest things missing here [is] a kind of an outreach directly to the communities” (Faculty-6, Central-U). This lack of presence hinders improving university partnerships with communities. Communicating with the communities was an important aspect of building relationships. Elders from Northern-U suggested there was a “need for more feedback between bands and university, like a report card on the students, to show how they are doing in the university.”

Earlier I presented the challenges students encountered in negotiating both Aboriginal band and university regulations regarding financial support. There was agreement in the data that Aboriginal bands are becoming increasingly bureaucratized and politicized. Within the universities, financial policy and practices limited the institution from supporting band-funded students. There were movements within the financial services units to deal with the issue of third party billing, but those involved expressed frustration over institutional and federal bureaucracy. A staff member strongly advised that a successful institution would be “one that would be founded on principles in partnership, or even being led by, people from [the local territory]” (Staff-17, Central-U). These relationships between Aboriginal communities and universities are influenced by larger, complex social issues of colonization, racism, and poverty already discussed in Chapter 2.

## Supporting Wholistic Success

The discussion of success using the wholistic framework presented in Chapter 1 provides a visual guide to the discussion of institutional success. This model was applied to the analysis and articulated how participants saw their institutions facilitating or hindering Indigenous wholistic understanding of success and directly identified how the institution was or was not a successful space for Aboriginal students.

For wholistic success to be supported at an institutional level, an administrator from Southern-U suggested universities needed to have

an ongoing awareness that [Aboriginal peoples] have needs and capacities as intellectual beings, we have needs and capacities as emotional, affective beings. We have needs and capacities as spiritual, and we have needs and capacities as physical. (Administrator-8, Southern-U)

Overall, the data examined in this dissertation demonstrated that universities were focused more on the intellectual realm, somewhat on the physical realm, and significantly less on the spiritual and emotional realms.

Intellectually, while approximately seven participants indicated institutions had a general limited approach to supporting Indigenous student success, other participants' responses reinforced the role of IKs in facilitating student success. For example, three participants mentioned the presence of Aboriginal scholars. Another three participants identified that institutions supported the intellectual realm through specific programs and courses. However, approximately eight participants argued there was limited curriculum and program development across the institution.

Physically, participants could easily identify the FNCs as sites of physical, cultural, and emotional supports for students. The presence of Aboriginal art, or even Aboriginal nation flags or totems on campus signified to a few participants that the institution

considered the physical environment of the campus for Aboriginal students. The physical needs of students were also facilitated by the general recreational services available at the three institutions. There was a call by approximately five participants for greater Aboriginal presence across the entire campus. Approximately ten participants portrayed their campuses as supporting the physical realm in a limited or marginalized way. Some participants suggested this was mainly due to limited financial resources, a common theme within their critique of the institution. In fact, one administrator from Southern-U called for an environmental audit of the campus by a team of Aboriginal students, faculty, staff, Elders, and community members. He saw this as a proactive action the university could undertake to support the physical needs of Aboriginal peoples on campus.

Figure 7 provides a visual presentation of the data analysis using the wholistic framework. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I used the wholistic framework as a tool for analysis. Figure 7 provides a visual presentation of the data analysis using this framework in terms of identifying the helpful and hindering aspects of universities in supporting wholistic success.

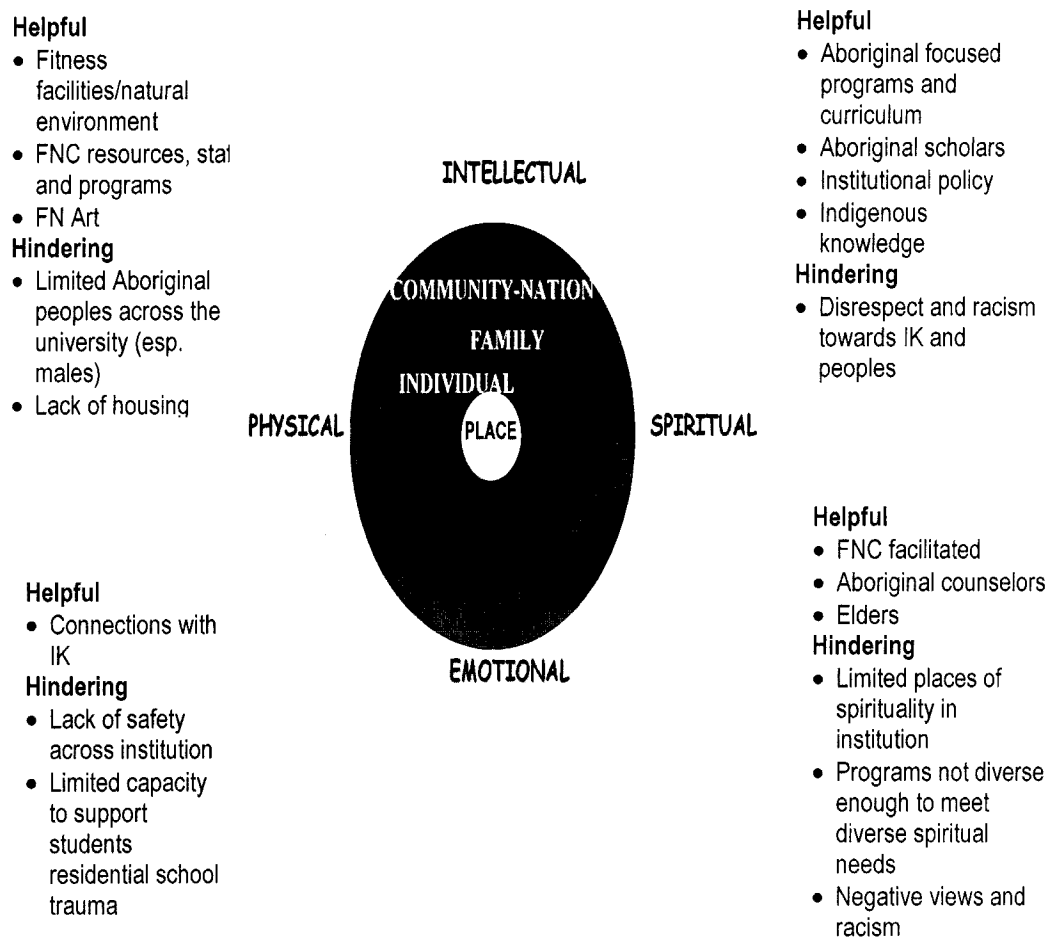


Figure 7

The helpful and hindering factors of universities supporting wholistic success.

Certain areas of the university were viewed as having a more wholistic approach to service delivery -- for example, student services rather than academic departments. As a staff person from Central-U said, "Student services are trailblazing in [wholistic success]. They certainly see it in a more holistic way, the rest of the institution needs to catch up" (Staff 12- Central-U). Another participant from Southern-U suggested that



universities don't tend to do well with the kind of general well-being of students. They tend to leave that as the students' responsibility, and they tend to focus primarily on the academic achievement of students. (Faculty-1, Southern-U)

However, even with other student service units having a wholistic awareness, there were limitations to how the wholistic approach was implemented, even within the FNCs.

We are so marginalized, wanting to have all programs and services there. I would really like us to see us create more presence in faculties, in departments that way. I don't know if it is possible to strike a balance to do that. I think we need to move beyond the centralized type of model in order to do that. I think the programs needs of Aboriginal students is growing at a pace that the [FNCs] can't fully, it doesn't have the capacity to fully meet those kinds of needs. (Faculty-2, Southern-U)

There were some differences of opinion on how Aboriginal student services were part of the institution. Some participants wanted both centralized services, such as those offered through the FNCs and decentralized services across institution which might be additive to the supports offered at the FNCs. Participants also recognized how the financial limitations of many academic and student service units hindered how they could fully implement relevant programming and services based on a wholistic framework.

We [as Aboriginal peoples] recognize the need to maintain the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and so then allowing us to incorporate traditional knowledge within our support systems...[but] some programs don't have the budget to do that. (Staff-1, Southern-U)

Correspondingly, there was also recognition that Aboriginal peoples cannot be the only ones valuing wholistic approaches; if the university were to become a successful place such approaches need to be embraced by the larger university community.

We know if your mind and your body is not at ease, you are not going to study and you are not going to sleep and you are not going to eat, and you are not going to want to be here, and we are sort of getting everybody to see that way, not just us, but it is getting some traction so it is kind of interesting. (Administrator-11, Central-U)

In the discussion of wholistic success, approximately 13 participants expressed the opinion that the university did little to address the emotional needs of Aboriginal students. Only two participants mentioned that Aboriginal students could use counselling services. There was some discussion around how safe Aboriginal students feel going to non-Aboriginal counselors or chaplains for emotional support. If the university were to truly value the wholistic approach the current emotional void experienced by some participants would be minimized. Such emotional voids jeopardize Aboriginal student participation, resonating with Tinto's theory of persistence (Tinto, 1993).

You just get frustrated, say I'm not gonna go to school then, I'll just work at Subway or something because a lot of times it's not worth the hassle, and then once you get here, you get the attitudes from people. You have to be a really strong person. (Staff-17, Central-U)

I feel totally disconnected from my community, because my parents and the people I grew up with are very cultural, and, like still practice a lot of our stuff and speak the language. And coming down here, I just feel totally disconnected from that since I hardly go home. And I don't practice it, and it's not like I don't believe it any more, it's just that the city and school is taking up my whole life. (Student, Southern-U)

It is important to indicate that both of these students were planning to continue with their studies. However, the frustration within the system and the feelings of disconnectedness with their communities they express was also experienced by other students who did not continue. Therefore, persistence is influenced by feeling connected to the institutional and home communities.

Systemic and overt forms of racism are also deterrents to Aboriginal student persistence. As a faculty member acknowledged, even internal forms of racism between Aboriginal peoples can be a negative experience for some Aboriginal students:

Non-Aboriginal students don't realize that a lot of our Aboriginal students have to jump through hoops to get in. They have to meet all the same requirements but there are additional requirements that they have to meet... What we have experienced and what we have seen amongst Aboriginal students is the kind of intra-discrimination amongst each other, between First Nations, Métis, Inuit, status, and non-status. (Staff-1, Southern-U)

The intra-discrimination described above was addressed by the FNCs, who organized workshops on identity and respect, which were facilitated by Elders. The action of respect means Indigenous knowledges can not simply be content, as a participant explained:

It has to be really about the way that we do it. How we talk about it and how we do it. There is lots more to do... we need to make the experience more meaningful by providing for those emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical [needs] so, altogether we accomplish that. When you do, you see how students respond, how they take up the knowledge, and it can be really exciting for them. Sometimes it can be really hard for them, so again, that we have [provided that] learning opportunity for them. (Faculty-2, Southern-U)

The emotional realm in addressing racism through respect continues to build spaces with the institution that honor and respect the diversity of knowledges and Aboriginal peoples on university campuses. The responsibility of the institution to facilitate such action was captured in these statements.

We need to create very clear places in those programs, where other ways of knowing and other ways of being a practitioner are honored. At least people are exposed to them, and they are exposed to as legitimate forms in their own right. (Administrator-5, Southern-U)

The institution needs to be asking itself whether or not it really understands fully the context within which an Aboriginal student is attempting to [learn] -- what is it that they're wanting out of the institution, and what is their actual experience in terms of attaining that? (Staff-7, Southern-U)

Over 15 participants indicated their universities did not address the spiritual or cultural needs of Aboriginal peoples on campus. However, participants were able to identify some ways in which the institution supported cultural and spiritual needs of students. For example, five participants specifically mentioned Elders facilitating such cultural experiences and often through the FNCs. Another two participants believed their institution recognized and supported cultural protocols. The presence of an Aboriginal counselor at two of the three sites was also discussed as a way the institution facilitated cultural needs of students. However, the lack of Elders within the chaplaincy unit made a couple of participants questioned how far the institution and student services were willing to go in supporting wholistic success across the institution.

In this discussion of the spiritual realm, approximately four participants, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, questioned the role of spirituality within the university. The value of spirituality was not questioned.

I personally think that spirituality is something that I don't see as a mandate of the institution. I think it is important that spirituality is not in any way infringed upon or suppressed, but I don't see that, I don't think that universities or schools are particularly well positioned to invest in nurturing spirituality...I think it is important for the university to acknowledge the significance of spirituality and show that it is protected in a sense of being recognized and acknowledged as part of a person. (Administrator-7, Southern-U)

However, participants were aware that in addressing the cultural needs of some Aboriginal students, one is ultimately alienating others. For example, the cultural practices of smudging or sweats may not be the cultural practices of the First Nations of the territory on which the university resides. It was also acknowledged that such cultural practices within the FNCs may alienate Aboriginal peoples with other faiths.

Do we keep some Aboriginal students who do not want to engage because of their traditional spiritual practices? For example, sweat lodges. I'm always concerned that there is a sense that if you are not a member of the sweat lodge community, that there is no place for you at the FNCs. It is not what it is about. I want it to be places for all. (Administrator-8, Southern-U)

I think the university to take all those spiritual beliefs and [if] we are going to support every single one ..., I think that is impossible. In fact, I would want to make [FNCs] much more secular and recognize and encourage [students] to maintain [his or her] spiritual identity. We are here about education... So although the [FNCs are] trying to promote spiritual health and physical health, really, because they can only support so much, they push students away. Students who may want to work on their spiritual health at the [FNCs] they can't do so because there is a cultural incompatibility... I think although spirituality of Indigenous peoples is important to Indigenous knowledges, I think...how do they support that -- that is huge questions, because you know, if we start taking one approach, we end up pushing the same amount of people or more away. (Staff-12, Southern-U)

The discussion over the place of spirituality recognized the diversity of Aboriginal nations and cultural practices. Previous discussion regarding the role of the FNCs and limited resources resonated within this discussion because more human and financial resources are needed to adequately address the diversity of cultural needs within the Aboriginal student population. The structures of universities continue to perpetuate the PAU ideology of what is permissible as Indigenous, in part, by limiting the activities of FNCs through inadequate funding and limited human resources. Adequate human and financial resources would enable FNCs to diversify their programming to meet the range of needs of Aboriginal students.

I think it is hard for students who [live by] all four of the realms, we don't have to evoke the medicine wheel -- we can just say that these universities are not about wholism. They tend to promote, if not create frantic, unbalanced people and we struggle against it. (Faculty-3, Southern-U)

Perhaps the debate is not about who are we alienating in providing one type of service over another but rather more about interrogating our practices as faculty and student service practitioners. The question may be more about how can we embody a truly respectful wholistic practice that would support all students.

## Summary

Chapter 5 addressed the research questions using the wholistic framework, a) *who is a successful Aboriginal student?* and b) *what makes a university successful for Aboriginal peoples?* Participants presented a range of definitions of Aboriginal student success which can be placed on a continuum from the simple attainment of a degree to a more complex wholistic definition of success. A wholistic understanding of success met the physical, intellectual, emotional, and cultural needs of students. A predominant theme was the notion of cultural integrity. Cultural integrity referred to individual's maintaining their cultural identity and sense of self. The responsibilities students have to their communities can both help and hinder their success in university. It is this contradiction the university needs consider in supporting Aboriginal student success. Participants recognized that community support empowered students to do their best. They also articulated that the obligations to return to one's home community might be an unfair expectation of all Aboriginal students, and thus, an ineffective measure of success. Therefore, a successful Aboriginal student attains his or her individualized goals, maintains his or her cultural integrity, and finds wholistic balance. One must remain aware that these individualized goals are linked to responsibilities to family, community, and nation. However, these responsibilities to family, community, and nation will vary depending on the individual Aboriginal student.

A successful university respects and honors Aboriginal student culture, identity, and ways of knowing. A successful institution also includes the seen face. The seen face of Aboriginal diversity could be thought of as a physical presence through people on campus (e.g., Aboriginal faculty, staff, administrators, students, and Elders) along with physical representations in the art work and architecture. Culturally, Indigenous knowledge through the seen face relates to the institution providing and participating in cultural ceremony, honouring cultural protocols, and attending Aboriginal social gatherings. Participants also spoke of the seen face that occurred through curriculum and pedagogical practices that valued Indigenous epistemologies. Institutions were also successful if they honored the commitments to change made through policy. A university was also successful when it established and maintained meaningful partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal communities.

The description of a successful Aboriginal student provides insight into the forms of capital that need to be valued within the mainstream system. Further articulating what makes a university a successful place for Aboriginal students not only moves the focus of deficit away from the student but also provides institutions clear direction for transformation. In understanding what is successful as a student and as an institution facilitates the discussion for the last data chapter of this dissertation. The final data chapter will present what the responsibilities of institutions to Aboriginal education are and identifies ways to hold institutions accountable to these responsibilities.

## Chapter 6

### RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

There are many threads presented in this dissertation that need to be woven together before beginning the third and final data chapter. The first thread of the argument is that Indigenous knowledge primarily exists in universities through the *seen face* of Indigenous administrators, faculty, staff, students, and Elders. The creation of space for Indigenous knowledges within universities requires building relationships with authentic allies, those who are non-Aboriginal peoples supportive of Aboriginal issues. Such relationships extend understandings of Indigenous knowledges and help transform spaces within the university. The second thread ties in Indigenous understandings of success. Several forms of Indigenous capital were identified in the discussion of Indigenous success which extended current understandings of success. Insight into the current state of Indigenous knowledge in higher education provides understanding about how institutions have (or have not) responded to Aboriginal post-secondary needs.

The final thread to be woven in this dissertation is articulating the responsibilities of universities to Aboriginal education and identifying accountability measures that resonate with the Indigenous wholistic framework and the 4Rs. The first section of Chapter 6 outlines the institutional responsibilities through the remaining Rs (relationships, reciprocity, and respect). A listing of institutional responsibilities is insufficient, therefore, for each R how institutional responsibilities can be embodied in practice is elaborated.

The second section of this chapter defines accountability standards based on the wholistic framework. Four main themes emerged from the data regarding accountability: (1) making policy public, (2) surveillance from outside, (3) surveillance from within, and (4) the need for metrics and benchmarks. Policy refers to putting intentions in writing and then



putting those words into action. Surveillance alludes to the monitoring of the university both from the inside and the outside. The need for metrics and benchmarks entails establishing base-line data that is more inclusive and representative of the wholistic framework.

## **Institutional Responsibility**

*Responsibility* is being used as Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) defined it as occurring through participation. For Kirkness and Barnhardt institutional responsibility “is not more than a matter of shifting to a policy, posture, and practice of actually working with First Nations people” (p.13). Participants unanimously agreed universities had responsibilities to Aboriginal higher education. However, differences of opinion existed amongst participants as to why universities were responsible and correspondingly, how they were responsible to Aboriginal education. For 14 participants, institutional responsibility to Aboriginal higher education was a response to the history and legacy of colonialism. Institutional responsibility also was seen as “derive[ing] in part from the lengthy history of oppression through the process of colonization” (Staff-19, Northern-U). For participants, the *legacy of colonialism* for participants related to the systemic issues of social class, poverty, and access to education.

Addressing class issues matters! And partly it’s the intersection of Aboriginality and class that exacerbates the cultural dislocations that also keep people out or off balance. And you need to address both. (Faculty-7, Central-U)

There is a social responsibility and then also there is a responsibility to the reality that in Canada the population of Aboriginal peoples is steadily increasing and it is in everyone’s interest to address the needs of Aboriginal children in terms of their education. (Staff-2, Southern-U)

The social responsibility of universities to Aboriginal education extended beyond being “an Aboriginal issue, but ...a social issue, because it affects everything else, y’know every other person and every initiative that we undertake in this province” (Administrator-6, Southern-U). In line with the current discourse of global citizenship, institutional responsibility to Aboriginal higher education relates to the larger society. Responsibility also relates to the influential role of universities in shaping society. The argument was put forward that

if we want to have the kind of society we want at the end of the road, we need to allow access to education for everybody...If we don’t we are going to have lots of intolerance, we are going to have inequality, poverty, and social injustice- all of this will go on. (Administrator-4, Southern-U)

Another participant from Southern-U believed

acknowledge[ing] [the colonial] history is to recognize that the family trajectories of people were away from the cultural and economic power were not important and other families have trajectories that were running in different directions which brought them into positions of power. So that critical narrative about colonization and the history of colonialism is critical to personalize it, to individualize it, and to understand it. (Faculty-3, Southern-U)

A further discourse of responsibility related to institutions having a moral and ethical obligation to Aboriginal peoples. Some participants, for example, expressed as an obligation based on the university’s being, “a public institution, as a leader, ethically, morally, and historically” (Faculty-9, Central-U). Several participants believed that the university, as a public institution, has “a leadership role” that supersedes current federal agendas and political climates. This belief resonated with the opinions of a participant who viewed the university as being responsible to “push the barrier and to really struggle with the question as to what does it mean to be, fully creating a learning environment in the community that’s

fully meaningfully inclusive and really actively facilitating meaningful participation and integration” (Staff-7, Southern-U).

Institutional responsibility also needs to connect to the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples and their needs. It was important that universities “break that cycle of education” and not become “a modern extension of colonization and oppression” (Faculty-12, Northern-U). Universities can break the colonial cycle of education by developing programs and services. This means challenging the current structure of universities and the processes in these structures that hinder Aboriginal student success. There was a consciousness amongst participants that Aboriginal education was not just an Aboriginal issue, but

a social issue, because it affects everything else -- y’know every other person and every initiative that we undertake in this province. I don’t think that people think like that generally. I think that they think that we’re a relatively small, statistically unimportant aspect of the institution, and I think that’s reflected in a lot of different ways. (Administrator-6, Southern-U)

And I think that responsibility derives in part from the lengthy history of oppression through the process of colonization, and I think we as a society, as an institution have a huge responsibility to do whatever we can to ensure that the playing field is leveled again and that people have an opportunity to fully realize who they are and realize their dreams and hopes and ambitions and goals. And I don’t think that’s happening anywhere nearly intensively enough. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

The political nature of Aboriginal education and the resistance of some people in society to supporting Aboriginal education related to a lack of understanding of the colonial legacy and disrespect for Indigenous knowledges. Currently, Aboriginal populations do represent “a relatively small, statistically unimportant aspect of the institution” (Administrator-6, Southern-U). However, forecasts based on statistical trends of the growth of the Aboriginal population intimate that institutions actually have a vested interest in the social responsibility to Aboriginal higher education (Mendelson, 2006). In British

Columbia, one in ten school-aged children are Aboriginal indicating that Aboriginal higher education will not be a statistically insignificant issue in the not-to-distant future (Mendelson, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2005). The future classrooms in post-secondary institutions will change, and institutions will need to be proactive to and prepare for these changes.

The parameters of institutional responsibility are organized according to the 4Rs (respect, relevance, reciprocity, and relationships) (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). The most prevalent theme in the discussion with participants of responsibility was relationships. This theme relates primarily to the presence of Aboriginal *seen faces* and *authentic allies* within the institution. The second most prevalent theme dealt with issues of relevance. Topics discussed related to this theme were funding resources, policy, and physical resources (e.g., housing). The final theme was respect for Indigenous knowledge. Throughout this chapter, there is an analysis of power based on how participants discussed the 4Rs and ultimately, how they experienced the 4Rs in their respective institution.

### **Relationships**

Relationships were discussed by approximately 40 participants as an important component of institutional responsibility to Aboriginal higher education. Participants' characterizations of relationships ranged on a continuum from *meaningful connections* to *tokenized exchanges*. There were several themes emerging from the data on relationships and institutional responsibility. The most prevalent theme was the notion of the seen face in terms of the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and students. The second theme in relationships was the power of authentic allies: One institutional responsibility is providing leadership in building support of non-Aboriginal peoples to be authentic allies. The third theme emerging in the data under relationships was the responsibility institutions

have to Aboriginal communities. The fourth and final theme discussed was how institutional responsibilities through relationships negotiate agency, social capital, and the structure of the university.

### Seen face

The first institutional responsibility also builds on the concept of the *seen face* (L. T. Smith, 1999), which, for participants, meant increasing Aboriginal presence across campus. Approximately 30 participants identified the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and students as an institutional responsibility. Participants attributed several benefits to having more Aboriginal peoples on campus. For example, nine participants indicated that by increasing Aboriginal presence on campus, there are more opportunities for mentorship and role modeling for junior Aboriginal faculty and students. Another benefit to increasing Aboriginal faculty across the disciplines is that Aboriginal students broaden their career and educational pathways (i.e., where they can see themselves in the institution and the workforce). Though a challenge in increasing academic seats or faculty positions is recruitment, as this participant stated,

I think we also have some challenges around...around First Nations or Aboriginal, attracting First Nations or Aboriginal professors or knowledgeable Elders or people who can help to impart [Indigenous] knowledge in a way other than through textbooks. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

Another benefit of the *seen face* was the social capital Aboriginal role models create in the institution for Aboriginal students, communities, and the broader university.

Previous chapters discussed how the presence of Aboriginal faculty can also result in tokenized relationships, in that Indigenous faculty, staff, and students become responsible for all Indigenous issues on campus. The challenge is building relationships that are based

on mutual respect; however, mutual respect alone is not enough to ensure change. As one administrator clarified,

You can't act on good intentions without the knowledge that it is essential in making those decisions right. So how do you do it? And even good intentions and some research that you do is not enough. I think you have to have processes and you have to have frameworks within your institution that allow...for a meaningful way of consulting and a meaningful way of knowing what is important and what is not, and a meaningful way for getting that kind of relationship where information flows and when it is potential. (Administrator-7, Southern-U)

Another administrator from Southern-U, acknowledging the benefits of having Aboriginal people on staff demonstrated how the responsibilities of Aboriginal faculty and staff often take for the education of others goes well beyond their job descriptions:

It has been a tremendous learning experience, I think there is a lot to learn and a lot to learn about all those things by having an Aboriginal person on our staff who has really taught us a tremendous amount, and it is a huge responsibility that I see him having. The responsibility not just to do the job but to educate all of us, first of all, on how much we don't know but just educating us about the different way of seeing, thinking, and perceiving and relating to our world. And I don't think that we have been able to take that very far in this community. (Administrator-4, Southern-U)

The reliance on Aboriginal peoples to educate others is problematic when there is no resulting change from such sharing of knowledge. The administrator quoted above also acknowledged that her unit had not only learned a lot from the Aboriginal people on staff but also enacted changes in policy and practice as a result of this relationship. The broadening of awareness and, more importantly, changes in praxis highlight the importance of authentic allies working with Aboriginal peoples on campus.

### Authentic allies

The second responsibility identified by participants was building *authentic allies* across all levels of the institution. Chapter 4 discussed in depth how increased seen face on campus had resulted in meaningful relationships with Aboriginal peoples that had influenced how many participants understood Indigenous knowledges. A participant considered that “there is also going to be the knowledge that we rely on ... [from] colleagues who are [more] understanding of Indigenous issues than I [am]” (Faculty-6, Southern-U). Approximately 20 participants believed the university benefits from reciprocal learning shared between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; furthermore, Aboriginal peoples gain from the building of authentic ally networks across the institution. Authentic allies were described as non-Aboriginal people who have a critical consciousness about Aboriginal issues. As a participant from Central-U reflected that

until you get to know people it's easy to stereotype and I think we are getting to know the people a little bit more as time goes on. I think it is truly valued and as some [First Nations] can share their perceptions, then you take those things to heart. ... So I think that the appreciation is growing and it's starting to be done for the right reasons and that I would say, I don't know if we are at the forefront, I mean if we keep thinking about the things on a responsibility and accountability level rather than on a personal level, you don't tend to get to the benefits, the true value, there has to be individualized, personalized, a true desire to do it which only comes from personal relationships. (Administrator-9, Central-U)

Indigenous peoples and authentic allies work together to develop meaningful relationships that influence institutional transformation. In these relationships all parties have obligations and responsibilities. In identifying what was wrong in the institution, the comments of one administrator implied that all stakeholders have a responsibility to work towards solutions:

just don't point it out to me and say that you are not delivering, help me to get there. I think that would be an approach that would get us together on that. (Administrator-3, Southern-U)

Some participants associated being an authentic ally with a responsibility to act by creating spaces for developing a critical consciousness in others and challenging stereotypes. A participant, who self-identified as an ally, explained her role as a non-Indigenous person,

is [to] connect [with] these [non-Aboriginal] students. They need to witness! This is the most important thing right now, is to witness what an [Aboriginal scholar] is saying is real. And that it's not this fairy tale, distant voice in the classroom. And that there are Indigenous people doing scholarly work, and that not all can be lumped into all the stereotypes of our Native people, which are still predominantly upheld in the university. When [non-Indigenous peoples] go downtown, when they look at the poor, it's mostly Indigenous people. That's their only contact. And so, what I want them to know is, when White students come in contact with Indigenous people, can it be other than in these marginalized spaces of poverty or the sex trade? (Faculty-8, Central-U)

Another participant from Northern-U expanded the responsibilities of authentic allies beyond the classroom. He referenced assisting students but also more broadly being responsible to the larger Aboriginal communities through his research and practice. He thought it was his responsibility to be

accountable to the community. I need to be accountable to the communities that educated me, trained me. So what am I giving back to them? How would my work give back? It has to give back. (Faculty-12, Northern-U)

Authentic allies, particularly those who are from mainstream culture, can use their position of power within the institution and society to support Aboriginal peoples and initiatives. The social capital and position of power of an ally that facilitated institutional change is exemplified in this statement:



The policy we had at that time was just an executive decision from the faculty. What happened was our [dean] at the time was leaving, her appointment was up. We [were] really concerned about the new dean coming in. After talking to our legal beagles, [we learned that the policy] wasn't legal. For us to make it legal and to make it entrenched within the faculty we needed to take it to Senate and therefore it went to Senate. It's written into the calendar. So we are really pleased that the senior associate dean at the time ... took that on and she said she would bring it to Senate and make sure that it was policy. So I think that's another way an institution can show responsibility and accountability. (Staff-1, Southern-U)

The power to enact change was described by an administrator, who suggested that

another layer of responsibility is how you use that within your own web of offerings and programs, how you create opportunities that reconcile what you know, to be happening with what has been happening. You know I'm not a big believer in revolutions -- I think often the most productive change happens through a gradual process - where you increase people's level of awareness, and I think that I don't expect that any university would have an instant fix to it. But I think we need to have a mechanism for this change to occur. (Administrator-7, Southern-U)

Another participant explained that as an Indigenous person he had a responsibility to "push the institution to create space in the institution that welcomes [Aboriginal people] there." He further proposed that

the institution has a responsibility to hear us -- and they have a responsibility to make the institution a welcoming place for us. But you can not have one with out the other. You have to have this push going on -- that has some weight to it. And then the institution has something that they can respond to, in what ever fashion it is. (Adminstrator-12, Central-U)

The above quotation highlights the institutional politics encountered on a daily basis by Aboriginal faculty and their allies, particularly when they challenge pedagogic authority (PAu). Authentic allies and Aboriginal peoples who were not in positions of power (e.g., sessional instructors) were vulnerable if they challenged the status quo. A few participants also recognized that some individuals in the institutions will never be allies but the work of transformation would have to continue in spite of this.

I discussed in Chapter 4 how the binary of us-them was not helpful in presenting the data of this research process. Another participant recognized the binary also had no place in institutional responsibility to Aboriginal higher education. He acknowledged that he thought that

we have to let go of the us-vs.-them perspective, because it is not going to get us anywhere. And, in fact, that will just lead to more isolation, people being removed from these types of discussions and pushed to the margins. Although that approach to settling difference can be beneficial in some circumstances, I think when we have groups of people that we need to build positive relationships if we use the us-against-them, we are right, they are wrong attitude that will just push them away, turn that relationship away from us. It is sort of, a negative feedback loop. (Staff-12, Southern-U)

There was evidence provided in the data of the power of coalition building. For example, at Northern-U Aboriginal faculty and staff worked with supportive allies across academic disciplines to provide important emotional and professional support. At Southern-U, the development of policy without meaningful Aboriginal community consultation resulted in the Aboriginal on-campus community gathering together and pushing back against PAU with a response document to the policy to ensure Indigenous perspectives were included. The latter example demonstrates how acts of symbolic violence (e.g., exclusion of Indigenous voices in Aboriginal policy) relegates Aboriginal agency to the role of “watch dog” (Staff-12, Southern-U).

A *watch dog*, as the analogy alludes, is responsible for watching and guarding, in this instance, Indigenous knowledges in higher education. However, the watch dogs often were Aboriginal staff members, who were not in the positions of power to enact change. In spite of this, power was accumulated through the collective actions of several Aboriginal faculty and staff on campus who gathered their respective capital to elicit an institutional response to their concerns. The danger of being a watch dog, and a good example of the

*politics of distraction* (G. H. Smith, 2000b), is when the responsibilities and agendas of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and administrators become circumvented and disrupted by the need to scrutinize the university community. Then again, this type of surveillance may be necessary until the university community becomes more aware of its actions regarding Aboriginal education. Another responsibility institutions have in Aboriginal higher education is their relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

### Aboriginal communities

Twenty participants identified university and Aboriginal community partnerships as an important responsibility institutions have to Aboriginal higher education. This type of relationship required stewardship and commitment over the long term. A participant described the university as “a family, and [it is a] dynamic relationship, so our responsibility is to be the steward of that. You can’t just fall into that relationship, establish what you need, and then fall out of it. There has got to be some continuity to that relationship so that certain issues can have the length of time in continuity to be addressed” (Administrator-1, Southern-U). “That is what institutional responsibility is -- you do it within the academic program, you do it with your student services, and you do it with your community partnerships and protocols” (Administrator-17, Northern-U).

Partnerships with Aboriginal communities are not solely based on Aboriginal communities sending their students to the institution. Partnerships also entail having Aboriginal community representatives in positions of power in the institution. An idea emerging from the sharing circle conducted with Central-U Elders was having positions for community members on the board of governors.

Another aspect of institutional partnerships with communities requires outreach and presence in Aboriginal communities. As an Elder from Northern-U shared, “I think that the

institution should be working closer with the bands or even having a dean or someone of the [FNC] to be able to go and promote this stuff throughout the bands within their areas.”

Another participant from Northern-U questioned: “Why isn’t there any individual or individuals working closely with the Aboriginal community? Because right now it is like a hit-and-miss process across the board in terms of the programs [and] what potentially could be work[ing] in partnership with communities” (Faculty-11, Northern-U). Universities have a responsibility to the nations and territories on which they were built. This was acknowledged by a participant who recommended that

we need to be responsible, and good, very good partners with our Aboriginal communities and what that education looks like. So that is our responsibility, to act in partnership with other groups. (Administrator-1, Southern-U)

In fact, today’s political consciousness of land rights and education agreements with the federal and provincial governments regarding any new institutional development requires support of the local Aboriginal community before it is established. The next section discusses how initiatives at the community or university level were challenged by the structure and the PAU.

### Agency challenged

Participants from all three sites shared examples of a program, policy, or service being designed without consultation or with the Aboriginal perspective being included as an “after thought.” It is also important to recognize, as a participant pointed out, that if there is only one Aboriginal voice at the table then who is making the decision? Who has the power in such a committee to enact change? It is often not the sole Aboriginal representative. However, as was previously discussed, the power of Aboriginal peoples was mobilized when they formed reactionary coalitions to ensure their voices were included in the process.

and resulting policies. This action-reaction between the university and Aboriginal groups on campus creates a “defensive” and “subversive” institutional culture that is resistant to change (Administrator-12, Central-U). As a result of growing political and social pressures, ultimately, as one participant articulated “over time institutions have no choice but to become institutions that are welcoming to Aboriginal people” (Administrator-12, Central-U). As Aboriginal peoples engage with universities and the political climate of supporting Aboriginal education we must remain diligent and conscious that change occurs more than on paper but is reflected across the entire structure.

Aboriginal agency encounters further symbolic violence when institutional support for Aboriginal initiatives is tied to an individual and not to an initiative or program itself. In two of the three sites involved in this study, such programs or initiatives became lost in institutional bureaucracy. For example, some programs received no further funding, while other initiatives were removed from the formal approval process when the Aboriginal person responsible for the initiative was no longer in the leadership role.

Reciprocal relationships require an “equal exchange” (Administrator-12, Central-U) or at least a mutual beneficial relationship between the university and Aboriginal communities. However, PAU is resistant to the equality and as a result Aboriginal agency must thrive in a defensive and subversive environment. Universities benefit from Aboriginal presence “outside of the monetary realm” (Administrator-12, Central-U), in spite of this, PAU fails to acknowledge the historical and current contribution of IK systems in society. These contributions include IK understandings of local environments, traditional medicines, ecology, biology, psychology, and education. Institutions have benefited from being the colonizers and now it is time for Aboriginal peoples to receive the benefits of a university education (Battiste et al., 2002; Kuokkanen, 2007). Institutions continue to appropriate IK; for example, a participant gave the example that “a lot of stuff that [non-Aboriginals] have

newly discovered has been traditional knowledge for a long time” (Staff-17, Central-U).

Therefore, another aspect of institutional responsibility includes the institution not commodifying Indigenous knowledges as theirs. As a participant explained,

I think the primary responsibility is to recognize that it’s not theirs. That the expertise is by and large outside of the university structure, and that major mind-bending is in order, to be able to design an Indigenous studies program that is really reflective of Indigenous world view, knowledge systems and so on, and that the appropriate approval systems, if you will, for design of courses, has to have a community connection. It has to have widespread Indigenous participation, both from communities, from Indigenous academics, from students. (Faculty-5, Central-U)

Higher education continues to misappropriate many forms of IKs as “theirs, ” such as experiential learning, global citizenship and wellness education, without acknowledging that the origins of these concepts lie within Indigenous communities (Marker, 2004). This lack of recognition continues the symbolic violence subverting Indigenous knowledge and institutional transformation.

### **Reciprocity and Relevance**

Institutional responsibility also relates to principles of reciprocity and relevance. The previous section discussed the relationships of responsibility. This section focuses on institutional responsibilities to the principles of relevance and reciprocity. The themes to be discussed in this section are financial resources, recruitment and retention, policy, and IK across the institution.

#### Financial resources

The first theme emerging was the responsibility of financial resources. Twenty-four participants called for more financial resources and human resources, indicating that these institutions have a long way to go to meet their responsibilities outlined in their policies. It

was seen that institutional responsibility lay in honouring the reciprocity envisioned in the universities' mission statements and policy directives. As one participant pointed out,

Well, the thing that comes to mind is that, well,...stating a number and present[ing] plans about how they're going to support those numbers. As [for] funding allocations for that, not soft, so that, because with the limited resources, usually Aboriginal [groups] go out and find some [outside funding] which takes away from the other duties [of staff]. So I guess [the responsibility is] making it policy. (Staff-10, Southern-U)

Limited financial resources hindered how policy was actually implemented at all three sites. Program administrators of the FNCs argued soft budget lines and limited finances constrained how much could be done to honor various programs or commitments. Academic departments and student service units were restricted in creating an Aboriginal seen face on campus by limited human resources budgets. Participants argued for a stronger institutional commitment to Aboriginal faculty and staff positions across the institution. Many administrators identified that the federal and provincial governments were answerable for lowering transfer payments to universities, which resulted in fiscal shortfalls and cutbacks.

As discussed in the previous chapter, bureaucratic red tape of student financial assistance presented various challenges for Aboriginal students receiving band funding. Part of this challenge relates to the relationships between the university and Aboriginal bands. Students expressed that the university's responsibility was to develop internal supports to assist band-funded students and improve their relationships with First Nations bands. A Northern-U participant described such policy implementation as a "dream," but he believed the reality was that institutional policy ends up being an "oxymoron thing -- it boil[s] down to how much money [universities] have and how much they [could] afford to actually put forward" (Staff-21, Northern-U). Financial commitments also relate to the next theme within reciprocity, the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students, staff, and faculty.

### Retention and recruitment

Another tenant of reciprocity that relates to policy was facilitating access to the institution (i.e., recruitment) and providing wholistic support (i.e., retention). The question was posed by some participants regarding how targeted recruitment funds translated into long-term retention strategies in the university.

When they say “we’re going to give you half a million dollars or a quarter million dollars” -- how does that translates out into success? How do you measure success? On how many students have actually completed their courses and how many students are moving on? And how many people are going to 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th. And I think will always continue to be the challenge, until we start looking at the way that students learn, and sort of assisting that transition. (Staff-21, Northern-U)

Eighteen participants indicated the university was responsible for facilitating access for Aboriginal peoples. Access can be discussed in terms of recruitment and retention. For some participants, access related to removing barriers or hindrances at the university level across the entire university experience. Accessibility was sometimes framed as an issue of moral or social obligation; for others accessibility meant creating equity:

I think there is a responsibility to accommodate to the best of the institution’s ability, education for First Nations, for Aboriginal students. You have to be able to work with, in this case the Aboriginal community, to find out how we can maintain the excellence that we say we have here, and yet include and increase the achievement of Aboriginal students. But we certainly need to, as an institution, make sure we’re not putting up unnecessary barriers. That there’s not something in place, that maybe makes sense for 90 percent of the population but is excluding others and has no real basis for existing. (Staff-16, Central-U)

One of the levels is to be appropriately informed on what kinds of things ought to be happening and what things can make a difference. You know sometimes, you might hear people say well, one of the key responsibilities is to make the university accessible. What does this mean -- accessible? If you provide access to something that is not needed? I mean is that a useful access? (Administrator-7, Southern-U)



For my main thing, the institution's responsibility is accessibility -- it's removing barriers for Aboriginal students, to me that relates to equity but accessibility is the main thing. (Staff-3, Southern-U)

Other participants spoke of the responsibility of the university to facilitate access to the larger Aboriginal communities; this also relates to providing relevant programs and services. Many participants from Northern-U, like this staff person, believed that the university had an obligation to meet the needs of the local Aboriginal community: "Well, I think in terms of a responsibility I think the institutions have a huge responsibility to ensure access and to ensure accommodation" (Staff-19, Northern-U). Community access was also a concern raised at Central-U; as a participant indicated,

For me the place of the university in the lives of Indigenous people is one of facilitating access to resources for communities which are fundamentally marginalized. (Faculty-7, Central-U)

Several participants discussed how the university is responsible for supporting students in a wholistic way. For example, a participant portrayed the responsibilities of a university as meeting the physical, financial, academic, social, and cultural needs of students. He proposed that

if [the university is] going to admit the students, then there is a responsibility that they were prepared to come here, in some whether that's academically, at least, or, well, financially too -- if they're needing budgeting help and those kinds of things. Socially maybe they need to find a place to live, those kinds of things, and they need assistance. I think the institution should be helping in those areas. Counselling for sure. So those kinds of supports are critical in having the students succeed, and it's part of the responsibility of the university to provide that. (Staff-20, Northern-U)

The above quotation also draws attention to the idea that universities need to meet Aboriginal students where they are and think wholistically about how to support them through their entire university experience drawing further parallels to the idea of a transcultured or decolonized university. As this Northern-U student said,

What [institutional responsibility] means to me is the institution will do whatever it wanted to ensure that students reach graduation and that might be taking a look at, like personalizing a program for the student, and having a look not only the student but all of the things that affect the student's life. (Student, Northern-U)

All three sites currently provide or were developing on-campus housing for students. Only one site had a specific policy for Aboriginal single student housing. However, students and other participants identified the need for more housing spaces for Aboriginal students, particularly family housing:

Another issue would be housing -- why [don't universities] provide housing for Aboriginal students? It is always difficult for our students to find housing. (Staff-1, Southern-U)

Some participants suggested the absence of a family housing policy illustrated the unresponsiveness of universities to the Aboriginal student demographics. In this case, institutional reciprocity translates to developing housing for Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff. During the time of this study, a family student housing policy was implemented at one site. Such policy design testifies to the agency within the university and the willingness of the structure to make systemic changes.

Wholistic support provision requires physical space within the institution. The allocation of space was just as political as the allocation of finances. For example, the location of FNCs (First Nations Centres) indicated varying levels of institutional commitment to providing wholistic support. As discussed previously in Chapter 4, Aboriginal cultural events and practices require space beyond the FNCs. Cross-campus understandings of Aboriginal peoples is limited if Aboriginal cultural events and gatherings are solely held within FNCs. Misunderstanding of Aboriginal peoples hindered efforts for cross-collaboration with academic and student support services. Consequently, wholistic support needs to occur within and outside the FNCs across the university.

Wholistic service provision recognizes that “not everyone comes from the same place” culturally, academically, and socially (Administrator-4, Southern-U). However, the challenge is building “*a bridging program*” or “a different kind of program” that reflects the diversity of Aboriginal student needs (Administrator-4, Southern-U). If institutions are committed to increasing the Aboriginal student population on campus, they are also responsible for providing wholistic student support services. This participant makes clear the responsibilities of the institutions by stating that

we can’t just say we want Aboriginal students and expect them to look and behave and be like every other student. [Institutions] have to accept that they are coming from a different place and we have to accept that.  
(Administrator-4, Southern-U)

Institutions are not only responsible for getting students in the door but also helping them beyond their first year. Participants were aware that procuring more resources for program development and staffing requires knowledge of the system and astuteness to negotiate the politics.

### Words into action

Another theme of institutional responsibility for 16 participants related to the institutions putting words into action or “putting your money where your mouth is” (Faculty-3, Southern-U). All three sites had various policies in their calendar, vision, or mission statements related to Aboriginal students. Putting words into action refers to institutions implementing their policies across the institution. As Chapter 2 presented, critical policy analysis involves identifying the “who”: What agents or actors were involved in initiating and designing policy, by whose agenda and goals, and more importantly, who was left out of the conversations (S. J. Ball, 1990; Foucault, 1994)? This is critical in terms

of investigating university policy and Aboriginal education. The question of who is at the table in putting the policy onto paper is important because

we are subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, and the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not “know” what we say, we “are” what we say and do. In these terms, we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies (S. J. Ball, 1994, p. 22)

In terms of Aboriginal policy at the university level, the people who developed the policy are often non-Aboriginal. When Aboriginal peoples were involved, as discussed previously, they were often the sole representatives for the entire Aboriginal community on campus.

A participant identified the problem of policy implementation as lying in the follow-through: “At the university level we make these pronouncements about what we want to happen and what we want to do but we don’t necessarily follow through” (Faculty-3, Southern-U). The same sentiment existed within Northern-U’s administration, where one administrator admitted, “Our heart [is] in the right place -- we are putting resources in the right place, but we have a long way to go” (Administrator-13, Northern-U). Institutional responsibility is grounded in honouring the reciprocity envisioned in their mission statements and policy directives.

The lack of commitment to intentions or promises was also evident in Central-U participants’ discussions. Participants saw Central-U voicing words of commitment to Aboriginal higher education but being unsuccessful in acting upon their words. For example, participants explained that Central-U administration often positioned themselves as “we will do this -- this is our part,” and some of them haven’t been doing that either. There aren’t many stellar examples of people doing what they say they were doing yet” (Administrator-11, Central-U).

Southern-U students were also aware of universities' setting goals and then not working towards those goals. For example, students talked about how the university globally marketed itself to potential students as a "wonderful place where Indians can come and just lie on the beach and get an education, and it's not true" (Student, Southern-U). The lack of congruency between how the university advertised itself and the lived experiences on campus for Aboriginal students was evident in the discussions of students. Some students depicted Southern-U as not "liv[ing] up to the rules they set for themselves in the beginning" (Student, Southern-U) because the campus did not have a welcoming and non-competitive attitude. In fact, these Aboriginal students referred to academic and social challenges to gaining their education.

Some participants indicated that the absence of policy for Aboriginal students was symbolic of the unwillingness of the institutions to transform. The absence of policy absolves the universities from meeting their constituents' needs. Participants, like this faculty member from Central-U, believed that universities

should have a responsibility to their constituents, and may be this is why you don't see the strong recruitment policies. Because then there's the flip side of that coin ... that you have to accommodate the students once you get them here. (Faculty-6, Central-U)

The above quotation exemplifies the perception that policies obligated universities into action. However, policy quickly becomes rhetoric without an implementation strategy. A Southern-U staff member suggested that institutions are eager to say "yes, we are going to create these opportunities for Aboriginal communities," but they fail to articulate "hey, here is how to get there" (Faculty-3, Southern-U). As a result, this participant said: "Policy becomes rhetoric when we are not saying in a meaningful way, here is how we are going to do it, here are specific days, here are what the outcomes we want to happen" (Faculty-3, Southern-U). The non-directive nature of policy hinders enacting change throughout the

institution. The policy documents “talk about things in general themes and encourage people to take initiative on things to see where they can fit in or tie into the bigger vision” (Administrator-3, Southern-U).

The general directive nature of policy encourages individuals to take initiative enacting policy within their own practice. In one instance, this empowers Aboriginal and authentic allies to initiate their own agency within the university. Unfortunately, this model provides little incentive for the institutional operation of such policies. Ultimately, non-directive policy relies on the good intentions of individuals to interpret the policy and to make the changes in their own practice. It was evident from participants, that individuals within institutions receive a failing grade for implementing policy into action (e.g., financial aid, housing, recruitment, and retention). However, participants provided examples of how they were able to influence policy direction and more significantly, implementation of policy, proving that universities, and, more importantly, the people in universities can and are willing to change. This hope and spirit of transformation was strongly connected to the relationships of respect within the institution. The next section discusses institutional responsibility in relation to the R of respect.

## **Respect**

For 20 participants, institutional responsibility to Aboriginal higher education required respect for IK. Therefore, the university was responsible for developing a cross-campus understanding of IK and Aboriginal issues. The respect of IK across the institution also relates to the principles of relevance and reciprocity. An emerging theme in the discussion of institutional responsibility was respect for IK. Another institutional responsibility related to respect, identified by ten participants, was listening. Listening is an important component of the principle of respect and, as a result, is discussed in this section.

Listening also relates to previous Rs of relevance and reciprocity, particularly in terms of designing and implementing policy.

### For IK

Chapter 4 explored in detail how IK was and was not present in the sites of this study. Therefore, this section will focus on how respect for IK across the institution is part of the responsibility of universities to Aboriginal higher education. As one participant recommended,

[Indigenous knowledge] should be a part of the mosaic or part of the fabric of this institution that is totally different -- it is not about what you do, it is about the way you do stuff. It is about the process. It is about the way you think and the attitude you bring. Without that attitude we are never going anywhere. (Administrator-12, Central-U)

Chapter 4 described IK as having pockets of presence in the three participating universities. Cultural representations across the institution created spaces of inclusion; however, the absence of Aboriginal culture and people in other spaces sent the message that IK was unwelcome. Although such representations of IK are important, it is equally important that such representations are acts of respect not tokenism. At one site where there “wasn’t much Aboriginal stuff,” a student observed that

most of the student population does not know that this is even [First Nations] territory. Yet there’s the Indigenous group in this area, yet there’s no recognition of that within the institution. (Student, Central-U)

The reality is the physical presence of Aboriginal culture did not broaden the understanding of non-Aboriginals of Indigenous knowledge or Aboriginal issues. Examples were provided by participants, both faculty and students, that more often than not, non-Aboriginal students have no awareness of issues of colonization or Aboriginal rights. This disconnect creates space for racism and disrespect for diversity. For example, students from

Northern-U spoke of the perception that was held by some non-Aboriginal students that Aboriginal students get all their education paid for. The reality is quite different from this stereotype. Students' experiences of inadequate band funding and limited scholarships indicated they were not receiving a freeride. Such stereotypes were also held by some non-Aboriginal faculty and staff. A participant who believed his campus to be beautiful reconsidered the red bricks once someone pointed out to him that the bricks, in fact, remind some Aboriginal peoples of residential school. Although current buildings can not be changed, the lesson he learned was that

an appreciation for that kinda things, it's startling for me when I hear something like that. It makes me think how much more is there that maybe introduces those kinda barriers or negative reactions so I don't know what -- I can't comment specifically on what the barriers might be, but these things make me wonder or think there might be a lot that I would never even grasp. (Administrator-9, Central-U)

Pedagogic authority (PAu) within universities maintained how and where IK was represented. This was evident in how participants discussed the double standard of having accepted forms of IK in the institution through art but encountering resistance to other forms of IK, such as cultural ceremony or practice of protocols:

Like, really taken into account -- It speaks back to the, y'know "you're having a ceremony, who do you need to include?" It just can't be an afterthought, it has to be really integrated, really understood, that in order for people to feel part of a university, they need to feel that it relates to them, that they count, and that if there are cultural differences or different needs because of backgrounds or circumstances or any of that, that that's both acknowledged and,...accommodated.(Staff-16, Central-U)

All three sites did provide some Aboriginal language courses; however, the issue that is important to acknowledge was the resistance and battle that had to be taken up in order for these courses to be part of the university calendar. This resistance also relates to the relevance of university courses and programs for Aboriginal students. It is also a good



example of the “double standard” (Student, Central-U) in universities respecting IK but challenging how IK becomes represented within the curriculum.

Respect also applies to the relationship between professors and students. Students encountered professors who did and did not have respect for IK. For example, some professors were “understanding of who Aboriginal people are and like what it’s taken for some people to come to university” (Student, Southern-U). On the other hand, there were professors who were “not even approachable, like some of the courses where I struggled in where I wouldn’t wanna go see my prof. They’re not someone I could relate to” (Student, Southern-U).

Another aspect of institutional responsibility includes administrators’, academic heads’, and directors’ knowing what and how professors taught, along with how they treat students. Negative classroom experiences continue to impact Aboriginal student retention (Archibald et al., 1995; TeHennepe, 1993). Inappropriate comments and the singling out of Aboriginal students still occurs on a regular basis at all three participating universities. Although an older Aboriginal student from Northern-U believed she would have been able to stand up for herself in the classroom, she was aware of a younger student who had left the university because the student didn’t know how to handle such situations. She explained that

[professors] should be responsible for what they are teaching the students. If an instructor was saying [something negative about Aboriginal peoples] to me, I would stand up and say why are you saying that? I would really challenge him, but I am an older student. And she was young so wouldn’t challenge him so she quit. (Student, Northern-U)

Aboriginal faculty also indicated that their non-Aboriginal colleagues at the staff, faculty, and administrative levels should be knowledgeable about Aboriginal issues. For example, an Aboriginal faculty member suggested that

[non-Aboriginal faculty] have to be willing, that's the thing about faculty they need to be aware that [Aboriginal faculty] should be able to send [Aboriginal students] to [them] for their expertise... The faculty should always be ready, always be ready to take on the types of tasks rather than lock themselves up. At the end of the day, we are going to end up losing students if we don't have that consistency or support. (Faculty-10, Northern-U)

By acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal nations, institutions showed respect for IK. Participants suggested universities tend to view Aboriginal peoples as a homogenous group. This "*lumping together of someone being Indian* [disrespects the] pride and integrity involved" in who one is as Aboriginal person (Elder, Northern-U). This Elder urged Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to hold each other in "mutual respect and still understand that people are different" (Elder, Northern-U).

### To listen

A respectful action of institutions meeting their responsibilities is listening.

Listening meant more than just hearing words and concerns. In the words of one student,

I would say just listening, and actually look like you are really listening -- to learn those values of respect and honor and to actually believe in them. That would be awesome but sometimes it doesn't look like it. (Student, Northern-U)

In articulating institutional goals and objectives through mission statements and policy documents, decision makers in the university must also put what they hear into action, resulting in meaningful changes. An administrator rationalized that

if you say you want to increase participation of Aboriginal people, we can tell you how you can do that -- you have to do these things, so don't be surprised when we come and say do this. So I think it really depends on the institution and I think it depends on what they said they want to do in terms of their mission. I think it depends on what kind of partnerships they have articulated with communities. (Administrator-11, Central-U)

Listening, however, must be more than hearing what is said; universities have the responsibility to act on what they hear. For example, students complete course evaluations that imply that the university is concerned about their feedback. Yet a student shared that “we never see the result, like what do they actually do with our feedback on the instructors” (Student, Central-U)?

The responsibility of decolonization follows the act of listening. One participant urged that

the Institution has to be a listener, they have to listen too, and we have to, we can't pretend we're not political. We have to support the whole thing of self-determination and listen to the communities about what they need, what they want, and work with them, truly beside them, not as, you know, “there's some money, let's get together and do this.” What is it that they need? And then make it useful for them, and if it is, then people will come. If it's disconnected from their reality, if we are disconnected and we're training Aboriginal adults and giving them degrees, are we part of this whole...how do we break that cycle of education? Just being a modern extension of colonialism and oppression? -- and that's what it is. (Faculty-12, Northern-U)

We must also be aware that the process of listening can result in nothing more than listening. Therefore, as a participant recommended, a mechanism should be put in place, “where they have to, where you can ask that question and they have to answer it” (Faculty-1, Southern-U). When listening is not heard or enacted upon it can be in fact oppressive, disrespectful, and another example of symbolic violence. The result of not being heard and constantly pushing back the PAu can be another way of suppressing voices in the academy and ultimately, does not change the structure. Although speaking out and writing back to policies gives pretenses of agency, it can also be another way the PAu monitors the counter-hegemonic voices in the academy.

One must be cognizant of the emotional toll not being heard takes on the morale and agency of Aboriginal faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Such passive inaction is a

misuse of the principle of respect and relationships and alludes to the issues of power and politics. The final theme defining institutional responsibility presents politics in the field. This section explores how PAu maintained the status quo and how agency pushed back the margins.

### Politics in the field

Power within a university is often in the hands of the decision makers, who are the administration and the board of governors. As a result, transforming universities into sites of success for Aboriginal peoples requires “the philosophy and beliefs of folks who are in positions of power and authority [to be] in sync with what [Aboriginal peoples] see in the institution” (Faculty-11, Northern-U). For universities to respect and include “other ways of knowing,” the PAu must not feel threatened; consequently, those in power need to “let go of their entitlement, control, and ownership” (Faculty-8, Central-U).

Institutional pedagogic authority is reinforced by those appointed to positions of power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu et al., 1994). For example, Central-U had established a position on the board of governors responsible for Aboriginal issues. This institution along with Southern-U also had an Aboriginal advisory council. These councils were established to consult with the university administration on any issue pertaining to Aboriginal students, programs, and policies. Tension existed at Central-U regarding the appointment of a non-Aboriginal woman to represent the Aboriginal council’s concerns to the board of governors. The issue was that there were no accountability measures in place to ensure how the Aboriginal perspective was presented, and more importantly, discussed at these meetings. As this Central-U staff person explained,

her responsibility was to take what was said at the Aboriginal council back to the board of governors, and I don't know if our, any of our recommendations ever made it to that table! We have no records to show that, yes, these concerns were carried forward. (Staff-19, Central-U)

The issue at hand relates to larger systemic issues of trust and accountability in the structure rather than who is in the position. There was no process where the Aboriginal council or community members could ensure that their voices were represented at these important meetings. At Northern-U, as stated previously, there was considerable tension around the lack of institutional awareness of the diversity of nations. The limited focus of programs and services exemplified the institutional power play occurring and placing different Aboriginal groups against each other. The Métis community, in particular, implied that their requests for a Métis studies program and Métis room within the FNCs were neglected by the institution. This power play also occurred at other institutions between various Aboriginal units on campus, all vying for limited resources.

The power dynamics in Southern-U created tension within the campus. Although the institution recognized the need to change, it maintained and reinforced its PAU through token responses acknowledging the need for change or just-enough-responses to stop criticism of inaction. This staff person articulated the power relationships within the university as

currently [being] top-down, a token program, a token effort. We still kind of experience that sometimes. Instead of saying well, you know what we agree with you we think these things are needed, instead of looking at how they can help us, maybe they need to look at how we can help [administration] as well. It's a foundation of relationship building. (Staff-3, Southern-U)

Evidence within the data demonstrates how politics also relate to the principle of responsibility. For example, two of the three sites had examples of territory marking, that is, disagreement over who had power or authority over Aboriginal issues within the university.

In one instance, non-Aboriginal units directed anything Aboriginal to the FNCs or other Aboriginal representatives. In the other case, non-Aboriginal departments or units attempting to develop Aboriginal initiatives within their own programs and services were blocked by Aboriginal staff, who believed that everything Indigenous across campus was their responsibility. Neither situation fosters positive relationships or transformative change.

The hierarchical nature of universities' organizational charts created middle management politics. A few participants acknowledged that some department heads and deans hindered faculty agency at the ground level or VP initiatives at the cross-institutional level. The politics between academic and non-academic units were more prevalent. A participant from Central-U observed that

this isn't about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, it's about administration and faculty. There is almost greater divide between non-academic and academic sides. This is staff coming up with these ideas; we have in no way any influence on the curriculum and the academic. (Administrator-10, Central-U)

The politics over "territory" and resources fails to model the 4Rs. To meet their responsibilities to Aboriginal education, institutions need to be mindful of these power dynamics and actively transform their practices to make positive change. The final section of this chapter describes how universities are to be held accountable to the aforementioned responsibilities.

## **Institutional Accountability**

Participants clearly could articulate the responsibilities universities had to Aboriginal education. The bigger challenge for participants was identifying accountability measures for those responsibilities. For some participants it was a “difficult question” to answer because, like many other participants, this Elder had

a hard time trying to deal with concepts of “making” them do anything -- that is not going to work. I do think that [universities] need to listen more. The university itself has to understand how Indigenous peoples think.  
(Elder, Northern-U)

The above quotation resonated with the recommendation from other participants that universities “need to listen more” (Elder, Northern-U). To some accountability meant “actually really listening to those values of respect and honour and to actually believe in them” (Student, Southern-U).

Forty-nine participants discussed various ways institutions could be held accountable to the responsibilities discussed in the previous section. The Rs of respect and relationships encompass the participants’ descriptions of institutional accountability. Four main themes emerged from the data: (1) making policy public, (2) surveillance from outside, (3) surveillance from within, and (4) the need for metrics and benchmarks.

### **Making policy public**

All three sites had specific policies regarding Aboriginal students (e.g., equity, admissions, financial, and housing); however, the implementation of these policies was not consistent or effective. As seen in the discussion of institutional responsibility, an equally strong call for institutional accountability emerged from the data in terms of policy design and implementation. Approximately 24 participants identified the primary measure for

accountability as “com[ing] from the words they say and they write” (Administrator-2, Central-U). Another participant from Central-U further stated,

We need to do is not just SAY it, and not just WRITE it, but actually PRACTICE it. And so accountability at every level. All of us, at some point can say or do something that we probably shouldn't. And it's important we have opportunities, and be open to growth, development, and new learning ourselves. (Staff-13, Central-U)

Accountability was based on the public commitment an institution made to Aboriginal higher education. If an institution does not make that public commitment, then

they don't owe us anything, other than we are taxpayers and we have a right to an education like anybody else...but if you do this dog and pony show and welcome all -- then [the institution] has a commitment to [Aboriginal people] because you invited us and you said that you want to be around us, so now you have to listen. (Administrator-2, Central-U)

Another participant from Northern-U indicated accountability related to “the value and importance an institution places on meeting the needs and expectations of Aboriginal peoples for in this case, post-secondary education?” He positioned institutional accountability in the abstract and in reality by further asking “do you put your money where your mouth is” (Administrator-13, Northern-U)?

Good accountability processes honour the commitments conveyed in mission statements and vision documents. Such public words clearly indicate the commitments that universities have articulated as their responsibilities. A participant from Southern-U outlined three steps for institutional accountability which resonated with other participants' conversations. First, he explained, “What matters is that they make [policy], and that it is public.” The second step of accountability is establishing a feedback mechanism where questions could be asked and the institution had to answer those questions. The structure “has to be a place where [decision makers] have to answer the question.” Finally, the third step was that



accountability was just not about the institution, there was also an implied accountability for the Aboriginal community as well. The accountability for the Aboriginal community was to be engaged in the process to the extent that it is working. If it is not working, of course, they should not waste their time, and they should not give it dignity. They should not appear to endorse it when it is not working. (Faculty-1, Southern-U)

The community endorsement is an example of community agency where “if [the university] is not meeting the needs, get the community to send [their people] elsewhere”

(Administrator-15, Northern-U). The next accountability measure put forward relates to measuring outcomes set by policy.

### **Surveillance from outside**

Accountability standards located outside the institution reinforce the principle of reciprocity with Aboriginal communities. Approximately 17 participants recommended that Aboriginal community agency could assess change within the institution by advocating their needs and monitoring the institution’s progress. Aboriginal community representatives located in the upper administration of the institution influences the power of the transformation. Power within a university is “like a balance” between the institution, which developed programs and services, from the lobbying of the local Aboriginal community. “If that dynamic is not sustained, it will go away, [transformation] will not happen” (Faculty-12, Central-U).

Another ten participants proposed the only “true” accountability measure for universities lay with federal and provincial government transfer payments. This external funding has power over institutions, because, as a participant believed, “the leverage [over universities] is where the funding comes from [and] the funding for education comes from the federal government” (Staff-2, Southern-U). Consequently, for some participants, the

federal and provincial governments had the power that made them the only valid enforcers of institutional mandates and missions. For example, in the words of one faculty member,

There's not direct accountability for a university...because the government can give a fair amount of direction to a university, I mean, that's where the major push is. I mean any initiative that has been started at [this university], you can probably trace back to governmental pressure, more so than anything from the students or even a community for that matter" (Faculty-6, Central-U).

So even though community lobbying can influence change within institutions, it was the perception of some that the government had more authority and power over the universities, and, hence, any changes within them.

The reciprocal relationship between governments and universities obliges universities to "lobby governments." The responsibilities of universities to Aboriginal education needs to explore the question, "How could the university take a role in putting [Aboriginal education] on ...provincial and federal tables, how can that be more streamlined" (Staff-10, Southern-U)? It is clearly seen that both the university and the government have a reciprocal responsibility to hold each other accountable to Aboriginal education through lobbying and legislation.

Institutions commonly respond to their responsibilities by linking accountability standards to the availability of financial resources. The neo-liberal rhetoric evident throughout the discussions and observations of this study requires critical interrogation as this discourse continues to influence Euro-Western constructions of success. However, as one participant viewed institutional accountability existing "beyond the political climate, then you are accountable to your own ideals, in trying to be the very best an institution you can to really advance in that direction" (Staff-7, Southern-U). Therefore, a responsibility of the institution is challenging neo-liberal influences of success and relating success back to the mandate and goals of the university, particularly those related to Aboriginal education.

As Chapter 5 presented, some participants are actively engaged in challenging this rhetoric by expanding how success may be understood. The proposed accountability measures were still predominantly defined by Euro-Western notions of accountability. The use of legal means and political pressure to transform the institution can produce negative “backlash.” One participant discusses how this pressure has to be done carefully:

I do agree that we need to use legal means and political pressure. But I think at a certain point if this society is not prepared to act morally and responsibly to Aboriginal peoples, it is really difficult to educate...towards a decolonized position...If you push too hard, you can produce backlash that can set things back too far. (Faculty-3, Southern-U)

Current understanding of accountability standards need to be inclusive of Indigenous perspectives built on the 4Rs of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility.

### **Surveillance from within**

Fourteen participants discussed how institutions are held accountable to their own communities -- extending the notion of dual responsibility to dual accountability. Universities were seen as accountable to the community they serve, to the faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Part of this accountability relates to the notion of the seen face discussed in previous chapters: “The more Aboriginal peoples that we have participating around campus, we get more involved in the conversations that do take place” (Staff-12, Southern-U). Having “the right people in the right places [who] are well informed of the system as well as Aboriginal issues” helps the university reach its goal of “increasing Aboriginal enrollment” (Staff-12, Southern-U). Aboriginal presence across the institution creates a consciousness of Aboriginal issues built on relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Another layer of accountability for universities is establishing positions of authority within the institution for Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal administrators monitor and remind others in the administration that Aboriginal people are part of the campus community. Aboriginal administrators are leaders within the institution “because they are closer to the president” than Aboriginal faculty or staff (Staff-1, Southern-U). Such positions of power result in added expectations of responsibility.

Unfortunately, Aboriginal administrators, faculty, and staff sometimes end up as watch dogs within the university and become distracted from the larger purpose of transformation. This is another example of the pedagogic authority (PAu) enacting pedagogic action (PA) to distract Aboriginal peoples from their important work, whether they are students, researchers, or educators. For example, Aboriginal faculty and staff became distracted from their own research, teaching, and practice when they had to sit as token representatives on committees or engaged in reacting to another policy developed without consultation. One such case described by an Aboriginal staff member who revealed that she sat on over 16 different committees and spent most of her time in meetings instead of developing programs and services for Aboriginal students.

We also need to consider how individuals as agents in the field of the university encounter spaces of resistance and support. We have learned through this dissertation that when the PAu enacts PA to the agency of individuals little systemic change occurs. The danger is the small successes but lack of structural reforms creates a sense of learned helplessness in individuals, who are challenging the PAu. For example, an individual who is attempting to make programmatic changes in a discipline that is resistant to including IK may put together course packages, work to change the academic calendar, present and consult at numerous meetings, only to be stopped at the faculty level. Imagine encountering that resistance everywhere you turn—the assumed agency of faculty or staff to make

changes to the structure, becomes minimized and the message is sent that things can not be changed, maintaining the power of the PAu. That being said, this dissertation has shown that individual agency that mobilized social and intellectual capital of others can influence change. Therefore, power does not always come from the top (this issue will be discussed in Chapter 7).

The need for Aboriginal presence at the decision-making level is important and this position has to be more than a “token seat” on a committee. However, in these structures, institutions need to ensure the Aboriginal voice does not get “watered down,” as, for example,

when [the Aboriginal person is] one person in a group of five or ten. So really what it boils down to is your decision gets overwhelmed by the majority anyways. It’s nice to have [such positions] but a lot of times the whole tokenism happens unfortunately. (Staff-19, Northern-U)

Engaging non-Aboriginal peoples who are “authentic allies” builds “support networks” and coalitions to move forward Aboriginal agendas at the decision making level (Faculty-3, Southern-U). The fourth and final accountability measure recommended by participants was related to measuring the outcomes and objectives set forth by policy.

### **Need for metrics and benchmarks**

Measurements and benchmarks define the fourth measure of accountability. Approximately ten participants also believed, as did this participant, that “counting demonstrates accountability” (Staff-16, Central-U). While success was defined as more than graduation; institutional accountability “comes down to how many students successfully graduate” (Staff-16, Central-U). Consequently, successfully graduating becomes

a case of somehow having both brought things to the institution as well as take away things from the institution in terms of knowledge and understanding, and links to the greater community. (Staff-16, Central-U)

The above quotation and the preceding excerpt demonstrate that simply counting ineffectively measures what is truly important in accountability. An administrator from Southern-U explains that

my view on...the measurement issue is that sometimes things that can be measured quickly, fairly, and reliably are not the kinds of things that we want to measure. So I'm a big believer of accountability and measurement in assessment. And measurement is an important part of assessment. Sometimes I think we fall into the trap of trying to step up those kinds of benchmarks or standards, which again, I'm all for standards as long as they are standards that address the kinds of things that really mean something. (Administrator-7, Southern-U)

The numbers game clearly indicates whether or not an institution achieved its goals for Aboriginal education (i.e., how many Aboriginal students graduate). Recruitment metrics and benchmarks, such as how many Aboriginal students applied and were accepted, also need to be considered. In terms of retention, universities do not currently assess how many Aboriginal students go on to second, third, and fourth year. Alumni surveys, like the *University Baccalaureate Graduates Survey*, provide important information related to career trajectory and program satisfaction. The same types of record keeping and surveys could also be developed for Aboriginal faculty, staff, and administrators.

The counting of the Aboriginal community on campus should not be the sole accountability measure occurring within the university. Participants also suggest that programs and services be continually evaluated for effectiveness of program outcomes and goals. Some participants believed responsibility for this program evaluation lies with program developers and administrators. Administrators and staff participating in designing the programs' accountability standards ensures there is infrastructure support, as this participant suggests:

There's a relationship between accountability and goals and objectives, and so if it is your program infrastructure that's establishing goals and objectives, then insuring that they're met has to sit with that body as well. (Administrator-13, Central-U)

Accountability at the program level requires long-term research to assess the impact of Aboriginal-specific programs and services. However, solely relying on internal evaluations has its own limitations, and, as a result, external accountability measures should also be in place.

### **4Rs in Relation to Institutional Accountability and Responsibility**

Relationships are *key* to transforming universities into more successful places for Aboriginal students. However, relationships within the university are complicated by several layers of politics within each institution. There were relationships that were manipulated to meet the PAu agenda and there were relationships that empowered Aboriginal peoples. This continuum of relationships requires building networks and approaching change through a variety of strategies. The discourse of the interviews and sharing circles revealed that positive change depends upon having the right Aboriginal person working with the "right" authentic allies in positions of power. It is important to elaborate this notion of "right." We can not assume that all Aboriginal peoples or authentic allies have the same position on an issue. Therefore, having the right person relates to the individual having the power and capital along with the critical consciousness about the issue of enacting change. Relationships influence power, structure, and agency within the institutions.

Respect means more than token art and surface-level tolerance for Indigenous presence at the institutions. Respect also was and is not a unilateral action. All parties

involved in this relationship need to respect each other. Respect at all three participating universities can be placed on a continuum from outward acts of disrespect to polite “political correctness” to genuine actions of respect.

There were many examples of good intentions, but, these good intentions fell short of making the systemic changes recommended by Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991). Good intentions can also be acts of symbolic violence when simply stated intentions do nothing more than pacify voices of dissent. Therefore, good intentions can be about silencing voices and not about wanting structural changes.

Universities are also responsible for providing relevant programs and services for Aboriginal peoples. Relevant programs and services meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal students and their communities. However, internal politics existed over how to address Aboriginal issues in the university. Relevance also requires increasing the seen face of Aboriginal staff, faculty, administrators, Elders, and students on campus. Creating an environment that reflected the Aboriginal diversity in British Columbia was important to ensuring the university was seen as a place for Aboriginal peoples. Universities further honor the principle of relevance by providing a place where Aboriginal students can “see” themselves represented in the physical environment, in the university community and within their academic programs (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy).

The principle of reciprocity refers to the “give-and-take,” in a relationship. Acts of reciprocity include dedicating a building with an Aboriginal name or cleansing the land with ceremonial protocol. Reciprocity also meant giving back relevant and meaningful education to Indigenous people. Even though great strides have been made in education and the social sciences, more needs to be done at the institutional levels to improve Aboriginal participation across disciplines. The university can demonstrate a reciprocal relationship with Aboriginal communities and the province, as a whole, whether through recruitment or



mentoring programs, academic preparation, summer programs, or in the training of teachers and administrators. Those within the institution (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) are ready for change. However, the institutional structure (e.g., bureaucracy) needs to be flexible and ready to act on those changes.

## Chapter 7

### IT TAKES MORE THAN GOOD INTENTIONS

The overall purpose of this dissertation was to explore the question *What makes a university a successful place for Aboriginal students?* This work identified several factors that contribute to universities becoming more successful places for Aboriginal students. For example, students acknowledged that having courses and academic programs grounded in IK helped make the university a successful place for them. Other participants recognized that the presence of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and Elders improved their understandings of IK and assisted them in building relationships with Aboriginal peoples. Such relationships equipped the university to be more successful places for Aboriginal peoples. First Nations Centres (FNCs) also played a critical role in facilitating Aboriginal student success and the building of relationships across the institution that facilitated institutional change.

The wholistic framework employed in this study assisted in understanding areas of the university that supported Aboriginal education. It was also clear from the data that good intentions have not been enough to transform the *entire* university into a successful space for Aboriginal people. In order to explore the issues inherent in achieving this transformation, I delved into the relationship between (a) Indigenous knowledges, (b) power, and (c) social reproduction. This exploration sought to articulate how Indigenous understandings of responsibility and accountability related to universities and Aboriginal higher education.

The argument can be made that if universities and other stakeholders outside the institution, such as the federal and provincial governments, Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organizations, and other interested groups, work together to make the institution a more successful place for Aboriginal students, these changes will also benefit the entire

campus community. If you think of Aboriginal education and mainstream education in terms of an unbalanced scale, simply adding the same weight to each side in terms of programs and services does not create parity or close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal university attainment. For true parity, the educational system, from pre-school to K to 12 to post-secondary, has to increase and improve programs and services for Aboriginal peoples. Changes also need to occur in the policy arena and in the day-to-day practices of those in the educational system. Therefore, even though changes to the institutional structure may benefit the entire campus, it is important to remain diligent regarding the specific impacts of these changes on Aboriginal peoples.

The first theme relates to the “presence and practice of IK” in a mainstream university. This section explores how IK had pockets of presence in the institution. The presence of IK is under constant vigilance, internally, by individuals who embodied IK and, externally, by others who placed political and hegemonic cultural value on IK. The roles of FNCs are also revisited in this section in relation to IK; however the politics of power and agency in terms of the relationships FNCs had across the institution are discussed in the second theme “power and capital.”

The second theme resonating throughout this research relates to power and capital. In this section, I compare the power enacted by Indigenous peoples and their authentic allies on campus to transform the institution with the power enforced by the PAu to maintain control over IK and continue hegemonic and colonial practices with respect to Aboriginal education. I also discuss notions of Indigenous capital and agency as counter-hegemonic movements to pedagogic authority.

The third theme, “two views of accountability,” discusses the competing values of Indigenous knowledge and neo-liberal values regarding accountability. In this section, I

question the logic of even having accountability measures. I also explore what we can do differently to adhere to our respective responsibilities.

The fourth theme, “unresolved contradictions,” explores the inconsistencies that were inherently part of the existence of IK in universities (e.g., role of Aboriginal faculty, First Nations Centres, and individual politics). It is also in this discussion that I revisit the problematic of the binary of us-and-them (Calliou, 1998).

After reviewing the themes that resonated in this research, I devote one section to reflecting on my experiences as a researcher in relation to the findings and the research process. Another section of this chapter explores the significance of this research project to the fields of higher education, student services, and Aboriginal theory. Finally, the last section of this concluding chapter presents implications for various stakeholder groups along with suggestions for research, theory, and practice related to this research.

## **Presence and Practice of IK**

In the section “pockets of presence” in Chapter 4, IK was described as having a minimal presence across the university. The presence of IK has increased primarily in areas where Aboriginal peoples, whether staff, faculty, students, Elders, or administrators, decided to share their knowledges. The ways IK were acknowledged in the university created tension in all three sites when IK pushed against Euro-Western pedagogic authority (PAu). Students shared examples of being singled out in class to speak for all Aboriginal peoples, faculty talked about how their engagement with Aboriginal communities was not viewed as service, and some staff talked about how the limited focus of the institution on the intellectual realms harmed the wholistic balance sought by Aboriginal peoples.

Simple acts of inviting Elders to a ceremony as an afterthought or hanging Aboriginal art in the hallways are not enough to maintain the cultural integrity of Aboriginal peoples on campus if the daily practices of individuals and the structures perpetuate acts of disrespect and overt and covert forms of racism. Keeping IK at the surface level in the institution illustrates how the dominant society seeks to maintain control over how IK enters and is represented in the institution. The PAu over IK disrespects the habitus and cultural integrity of Aboriginal peoples and, more importantly, hinders wholistic success. The inclusion of IK and respect for Indigenous peoples in universities has to be more than an afterthought.

IK is multidimensional and influenced by place. The university can be thought of as one field in which IK can be present. However, given the political nature of universities, as described by social reproduction theory, there is a dual responsibility in bringing IK to the university. First, it is critical that Indigenous people in the academy are diligent in their use of their IK so that it does not become commodified. Second, authentic allies also have a responsibility to ensure IK is not tokenized, but respected, and, more importantly, valued as an integral component of the fabric of the university.

The physical presence of IK in the institution indicated how the university valued or undervalued IK. For example, most of the FNCs (obvious markers of IK on campuses) were located in the basements of buildings or on the outskirts of the campus. Even taking into account the history of campus development and the politics of space in universities, it is still clear that IK continues to be marginalized physically and intellectually across the campus. The inroads IK has gained need to be celebrated and expanded across the campus.

In many Aboriginal communities, the intergenerational nature of knowledge transfer is the responsibility of the Elders, aunties, uncles, and parents. There were limited examples of Elders as classroom teachers in the sites of this study; primarily, Elders were valued as

important cultural advisors and mentors through the FNCs. Elders had limited presence in the classrooms, although some Elders were teachers for Aboriginal language or culture courses. This highlights how legitimacy of knowledge in the academy is based on the intellectual capital of a university credential -- the authority of knowledge was bestowed on those holding a doctorate. Some university administrators and faculty who are unwilling to relinquish the power of these credentials resisted recognizing the intellectual capital of Elders. There was some evidence (although limited) of recognizing Elders for their academic contributions, but parity of degree status was not explicitly mentioned.

Despite the lack of cross-institutional acceptance of the intellectual capital of Elders, FNC administrators, staff, and students recognized the importance of their role. Two of the three FNCs had implemented or were implementing Elders programs. Two of the three institutions also had strong involvement of Elders and community members in an advisory council capacity. These positions were facilitated in part by the leadership of the FNCs. Such advisory roles and in-residence positions created avenues for agency in influencing policy directions and practices with respect to Aboriginal issues (e.g., academic programs).

FNCs were also active sites of IK through cultural and academic programming. Elders in the FNCs acted as mentors and cultural advisors for students. The FNCs also expanded IK across the universities with some successes and challenges. The successes related to building relationships -- the support of authentic allies facilitated building of networks of relationships across the institutions. These positive relationships were particularly powerful when the FNC director was part of the upper administration of the university. Such a position influenced policy and the decision making of other administrators and provided key direction for the practice of other departmental and support staff. The problem was that the FNCs had limited resources, both financial and human; consequently, FNC staff often became responsible for all things Indigenous. This unfair

weighting absolved non-Aboriginal peoples in the institution of taking responsibility for their own learning and, more importantly, their practices within the university, particularly those practices that hindered Aboriginal student success.

Another issue that arose in the discussion of IK was how the institutions and FNCs honor and respect the diversity of Aboriginal peoples in the institution and, at the same time, respect the local nation on whose land the university is built. There were political differences between various student service providers and the FNCs about who was responsible for Aboriginal students and issues. Ultimately, such political tensions distracted people from the important work of transforming the university. The presence and practice of IK, specifically FNCs, in the university strongly relates to the next section, “power and capital.”

## **Power and Capital**

Pierre Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory provided insight into the nuances of the structure of universities, coupled with the wholistic theoretical framework, these theoretical lenses highlighted issues of power, Indigenous capital, and agency. Power is not always a top-down process. Through coalition building, Aboriginal peoples, along with authentic allies, achieved some progress in both programs and policies. For example, Aboriginal community members and organizations worked with Aboriginal faculty at Northern-U to develop and implement a specific academic program. Similar coalition building influenced the direction of housing policy at Southern-U and the development of culturally relevant spaces at Central-U. Progress and change were occurring in the universities, but had limited impact structurally across the institution. Many participants recognized that any change

within an institution, particularly at the structural level, takes time and resilience on the part of those supporting the change.

University structures (e.g., procedures and policies, mission statements, infrastructure, budget, and academic calendar) can positively and negatively affect how transformation occurs at the institutional level. These structures in part define the type of cultural masks universities are currently wearing. For the most part, the universities participating in this study were a mix of the assimilative and marginalized masks. There were pockets of the institutions that certainly valued IK (i.e., marginalized), however, the larger culture of the institutional structure imposed notions of “fitting in” and “being like any other student,” that resonated an assimilative tone. As a result of this research, two questions need to be posed to each of these universities: Is this the mask they want for their institution? If not, universities need to transform their institutional structures to embody the cultural mask they believe resonates more closely with their responsibilities and accountabilities to Aboriginal education. Part of this institutional transformation connects to power, capital, and politics of stakeholders.

University structures certainly play into the negotiation of power, capital, and politics of the stakeholders. Stakeholders in the university may have their own individual agendas that may or may not be unified towards a specific Aboriginal initiative. Such politics further complicate the issue of transforming universities into successful spaces for Aboriginal peoples. For example, there were instances in this study where upper administrators were proactive and supportive of Aboriginal initiatives. This support set the tone for the rest of the university. There were also examples of power exerted from staff, faculty, and students that impacted decisions made by upper administration. Conversely, there were a few cases of when individuals with personal or political differences impeded the progress of change in the institution.



Political agendas that are competing can be also viewed as acts of symbolic violence because power is maintained or reinforced by the PAu. Such acts are also part of the colonial practice of divide and conquer, that is, putting competing interests in conflict with each other to distract them from the larger issue at hand. Such agendas hinder policy development and ultimately, transformation of the university structure. From what I observed, varying political agendas, including between Aboriginal groups, created fractures in alliances when groups or individuals were competing over limited financial or human resources.

Another significant issue imbedded in the institutional structure was the issue of responsibility; that is, who was responsible for Aboriginal issues in the university. The lack of clarity over responsibility created power struggles when transformation agendas challenged PAu. Institutional facilitation of Indigenous capital and cultural integrity requires a sharing of power across the institutional hierarchy (top-down, left-right) that provides support instead of resistance to Aboriginal initiatives. In this facilitation, the role of watch dog must fall to all stakeholders; it can not simply remain in the hands of a few Aboriginal people on campus. The watch dog must also be proactive instead of reactive, anticipating changes and ensuring representation at pertinent discussions and decision-making tables.

The progress of policy developments regarding Aboriginal issues was often affected by the politics of territory between different units (e.g., FNCs, financial services, and residence). Institutional policies (e.g., academic, admissions, housing, finance, and recruitment) were developed as a result of the capital of various stakeholders *and* relationships between these individuals, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. The power to enact change becomes threatened when key individuals involved in the creation of an initiative become removed from the process. It is in these moments that the PAu pushes

back against the counter-hegemonic. The challenge, as alluded to previously in this dissertation, is the actual implementation of policies, which, as a form of accountability, will be discussed in the next section, “two views of accountability.”

Participants in the study, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were very clear, in their discussions of responsibility, that the institutions needed to be doing more for Aboriginal education. Part of institutional responsibility involves *each* individual *actively engaging* in his or her own practice, whether as administrators, faculty, staff, or students. Stakeholders in the university also have the responsibility to remain conscious of the need for institutional change and their responsibility to enact such changes. Institutions also have a greater responsibility to actively recruit and retain Indigenous students and faculty. However, simply putting bodies in seats or offices is not enough to change the power structures of the institution (Kuokkanen, 2007), and recruitment and retention are not simply addressed by increasing the number of seats for Aboriginal students and faculty. Other gatekeepers, in positions such as finance and housing, also need to be actively engaged in minimizing the structural barriers that impeded Aboriginal recruitment and retention.

Supporting a wholistic theoretical framework is not about addressing perceived deficits; it is about empowering the cultural integrity and forms of capital of Indigenous peoples. By identifying areas of the institution that hinder wholistic understandings of success, I am also reflecting on what the structural deficits are that prevent universities from becoming successful places for Aboriginal peoples.

Institutions enacted their responsibilities to Aboriginal higher education in a variety of sites across the campuses but not in all spaces. PAu attempts to define and control IK result in Aboriginal peoples pushing back and advocating for change. The role of authentic allies, particularly those who embody the capital valued by the PAu, also play an important role in supporting IK presence and Aboriginal agendas in mainstream universities. The

cross-institutional presence of authentic allies and Indigenous peoples reminds institutions of their responsibilities because the institution is built on the people who are there. The seen face as an accountability measure demonstrates the connections between the concepts of relationships in Indigenous theory and power and capital in social reproduction theory. Without relationships that challenge, support, and push power structures within the university, change within the university will remain slow and stagnate, particularly when the PAu believe they have done enough to appease the concerns of Indigenous peoples and communities.

## **Two Views of Accountability**

Under the neo-liberal rhetoric, the notion of individual autonomy (i.e., success is dependent on your individual performance) predominates and the systemic influences on shaping that performance are not held responsible. The neo-liberal value of the “free market” on educational choice and increased surveillance through standardized evaluations plays into the neo-conservative agenda of a romanticized return to the “values” of education. Using their measures of success, neo-conservatives can then determine what knowledge, values, and behaviours should be “standardized and officially defined as legitimate” (Apple, 2004, p. 24). As this view is increasingly embraced by the authoritarian populace (i.e., the new middle class), who want to maintain their power as middle class and provide their children with every advantage, education is becoming a playing field of increasingly more inequitable power struggles. Current accountability discourses are influenced by this neo-liberal rhetoric that values financial gains and measurable outcomes, such as graduation statistics. An Indigenous perspective on accountability presented in this dissertation is based on the wholistic theoretical framework and the 4Rs, which does not

exclude graduation and financial outcomes, but, at the same time, gives them less weight and emphasis. Such statistical measures can, in fact, expose inequities in the educational system and strengthen the argument that the structures and practices of higher education need to change.

Indigenous understandings of responsibility acknowledge the multiple roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders inside and outside the institution. This recognition reflects the interconnection of the university to society, locally and globally. Consequently, an alternative to the neo-liberal measurable outcomes of accountability requires that the structure of the university be changed in order to better facilitate Aboriginal student success. The application of Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4Rs in the wholistic theoretical framework not only challenges neo-liberal discourse of accountability but clearly articulates how universities can address their responsibilities to Aboriginal education.

### **Unresolved Contradictions**

Relationships are *key* to transforming universities into successful places for Aboriginal peoples. However, I have remained aware throughout this work that simply arguing that universities need to transform ignores the complex relationships universities have with society. It is not enough to simply advocate for individuals in the universities to change their practices or to naively assume everyone will become authentic allies. These acts alone can not change the systemic structural issues in universities or society that hinder Aboriginal higher education.

Simply bringing IK into mainstream universities, for example, creates contradictions in terms of how IK is experienced. As counter-hegemonies in the university, IK pushes and pulls against PAu and hegemonic-valued forms of capital. At the same time, universities are

micro-structures of society and enact PA, in response not only to internal systemic influences but also (perhaps predominantly) to the dominant values of power in the larger society.

Another contradiction that resonated in both the policy and student experience realms was the issue of student financial support. Inadequate funding hinders the participation of Aboriginal students in university. This section discusses the tensions between policy at the institution, Aboriginal community, and the federal government.

The contradictions of the multiple and often competing roles Aboriginal faculty face in the academy are also discussed in this section. For example, as well as securing tenure, faculty face additional expectations such as fulfilling responsibilities to the community, being advocates and agents of change in the institution, and representing the visible presence of IK in the university.

### **IK in the academy**

In the discussions about the presence of IK in the university, there were obvious contradictions related to the discourse of power, hegemony, and pedagogic authority (PAu). For example, the location of IK in the institution occurred primarily as pockets of presence in marginalized spaces. Although there were examples of sites where the boundaries of permissibility of including IK were being pushed, the issue of permissibility exemplified how the dominant hegemony attempted to exert PAu in defining how and where IK was represented in the university. A concrete example emerging from both the data and the research literature was how the oral traditions of Elders were challenged as valid sources of information in research. IK was also present, although sparingly, in representations of Aboriginal art and architecture. Such representations were usually located in close proximity to Aboriginal faculty offices or Aboriginal-specific academic programs.

IK in the university was influenced by (1) the pedagogical approaches of the person being the knowledge holder and transmitter of IK and (2) where IK was present in the academic realms. This boundary of power was challenged by Aboriginal faculty who attempted to indigenize the classroom by physically changing the structure of the class to a circle to distribute power between the learners and instructor. Even the perception that Aboriginal academic programs were less rigorous played into the politics of power occurring within the institutions.

The contradictions within these representations of IK relate to hegemonic and neo-liberal influences on marketization of degree credentials. For example, there was a hierarchy of quality in that Bachelors of Science and professional programs carry higher symbolic and, in some cases, economic capital in mainstream society over Bachelors of Arts. In such academic hierarchies, Aboriginal programs were perceived as being at the bottom.

The PAu notions of IK were imposed when, for example, the diversity of Aboriginal nations was homogenized into one way of being Aboriginal. This way of being was defined by hegemonic perceptions of what it meant to be Aboriginal. There was also evidence in the data that power and conflict existed in some aspects related to valuing certain forms of Indigenous capital over others. Such internal politics created power imbalances between Aboriginal groups. I would suggest these politics are a consequence of PAu and colonization. The politics of distraction were evident when the Aboriginal and university community debated who were viewed as legitimate knowledge holders of IK. I argued earlier that the binary of us-and-them or Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal did not have a place in this research. I would extend this argument to the politics of identity. Aboriginal nations represent diverse Indigenous knowledge systems. This heterogeneity is integral to Indigenous forms of capital and cultural integrity.

Another contradiction related to the authenticity of IK was how IK in the university, especially through textbooks, was different from the IK practiced in Aboriginal communities. Symbolic capital of IK in the academy also played into this tension because IK became tokenized and disrespected. The next section discusses the contradictions inherent in competing needs and resources.

### **Competing needs and resources**

An obvious issue, throughout the discussions with participants, was the limited financial resources for Aboriginal initiatives across the campus. The two most prevalent contradictions related to (1) Aboriginal student financial support and (2) resources for the FNCs. For example, Aboriginal students fund their education in a variety of ways (e.g., federal funding, work, student loans, and personal savings). The federal government provides funding support to First Nations students through the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP).<sup>25</sup> However, funding caps and overall increases in Aboriginal participation in higher education has resulted in many First Nations students not receiving funding from the PSSSP. In addition, the PSSSP program does not address the financial needs of non-status Aboriginal and Métis students. Those students receiving support from the PSSSP still encounter financial shortfalls because of inadequate funding. PSSSP funded students are also ineligible for the Canada Student Loan programs; this ineligibility then excludes them from bursary and work study programs.

The contradiction in terms of Aboriginal student financing is multi-layered. One aspect is the inadequate funding being provided by the federal government to support Aboriginal students in their post-secondary studies. The other is that once Aboriginal bands

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<sup>25</sup> See [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/ense\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/ense_e.html) for more detail regarding this program.

receive federal transfer funds, there are politics and regulations -- set both by the band, internally, and by the federal government, externally -- that impede student success. Limited financial support does not support the wholistic framework of student success. The other layer relates to the limitations of financial student support services in helping Aboriginal students. For example, financial services are restrained by policy restrictions of the alternative programming policies (e.g., Canada Student Loans, bursaries, and work study programs). The problem is further compounded by the limited knowledge and resources that financial student services have regarding Aboriginal funding and scholarships, unless they liaise with the FNCs.

The physical and emotional stressors of inadequate funding are not the only negative impacts of inadequate funding. Students also encounter numerous institutional obstacles, based entirely on finances, that can impede their progress through their programs, causing a stop-out or complete withdrawal (Tinto, 1993). For example, in addition to residence and tuition fees, the university and housing application fees can keep students from getting into the institution. Even when students have been accepted, unsecured and inadequate funding from their communities, coupled with institutional bureaucracy regarding fees, can impede Aboriginal student retention. To address one of the financial stressors that impede student retention, one institution had developed a third-party billing process to minimize the stress of late payments from band offices on behalf of students. This policy change was implemented after my data collection phase, and the impact of this policy is yet to be determined.

Another contradiction regarding competing needs and resources is at the level of the First Nations Centres and the financial resources they are allocated by the university. The FNCs who participated in this study provided amazing programs and services with the limited resources they did have. Yet, there was still the expectation by the university



community that the FNCs and their small staff provide support to all Indigenous students and also service the broader university needs regarding Aboriginal issues. Soft funding and limited budgets created contradictions for the FNCs trying to implement wholistic service provision. The next section discusses the contradictions of being an Aboriginal faculty member.

### **Multiple and competing roles of Aboriginal faculty**

If institutions want to increase the presence of Aboriginal faculty then what will be the university's expectations of these faculty members? Evidence was presented in this dissertation that Aboriginal faculty often face greater workloads than other faculty, particularly around supervision and committee work, due to the perception that they will deal with *all* Aboriginal issues. The privatized academic, according to G. H. Smith (2000a), follows the rules of the tenure and promotion process and simply exploits his or her Indigineity for symbolic and academic capital. I would re-cast a public academic in terms of Indigenous capital. For example, a public academic pursues the same process but contributes and builds upon his or her Indigenous capital for the greater good of Indigenous people. The problems Aboriginal faculty face lie in the structure that values PAu interpretations of capital and impinges on the types of decisions Indigenous faculty have to make to honour their cultural integrity and multiple responsibilities. The challenge is maintaining agency over his or her cultural integrity in a field that values the capital associated with tenure and promotion (e.g., research, publications, teaching, service, and funding).

## Significance of Study

The question that has been posed to me on several occasions about this research project is “*What are we going to learn from your research that we don’t already know?*” The answer lies within the analysis of the dissertation and, more importantly, in the voices of those who participated in this project. I do not see universities as having the sole responsibility for Aboriginal education. However, I do believe universities have a key responsibility in facilitating relationships with other stakeholders inside and outside the institution to facilitate an ongoing transformation of the educational system. This dissertation identified several areas needing improvement that reinforces the call for renewed commitment and energy to ensure that the system does change in meaningful ways. Institutional accountability to Indigenous higher education is critical to move the place of Indigenous knowledge forward within the university.

Part of this dissertation, of course, is reiterating what those of us working in Indigenous education already know: The mainstream system is slow to change, and the past recommendations of Hawthorn et al. (1967, 1968), the Assembly of First Nations (1988), and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples (RCAP) (1996) continue to be relevant in 2008. This dissertation highlights areas of improvement and needs, reminding us that the journey to change the educational system is working, but vigilance is required to continue the transformation of mainstream education that supports Aboriginal student success.

In Chapter 2, I presented a summary of recommendations from aforementioned reports (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Hawthorn et al., 1966; Hawthorn et al., 1967; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996) that related to institutional responsibility and accountability. These reports recognized that universities are critical stakeholders in the power structures that influence the health and economy of Aboriginal peoples. As such, university responsibilities to Aboriginal higher education are to facilitate

Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education. Evidence from the data of this research process demonstrated that Aboriginal agency in the university depended on where they were located within the hierarchy, how Indigenous peoples were exerting IK and pushing against PAu, and how authentic allies support Aboriginal peoples.

Another recommendation in these reports called for parental involvement in all levels of education. This was an obvious gap in this study. I am not suggesting that universities resume their in-loco-parentis roles nor am I suggesting that parents become interfering or overly involved.<sup>26</sup> I do consider universities having an important role to play in building parental involvement in the institution. Elders, Aboriginal faculty, and students who were parents provide academic knowledge and cultural capital to their children, and, somewhat more broadly, to their communities. They can be important role models and supporters of education and career aspirations, especially for students in the elementary and secondary schools. There are many opportunities to build relationships with parents and Aboriginal communities that would have reciprocal benefits for all involved.

Elders were recognized as critical supports in making the institution a more successful place for Aboriginal students, faculty, and staff. Building on this acknowledgement, it is important that universities continue to integrate Elders across the institution and, also, formally recognize Elders for the knowledge that they bring to the institution.

The aforementioned reports also recommended that there be an increase in culturally relevant curriculum and Aboriginal programs. Since these reports, there has been an expansion of Indigenous-focused programs in forestry, business, medicine, nursing, and other disciplines. However, these expansions are not across every discipline. More

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<sup>26</sup> See the article "A 'helicopter' mom learns some lessons," in the *Globe & Mail*, Nov 3, 2007, p. F7.

importantly, such programmatic changes have occurred as a result of the actions of groups of like-minded individuals who advocate for Aboriginal higher education. Another implication related to program development was the need for universities to continue to build and maintain relationships with urban and rural Aboriginal communities.

The wholistic framework and 4Rs also informed the methodology of this project, adding to the growing research using this approach in working with Aboriginal peoples. This study moves the discussion of Indigenous higher education away from the student deficit model to one that centers Indigenous epistemologies and critiques on the structural deficits of universities.

On a practical and theoretical level, a better understanding was gained concerning institutional strengths and weaknesses with regard to Aboriginal higher education -- for example, what is working or not working (e.g., identification of policies, programs, and services) and WHY. The critique of institutional responsibility provides institutions with a point of view from which to strategically and actively make improvements and to establish new initiatives to be more accountable to Aboriginal education. The Indigenous accountability framework relates back to the practice of the 4Rs. Meaningful engagement with the 4Rs would also help enhance partnerships between Indigenous communities and post-secondary institutions in making universities sites of success for Indigenous students. The following section presents implications for theory, research, and policy.

## **Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice**

### **Theory**

This work has implications across several theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Through this research, I addressed some existing gaps in the literature pertaining to Aboriginal post-secondary education, particularly at the university level. In articulating Indigenous understandings of success, I provide an alternative to current hegemonic discourses and a wholistic model from which success can be fostered. Indigenous understandings of success and the articulation of Indigenous capital broadens the retention literature to include an Indigenous perspective on structural deficits that hinder wholistic success. This dissertation also furthers discussions regarding Indigenous knowledges in higher education, particularly expanding understandings of the roles of Aboriginal student services as sites of IK and agents of change in higher education. In addition, in using Bourdieu's social reproduction theory, I have also expanded the concepts of power and capital in relation to the wholistic framework. Another contribution this work makes to the literature is providing an alternative to the neo-liberal discourses about accountability: an articulation of accountability through the perspective of the wholistic framework. The implications of this work require further expansion of Indigenous theory and continuing application of Indigenous theory to other theoretical frameworks in order to build along the horizontal and vertical institutional and structural changes within education for Aboriginal peoples.

## **Practice**

The practical application of the 4Rs as a methodology analysis tool broadens the work being done in Indigenous methodology. The further discussion and application of the 4Rs also broadens the 1991 recommendations of Kirkness and Barnhardt at a contextual and practical level. There are several implications arising for each stakeholder involved in this study.

### Administrators

The positions of power in the hierarchy of a university are in administration positions, such as directors, associate deans, deans, vice presidents, and president. Consequently, administrators have important leadership roles in transforming their institutions to become more successful places for Aboriginal students. For example, administrators are responsible for role modeling effective practice. They can also embody leadership by fostering authentic allies across campus. Administrators are influential in directing policy into practice. While the argument was put forward that policy was developed so each unit in the university can interpret the policy according to their own understanding. The problem was that multiple interpretations and absolved responsibility for implementing change resulted in many policies not having cross-institutional impact.

Another important leadership responsibility for administrators is facilitating cross-institutional communication strategies to improve relationships between academic and student service units. The final role of administrators, which is critical to institutional transformation, is improving relationships with Aboriginal communities through active presence in the community.

### Faculty

Faculty members can modify their pedagogical practice to be inclusive of other epistemologies and learning styles. Non-Aboriginal faculty members are also responsible for taking responsibility over their own learning regarding Aboriginal students and needs. Pedagogically, faculty can include Aboriginal research and literature within their curriculum. In their practices, whether in research or teaching, faculty members have a responsibility to respect the cultural integrity of Aboriginal students, faculty, staff, and Elders. Through these actions, faculty members mentor and role model effective practice. In the structure of the university, faculty members have power to influence changes in policy; therefore, they can advocate and support Aboriginal initiatives within their departments, faculties, and across the university.

### Staff

Staff in the university, particularly student services staff, can support Aboriginal students by modifying practice to be respectful and inclusive of IK. Like faculty, staff also can support Aboriginal student success by taking responsibility for their own learning regarding Aboriginal students and their needs. Non-Aboriginal staff can also empower Aboriginal agency within the institution by becoming authentic allies. Staff can further institutional transformation by actively implementing policy into practice. Staff can also evaluate their practices on a continual basis to ensure they are meeting the needs of the Aboriginal population in the university and community, and, in their practices, they can improve relationships with Aboriginal communities through active presence in the community. For example, recruitment materials should be culturally appropriate and recruiters should be informed regarding cultural protocol so they understand how to appropriately enter Aboriginal communities and schools.

### Students

The university can help foster the building of relationships (i.e., social capital) that value the cultural integrity of Aboriginal students. Students can develop empowerment strategies that support individual agency within the classroom and broader university community. Aboriginal students can advocate for their needs through student organizations. Students can also learn about institutional structure through the FNCs and other means to support changes and IK within the institution.

### Elders and Aboriginal community members

Elders and Aboriginal community members have important roles to play in universities. Therefore, they should be working towards increasing their presence across the institution, particularly upper administration and classrooms. They should also continue and expand the important work they are doing in FNCs. Aboriginal communities can also encourage an increased presence of the university in their communities.

### Government

Institutional transformation will not occur in isolation. Aboriginal communities, along with the provincial and federal governments have important responsibilities to transform universities for Aboriginal students. For example, governments should be working closely with Aboriginal communities and related organizations to define post-secondary needs at regional and provincial levels. Governments can also develop accountability standards based on Aboriginal community criteria and needs related to university education.

The next section explores the implications of this research regarding university policy as it relates to institutional responsibility and accountability.



## Policy

The data emerging from this dissertation alluded to the need for cross-institutional policies in order for universities to be more responsible and accountable to Aboriginal higher education. Policy at the university-wide level is important for several reasons. First, the endorsement of a policy by the leadership (e.g., president, vice-presidents, board of governors, and deans) sets the direction of the institution. Second, institutional-wide policies also ensure that each unit in the university responds to the policy as it applies to their practice, whether academic faculties or student services. Third, university-wide policies create spaces in the academy for individual agents to collaborate and collectively change the practice and structure of the institution.

Three university-wide policies are needed in the areas of (1) admissions, (2) recruitment and retention, and (3) cultural practice and protocols. Two other policy recommendations arising from this research fall under the jurisdiction of Student affairs and services: (1) housing for Aboriginal students and (2) student financial support and third-party billing.

University-wide policies, such as admissions, are important to increase the seen face of Aboriginal students on campus. Admissions policies empower those at the level of the registrar and deans to make decisions that are supportive of Aboriginal participation, through Aboriginal admissions policies. Recruitment and retention policies influence how recruiters enter Aboriginal communities and schools. Such policies, therefore, can transform the practice of recruitment and retention to become more culturally relevant and effective. Cultural protocol policies set the tone of the university in terms of how to respect IK and honor the relationships the institution has with local Aboriginal nations. Such policies set the directive for behaviour as a normal expectation rather than the exception to the rule. Cultural policies also set boundaries for the institution regarding how cultural components

of IK are practiced and present in the academy. This is not to over-regulate IK, although I acknowledge that is a risk, but to empower Aboriginal peoples and prevent token and disrespectful acts in the university.

The question that needs to be answered in regard to policy is: How does the university develop policies that address institutional responsibility and accountability? The answer that emerged from this research is that *any* policy development needs to be done in consultation with appointed representatives from Aboriginal groups across the campus *and* the surrounding Aboriginal communities. Indigenous voices need to be present, engaged, and respected, at the policy-decision making tables across the institution. This is an important aspect of institutional responsibility and honors the principles of respect and reciprocity. Institutional accountability to policy requires that words be transformed into action. Therefore, once policy is written universities need to set up internal and external monitoring systems to ensure policies are implemented effectively and respectfully.

This dissertation focused on the responsibilities of three public universities to the Indigenous peoples of British Columbia, Canada. The results and recommendations that arose from this work provide institutions with tangible insights into their practice along with recommendations that are culturally appropriate to each context. The next section of this chapter presents ideas for future research.

## **Future Research**

The questions asked in this research process have led to some answers but have also opened up other lines of inquiry that I believe warrant further investigation. For example, this study was conducted with three universities in British Columbia. I would be interested in learning how other universities across Canada and internationally deal with issues of responsibility and accountability to Aboriginal higher education. This study also could be expanded to the community college sector, both the public and private Indigenous institutions, and address the following questions:

- How are community colleges successful spaces for Aboriginal students? What role do private Aboriginal post-secondary institutions play in Aboriginal student experience?

Also more research needs to be done to understand the experiences of Aboriginal faculty in mainstream universities.

Another line of research that needs exploration and application is the development of retention models for Aboriginal students. An expansion of research using current models for applicability and nuances that may be specific to diverse Aboriginal student populations is needed in the field of Aboriginal student retention. I also believe a better understanding is needed regarding the impact of policy changes on Aboriginal students. For example, how do changes to the federal Aboriginal Post-Secondary Student Support program impact Aboriginal students? How does the change in housing policy (e.g., to include Aboriginal families) help or hinder Aboriginal students in university and college?

An important message heard in this research process was the need for a better understanding of Aboriginal community expectations of higher education, at the university and college level. This community-based research could explore the question: What vision

do Aboriginal communities have regarding higher education? An additional research project involving Aboriginal communities would explore Aboriginal parental involvement in student career and education decision making. Another could work with Aboriginal parents and community members regarding Aboriginal community involvement in the university and the university's involvement in their communities.

## **Transforming the Structure**

I have a hope -- associated with conducting this research and pursuing a career within the very institutions I critique -- that transformation is occurring. I will admit I have been accused in the past of wearing rose-coloured glasses. I accept this accusation as recognition of a hope in me that has not been crushed by colonization. If I can imagine a wholistic practice for myself that embodies my own understandings and respects those of my peers and colleagues, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, then I can imagine a wholistic approach becoming a reality within universities.

I believe universities have an inherent responsibility to Aboriginal peoples because of the power universities have in society. Although Canadian universities may be founded on Euro-Western values and epistemology, universities are also sites of contestation broadening what is considered knowledge and respecting other ways of knowing. For example, universities play a key role in influencing the K to 12 education system through the training of teachers and school administrators. Consequently, I think universities can play a key role in stopping systemic racism and academic streaming (examples of PA by PAu) by changing the education of these important educators. This systemic change will not happen over night. However, I do believe that universities can be the catalyst for change – in higher education, K to 12 education, and society.

The wholistic framework employed in this study presented several advantages and challenges in terms of working with the data. An advantage was that the framework resonated with my own intuitive understanding of how I envision universities and the student experience -- interconnected and interrelated to all four realms. The disadvantage of this framework was the contradiction that the actual structure is not based on this vision. For example, universities are primarily identified as contributing to the intellectual realm, from which one supposedly develops further intellectual, social, and symbolic capital to negotiate mainstream society. A wholistic approach to success would ensure that the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of Aboriginal peoples are being met while, at the same time, facilitate relationship building (i.e., social capital) and assist Aboriginal students and faculty to maintain their unique cultural integrity.

Articulating the gaps in the structure through the lens of social reproduction theory also supported the use of the wholistic framework as an analytical tool to reflect Indigenous understandings of the responsibilities of universities to Aboriginal education. Another advantage in using a visual representation of the framework (such as presented in Figure 7) is that it clearly identifies areas of strength and weakness in how institutions were helping and hindering Aboriginal education. The resulting analysis of this dissertation was guided by the principles of the 4Rs and the wholistic framework. These epistemological and methodological tools also firmly centered Indigenous knowledge in this work.

Rauna Kuokkanen (2006) suggested that for universities to transform, they need to start valuing the gift of IK. The reality as presented in this dissertation is that universities do have individuals who are committed to changing, whether in their teaching, research, or practices, to support Aboriginal education. The challenge is that not enough individuals are committed with good intentions to that personal transformation. I am not arguing that all people need to embody a wholistic framework, but I do believe that faculty, staff,

administrators, and students need to be educated so they comprehend multiple ways of understanding and feel committed to supporting Indigenous education. Simply, arguing all people need to believe in the wholistic framework does nothing more than to position one group over another and disrespect the wholistic framework. However, I also believe that universities committed to supporting Aboriginal education must change the structure of the institution to change the power imbalances, respect cultural integrity and IK, and embody the 4Rs as part of the institutional fabric.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A Letter of invitation to institution and institutional consent form**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**



**Department of Educational Studies**

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374

Fax: 604-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

**Institutional Accountability & Responsibility  
to Indigenous Higher Education**

[DATE]

Dear [NAME],

Greetings, I am writing to ask for your participation in a study that is examining institutional responsibility and accountability to Indigenous higher education. This study is being conducted as part of my doctoral research in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am being supervised by Drs. Jo-ann Archibald and Lesley Andres.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine what makes an institution a successful place for Aboriginal students based on Indigenous perceptions of success. Although many studies have examined what makes an Aboriginal student successful in school, there has been a lack of examination on what makes an institution successful for Indigenous peoples. This research is important because it focuses on what universities currently do and could to improve policies, programs and initiatives for Aboriginal post-secondary students.

I am seeking permission to conduct this research with members from your Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Elders and various university administrators (e.g., Directors or Administrators responsible for Admissions & Registrar's Office, Recruitment office, Academic advising, Aboriginal student services and other related Student Services). I am also interested in conducting a sharing circle with volunteer Aboriginal undergraduate students associated with [name of institution]. Attached are copies of the letters requesting informed consent for the interview and sharing circles as well as a sample of the interview and sharing circle protocols.

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



## Department of Educational Studies

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374

Fax: 604-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

## Institutional Consent Form

TO: Michelle Pidgeon  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4

RE: Institutional Accountability & Responsibility to Indigenous Higher Education Study

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I grant permission to conduct research in this institution as  
\_\_\_\_\_ outlined in your recent letter.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please contact me to provide further information about the study.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I am not able to grant permission.

### Additional Comments:

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Name:

Position

Institution

Phone

E-mail

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**Appendix B Letter of invitation to individual interviewee and consent form**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**



**Department of Educational Studies**

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374

Fax: 604-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

**Institutional Accountability & Responsibility  
to Indigenous Higher Education**

August, 2005

Dear [NAME],

Greetings, I am writing to ask for your participation in a study that is examining institutional responsibility and accountability to Indigenous higher education. This study is being conducted as part of my doctoral research in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am being supervised by Drs. Jo-ann Archibald and Lesley Andres.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine what makes an institution a successful place for Aboriginal students based on Indigenous perceptions of success. Although many studies have examined what makes an Aboriginal student successful in school, there has been a lack of examination on what makes an institution successful for Indigenous peoples. This research is important because it focuses on what universities currently do and could to improve policies, programs and initiatives for Aboriginal post-secondary students.

As the [position of interviewee within university], I am interested in learning about your definition of "success," your perceptions of what makes your respective institution successful to Indigenous students, in what areas [institution] could improve its accountability and responsibility to Indigenous higher education. I am also interested in learning about your experiences in developing policies, programs and services that are targeted towards Aboriginal students. Your input is important to my study as it will help me in composing recommendations that I can submit to government departments (e.g., Indian & Northern Affairs and Ministry of Advanced Education) Aboriginal organizations, and the university administration so that post-secondary institutions (specifically universities) can



better address the needs of Aboriginal students attending post-secondary education in large urban settings.

You are being invited to participate in this study, which would involve being interviewed 1-2 times. The first interview would take approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours to complete. A second follow-up interview may be requested for clarification purposes only, this interview would take approximately 30 minutes. Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and it will be scheduled at a time that is convenient to you. You have the right to not answer any question and to withdraw from the interview at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be coded and all personal identifiers will be removed, which assures your anonymity. The data will be kept in a locked office and password protected on a computer hard drive.

I will contact you via telephone or e-mail during the week of [DATE] to discuss this matter with you directly. If you have any questions about this project, please contact either Michelle Pidgeon, at 604-XXX-XXXX or e-mail at [pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca), or Jo-ann Archibald at 604-XXX-XXXX or email at [jo-ann.archibald@ubc.ca](mailto:jo-ann.archibald@ubc.ca)

If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Research Study Help Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Thank you for helping me with this important research project.

Respectfully,

Michelle Pidgeon  
PhD Candidate  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

Jo-ann Archibald  
Principal Investigator  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



## Department of Educational Studies

Mailing address:

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Tel: 604-822-5374

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## CONSENT FORM

### Institutional Accountability & Responsibility to Indigenous Higher Education

#### **Principal Investigator:**

Jo-ann Archibald  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

#### **Co-Investigator:**

Michelle Pidgeon  
PhD Candidate  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to critically examine what makes an institution a successful place for Aboriginal students based on Indigenous perceptions of success.

You have been invited to participate in this study as your role as [position of interviewee] in relationship to Indigenous higher education. As the [position of interviewee within university], I am interested in learning about your own definition of "success" along with your perceptions of what makes your respective institution successful to Indigenous students, what [institution] could improve on or future directions it could take to be more accountable and responsible to Indigenous education; and your experiences in developing policies, programs and services that are targeted towards Aboriginal students. Your input

will help provide recommendations that I can make to government departments (e.g., Indian & Northern Affairs and Ministry of Advanced Education) Aboriginal organizations, and university administration to make post-secondary institutions (specifically universities) to better address the needs of Aboriginal students attending post-secondary education in large urban settings.

### **Study Procedures:**

You are being invited to participate in this study, which would involve being interviewed 1-2 times. The first interview would take approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours to complete. A second follow-up interview may be requested for clarification purposes only, this interview would take approximately 30 minutes.

Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary, and it will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. You have the right not to answer any question and to withdraw from the interview at any time.

### **Confidentiality**

All information gathered from the interview will be coded and all personal identifiers will be removed, which assures your confidentiality. The data will be kept in a locked office and password protected on a computer hard drive. Only my PhD committee and myself, Michelle Pidgeon, will have access to the data.

### **Remuneration/Compensation**

For participating in this study, you will be given a small gift of appreciation.

### **Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions about this project, please contact either Dr. Jo-ann Archibald at 604-XXX-XXXX or Michelle Pidgeon at 604-XXX-XXXX.

### **Contact for concerns about the study:**

If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Research Study Help Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Many thanks for your assistance,

Michelle Pidgeon

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald

**CONSENT:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your position within the university.

Your signature below indicated that you have received a copy of this consent form for your records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix C Sharing circle consent form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Department of Educational Studies**

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: 604-822-5374

Fax: 604-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

CONSENT FORM

**Institutional Accountability & Responsibility  
to Indigenous Higher Education**

**Principal Investigator:**

Jo-ann Archibald  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

**Co-Investigator:**

Michelle Pidgeon  
PhD Candidate  
Educational Studies  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z4  
[pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to critically examine what makes an institution a successful place for Aboriginal students based on Indigenous perceptions of success.

You have been invited to participate in this study as an undergraduate Indigenous student in your relationship with higher education. As a student, I am interested in learning about your own definition of “success” along with your perceptions of what makes your respective

institution successful to Indigenous students, what [institution] could improve on or future directions it could take to be more accountable and responsible to Indigenous education. Your input will help provide recommendations that I can make to government departments (e.g., Indian & Northern Affairs and Ministry of Advanced Education), Aboriginal organizations, and university administration to make post-secondary institutions (specifically universities) to better address the needs of Aboriginal students attending post-secondary education in large urban settings.

### **Study Procedures:**

This study is being conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation in the Department of Educational Studies. The findings of this study will also be used for academic scholarly publications and presentations. Presentations will also be made to each institution participating in this study and to other relevant organizations.

You are being invited to participate in this study, which would involve taking part in a sharing circle with other undergraduate Aboriginal students. The sharing circle will take approximately 1.5 hours to 2 hours to complete.

### **Confidentiality:**

Participation in the sharing circle is entirely voluntary. You have the right to not answer any question and to withdraw from the sharing circle at any time. While confidentiality can not be guaranteed, each participant is expected to respect the protocol of the sharing circle. Protocol requires participants to respect what is shared during the circle and not to disclose what is shared amongst participants outside of the circle.

Each sharing circle will be audio taped. Each audio tape will be coded to protect the identity of the participants. All information gathered from the interview will be coded and all personal identifiers will be removed, which assures your confidentiality. The data will be kept in a locked office and password protected on a computer hard drive. Only my PhD committee and myself, Michelle Pidgeon, will have access to the data.

### **Remuneration/Compensation:**

For participating in this study, you will be \$15.00 and lunch.

### **Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Jo-ann Archibald at 604-XXX-XXXX or Michelle Pidgeon at 604-XXX-XXXX.

### **Contact for concerns about the rights of research participants:**

If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Research Study Help Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

**How would you define Institutional Responsibility to  
Aboriginal higher education**

**105**

<b>Institutional Responsibility</b>	<b>Frequency of code</b>
relationships- SEEN FACE	25
relevance- financial resources	24
relationships- FN community	20
respect- IK	20
relevance- facilitating access	18
respect- WORDS into ACTION	16
respect- colonial history/current social impact	14
reciprocity-x-institution understanding/involvement	13
relevance- IK across institution	11
relevance- policy	11
respect- LISTEN	10
relationships- Leadership/Mentorship	9
relationships- power	9
relationships- AUTHENTIC ALLIES	8
relationships- dual responsibility	8
relevance-FN programs/courses/services	8
relationships- government	6
relationship- recruitment/retention	6
relationships- to students	6
respect- diversity of FN	6
relevance- wholistic support	5
respect- caution of cooptation/tokenism of IK	5
relationship- reliance on FN	4
relationships- appreciation growing	4
relationships- individual/personal understanding	4
relevance- research	4
respect- Elders	4
respect- Sovereign nationhood	4
politics- support or marginalization of FN and IK	3
relationships- lack of commitment	3
relevance- housing	3
history-obligation	3
education enhancement agreement	2
relevance- teaching, service, research	2
lack of policy--symbolic of unwillingness to change	1
politics- justifying special services for FN	1
relationships-US-THEM	1
relevance- exchange of services/knowledge	1

**Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your position within the university.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





## **Participants Needed**

for a study on

# **Institutional Accountability & Responsibility to Indigenous Higher Education**

As part of my doctoral research, I am looking for individuals to participate in a sharing circle session to help learn more about Aboriginal students' perceptions of what makes institutions "successful" places for Indigenous students. In this session, we will discuss how you would define success in university, how accountability and responsibility should be discussed and practiced within universities and what you think are institutions' responsibilities to Indigenous higher education

**Who?**                      **Indigenous undergraduate students**

**Where?**                  TBA

**When?**                  TBA

**Involves?**              1½ - 2 hours of your time, sharing your perceptions and experiences with a group of other Aboriginal undergraduate students.

**Reward!**                Participants will receive **\$15** for their involvement.

***Lunch*** and refreshments will be provided.

**Interested?!**

**Contact . . .**

Michelle Pidgeon (PhD Candidate)  
[pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:pidgeon@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

Jo-ann Archibald (Principal Investigator)  
[jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jo-ann.archibald@interchange.ubc.ca)  
604-XXX-XXXX

## **Appendix E Interview and sharing circle protocol**

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. How would you describe a successful Indigenous university student? How do you think universities define a successful Indigenous student? Any recommendations on how this can be addressed?
2. How would you describe a university that is successful for Aboriginal education?
3. What factors impede/hinder institutions from being successful for Aboriginal students?
4. What role does Aboriginal student services have in making institutions more successful for Aboriginal students? What is their relationship to the university? To Aboriginal communities?
5. How would you define institutional responsibility to Aboriginal education? What evidence do you see of this responsibility at your current institution? What areas are working positively? What areas are not-working positively? How can these areas be improved?
6. In terms of the physical-emotional-spiritual-intellectual realms of an Indigenous student, how is the institution responding to these realms (e.g., programs, services)? What areas do you see missing? What recommendations would you make to improve this?

## SHARING CIRCLE PROTOCOL

1. How would you describe a successful Indigenous university student? How do you think Aboriginal communities define a successful Indigenous student? Any recommendations on how this can be addressed?
2. How would you describe a university that is successful for Aboriginal education?
3. What factors impede/hinder institutions from being successful for Aboriginal students?
4. What role does Aboriginal student services have in making institutions more successful for Aboriginal students? What is their relationship to the university? To Aboriginal communities?
5. How would you define institutional responsibility to Aboriginal education? What evidence do you see of this responsibility at your current institution? What areas are working positively? What areas are not-working positively? How can these areas be improved?
6. In terms of the physical-emotional-spiritual-intellectual realms of an Indigenous student, how is the institution responding to these realms (e.g., programs, services)? What areas do you see missing? What recommendations would you make to improve this?

## Appendix F Examples of Atlas.TI family and coding structure

The following lists are examples of some families of codes I created to organize the data analysis of the interviews and sharing circles. Some of the codes are included in more than one family because the codes crossed themes. The first line of each table show how many codes were related to a specific question asked in the protocol. For example, for the question “how do you define Indigenous knowledges?” there were 58 responses. For some themes and codes, there were multiple responses within a transcript so the frequency of codes is greater than the total number of transcripts.

<b>How would you define a successful Aboriginal student?</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Family: Successful Aboriginal Student</b>	<b>Frequency of code</b>
achieves own goals	28
cultural integrity maintained	27
community definition of student success	18
wholistic balance	14
university definition of student success	13
Relevance	9
role models	8
contribute back to FN people	7
completed their program	5
just being here	2
Linked to K to 12	2
student success vs. institutional success	2
Theory-PAu	2
academic achievement	1
comfortable in learning environment	1
Confident	1
continued engagement in their ..	1
culturally determined	1
imparting life skills	1
employment related to education	1
establishing community- sense of belonging	1
further a community's agenda	1
habitus of success	1
negotiate system (Balance both worlds?)	1
role of family--cultural capital	1
survives in tact	1

How do you see IK in your institution?	92
Relationships	55
FN programs/curriculum	26
FN involvement- community	22
Respect	22
lack of x-curriculum	15
FN Elder	13
FN faculty & staff	12
lack of understanding of IK	12
lack of x-institution	11
FN community coordinators	9
Language	9
Limited presence	9
Tokenism	9
IK in academy different from IK in community	8
IK seen through Western lens	8
lack of respect for IK diversity	5
FN- library/resources/spaces	4
legitimacy of IK authority	4
FN- authors in curriculum	3
FN involvement- governance	3
lack of FN community involvement	3
challenge- funding	2
FN culture	2
IK different from academic knowledge	2
IK-toleration vs. encouraged	2
research agendas	2
white man guilt	2
academic marginalization	1
at surface level	1
Complacency	1
lack of FN in classrooms	1
non-FN courses (helpful)	1
value of IK in PSE	1
Values & ethics	1
X-institution vs. cocooning	1

**What role does the FNCs play in 1) supporting student success and 2) relationships across campus?**

**75**

<b>Thematic Area: Nations Centre</b>	<b>Frequency of code</b>
relationships- x-campus	58
supporting students	32
Physical	20
Intergenerational	19
social support	17
relationships- FN community/agencies	15
FN culture	13
cultural programming	12
FN Elder	12
partnerships with communities	12
FNC- important role	11
Advocate	8
role models	8
academic success	7
wholistic support	7
Place	6
Financial	4
Transition	3
Advising	2
challenge- funding	2
FNC- not all FN students use service	2
Housing	2
leadership role	2
resource tool	2
build bridges to communities	1
Communication	1
coordinating FN on-campus	1
Counseling	1
depends on the population	1
Emotional	1
Employment	1
encourage participation x-institution	1
Intellectual	1
location of safety or isolation?	1
Mediator	1
network of support	1
program development	1
Publications	1
site of IK	1
X-campus: equity initiatives; reciprocal initiatives	1

**How would you define a successful University for  
Aboriginal students?**

**62**

<b>Family: Successful University</b>	<b>Frequency of code</b>
supporting students	32
awareness (limited?)	22
Respect	22
respect for difference	14
cultural programming	12
partnerships with communities	12
seen face	10
commitment to change (clear intentions)	6
lack of FN community involvement	3
marginalization/ghettoization	3
absence of ghettoization	2
IK-toleration vs. encouraged	2
lack of supports (x-institution)	2
Builds understanding	1
challenge canon of University knowledge	1
creating living community	1
imparting life skills	1
equitable space	1
maintain their integrity/purpose	1
opportunities for x-cultural	1

<b>How would you define Indigenous knowledges?</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>Frequency of code</b>
Unique to the population	23
Respect	22
Intergenerational	19
located in place	16
respect for difference	14
FN culture	13
traditional knowledge	10
wholistic knowledge	10
Language	9
not an expert	9
IK different from academic knowledge	8
IK in academy different from IK in community	8
lived experience	7
oral tradition	7
Interconnectedness	5
spiritual knowledge	5
contemporary knowledge	4
legitimacy of IK authority	4
based in the local environment..	2
broad based knowledge	2
Private knowledge	2
collective body of knowledge	1
Cosmology	1
dictomizing (hindrance)	1
Experiential	1
historical knowledge	1
informal basis	1
inherited knowledge	1
intellectual tradition	1
legal traditions	1
life-long learning	1
medicine knowledge	1
personal identities	1
Public knowledge	1
university knowledge as Traditional knowledge	1
urban-rural	1
Values & ethics	1



**How do you define Institutional Accountability to  
Aboriginal higher education?**

**60**

<b>Institutional Accountability</b>	<b>Frequency of codes</b>
dual accountability	19
to governments	17
to students	10
to university community	10
# (counting)	9
Words into action (policy)	9
politics of power	6
goals and objectives	4
positions of power	4
program delivery	3
financially	2
needs to be at individual level	2
to FN community/province	2
FN as watchdog	1
relationships/networking	1
outside institution	1
x-institutional change	1