

SUCCESS FACTORS THAT HELPED FIRST NATION STUDENTS
COMPLETE THEIR UNIVERSITY DEGREES

By

ELVIN M. BOYER

Diploma in Ed., University of British Columbia, 1995

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1991

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

In

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Counselling Psychology)

We accept this as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2002

Elvin M. Boyer

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Counselling Psychology
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Dec. 5 2002

ABSTRACT

This study explored those factors that contributed to the graduation rate of First Nations students who successfully completed an undergraduate degree. The purpose of this study was fourfold: (1) to create a profile of First Nations students who graduated from a university; (2) map out those experiences that either facilitated, or hindered the student's educational endeavors; (3) explore those variables, that defined how students overcame hindering factors; (4) to develop a grounded theory representative of students' educational achievements.

The research method involved in-depth interviews with seven First Nations students, who received an undergraduate degree from a university, and were either from Vancouver, or were long-term residents of British Columbia. The students described: (a) their educational experiences, that contributed to the completion of their degrees; (b) factors that either facilitated, or hindered with their educational goals; (c) how students maneuvered to overcome obstacles, that were not helpful; and (d) those factors, that played a role in students' desire in completing their degree.

Basic techniques, and procedures based on the grounded theory methodology conveyed a variety of factors that subsequently formed five major core categories leading to the students' graduation rates. Analysis of content, and verification of the categories were defined through coding techniques, and constant comparison methods that were grounded in the data. The results indicated that the students' success rates were the result of the following factors:

Personal factors, sources of support, institutional factors, geographical factors, and overcoming barriers to success. The educational experiences that the students shared supports the notion that the transitional stage they must endeavor is a dynamic process, and reflects various dimensions. These dimensions were linked in a conceptual model that reflected the basic process of becoming whole, and maintaining balance within an environment that is sometimes conflicting, and contrary to the students' cultural values, and beliefs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the problem.....	7
Purpose of the study	8
Assumptions of study.....	9
Limitations of study	9
Definition.....	10
Significance of study	10
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Personal factors that play a role in student success	16
Sources of support and student support systems	21
Institutional factors relevant to the success of First Nations students.....	23
Non- Native Institutional factors and First Nations students.....	23
Major components of First Nations systems.....	27
Success factors found to be effective with First Nations students.....	31
Geographical factors that impact student success	38
Barriers students experience in their educational pursuits	41
Policies that impacted students success	41
Hindering factors that stem from curriculum	42
Personal barriers encountered by students.....	43
Hindering factors that involve relationships with others.....	45
Resources and their impact with student success.....	46
Overcoming barriers to educational success	47
Personal factors that contributed to student success.....	47
Changes identified at the structural and program level.....	49
Summary of literature findings	51
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	54
Research Participants	54
Research Questions.....	56
Interview Process.....	58
Transcript Analysis.....	59
Procedures and techniques	59
Open Coding	61

Axial Coding.....	62
Selective Coding.....	64
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	67
Personal factors	67
Support systems.....	79
Institutional factors.....	90
Geographical factors.....	103
Overcoming barriers	107
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	120
Strengths and limitations.....	120
Theory postulated.....	122
Implications for the research literature	128
Implications for practice	138
Implications for research	139
REFERENCES.....	140
APPENDIX A	145
APPENDIX B	146

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to thank God for giving me the ability, and inspiration to complete this project. He has given me the energy, insight, support, and guidance necessary to complete the major task of writing a thesis.

I also want to thank Dr. Gary Grams for his support, guidance, and comments to develop a theory for First Nations students who completed an undergraduate degree.

Thanks are also owing to my other committee members, Dr. Rod McCormick, and Dr. Marvin Westwood for their comments and guidance.

Special thanks to my wife Shirley for her typing, and many people for their comments, prayers, and proof reading.

Most importantly, I want to thank the participants whose time, honesty, wisdom, and insight made this research possible.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life experienced by Canadians is determined by the stratified social system (Spencer, 1996). Those who rank highly are able to enjoy the benefits of a modern industrial society inclusive of its educational, medical, and leisure activities. Those who rank lower in this system fail to benefit from technological innovations, and thus cannot improve the quality of their lives. First Nations people in Canada, due to historical oppression, are a group of people who do not always enjoy the benefits of modern society. Compared to other Canadians, Aboriginal people suffer higher unemployment rates; lower labour force participation rates, and lower high school graduate, and college enrollment rates. First Nations people rank first in the number of individuals to be incarcerated (Statistics Canada, 1993). First Nations' suicide rates are much higher in relation to the population in general (Cooper, M. & Karlberg, A. & Adams, L. 1991). As the data indicates, the deplorable social conditions faced by First Nations people has come to be known by governments, and its officials as the "Indian problem." The Canadian government has yet to recognize that its future economy, and progress are inextricably tied to the fate of young First Nations students who drop out of school, and become dependent upon social assistance. This connection is clearly illustrated by Lauer (1984) who states:

Social assistance is a far more serious problem for Aboriginal people than for other social groups. Structural factors have produced the problems that forced Native people to become dependent on social assistance; yet most Canadians engage in a form of personal attack, implying, or asserting that Aboriginals themselves are the cause of their own need for social assistance. Maintaining that they have brought on their own problems, but never considering the structural problems that prevent Aboriginal people from fully participating in Canadian society. At the same time, Canadians appear to be largely in agreement that [the] "social charter" provide assistance to people unable to attain an adequate quality of life (p.177).

The idea of an independent, contributing First Nations economy within society remains a vision for many. First Nations can be a viable source of income that would not only be beneficial to First Nations communities, but it would strengthen the entire economy, and raise the social position of First Nations peoples within society.

In the video, "Means to Combat Child Poverty" (1997) produced by Cable Public Affairs Channel, (CPAC) Mustard comments, "when you measure the education, and health performance of a specific group - You are essentially measuring the same thing because both are inter-related." He further states, "There will be a gradient which is related to other factors." In parallel Mustard demonstrates what these factors are and how these two variables interplay to produce the same outcomes. Mustard (1997) says, "when the quality of the population improves, (health, and education), it has a direct effect on the overall quality of the economy." To support his claims, Mustard relies on Fogel's findings from research conducted on the British economy. These findings that

were presented on an overhead, and can be found in the video, "Combating Child Poverty" states:

The combined effect on the increase in dietary energy available for work, and of the increased human efficiency in transforming dietary energy into work output, appears to account for about 50 percent of British economic growth since 1790 (R.W. Fogel, 1994).

In addition, Mustard raises some important points about the development of coping skills. He says, "The first 6 years, particularly the first 3 years, [of a child's life] will essentially set the stage for the development of [that] child's coping skills for life." He further states, "How one overcomes this disability depends on how society is structured – it is a disability because most people never reach [their] maximum potential" (CPAC, 1997). The important point in this case refers to children who have experienced a difficult preschool period without adequate family, and developmental support. When those same children started to exhibit social problems later in the elementary school years, the tendency for teachers was to treat the symptom, rather than prevent the symptoms from occurring in the first place.

According to Mustard, the mismatch between opportunity, and intervention is the area to consider for investment. In other words, to break the cycle of poverty, and its effects, the focus should start with the children, and connection with health issues. The underlying premise is if you improve the quality of life, (education, and health), it has an overall positive effect on the

economy. In other words, the economy improves, or is strengthened. Again Mustard relies on research findings which can be found in the video, "Means to Combat Child Poverty" and states:

The overriding task of the first world in the decade ahead is to maximize to the extent possible – wealth creation, social cohesion, and political freedom realizing that the promotion of any one of those goals may be achieved at the expense of others (Ralf Dahrendorf, *The responsible Community* 5, issue 3, 1995).

Mustard (1997) points out that if this task to improve the economy is neglected, or cannot be accomplished, it will cause enormous problems in the future, both socially, and economically. With respect to the members within that community, the result will be a split, or unstable economy with huge problems.

The final point raised in Mustard's presentation refers to issues of poverty that exist here in Canada. According to Mustard, (1997) a common denominator of the poverty-stricken is directly related to one's longevity. He states, "On a frequency distribution, this group [poor people] fell into the lower quintile which predicts lower life expectancy" (CPAC, 1997). In a rich country like Canada, this is a disgrace. In this context, the relevance of this discussion refers to the link between health issues, and First Nations educational endeavors. The relationship between these two variables reflects an even gloomier state for First Nations with enormous, and complex problems.

It is difficult to get to university, and once there the difficulties don't end. From the literature it was found First Nations students were not exempt. In fact,

they experienced a variety of difficulties on campuses, throughout the country (Frideres, 1998). They were plagued with financial problems, difficulties with their studies, personal, and social concerns, and racial identity problems (Barman, Herbert, McCaskill, 1987). Other problems identified in the literature referred to the following themes: Racism, discrimination, and feelings of alienation; relationships between teachers, other students, and peers; attitudes about school, persistence, and determination; support from family, school, friends, peers, traditional healers, elders, and counselling; living in two different cultures with conflicting values, beliefs, and purposes; Identity confusion; and grieving the loss of family contacts with relatives, friends, and home environment. These themes were integrated with the results of a personal interview, to form preliminary theoretical categories. Details of these preliminary categories were provided in the literature review section of this paper.

More recent works, such as "Gathering Strength" (1996), prepared by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), have found more First Nations students attending university programs. However, the graduation rate still remained quite low. The commission reported, " the Aboriginal population undertaking university programs increased to 8.6 percent by 1991, but the record of completion was very low (three per cent), and increased by only one per cent between 1981 and 1991 (p.513). In comparison, Frideres (1998) concluded, " In 1981 fewer than one percent of First Nations attended university, as compared

with nearly seven percent of the general population" (p.165). These results raise questions concerning Canada's post-secondary institutions, and their role in addressing these issues, and how they are accommodating the needs of First Nations students.

Although a number of universities have tailored special programs to meet the interests, and needs of First Nations students, others provide remedial services to assist such students who will be entering university. Over the last two decades many changes have taken place. For example, more courses in correspondence to Native studies are offered at universities across Canada. There are more programs relative to First Nations students, including law, education, and more recently, health, and science. Despite these impressions that tends to present, a picture perfect image, First Nations lag far behind in comparison to other minority groups' graduation rates (RCAP, 1995).

The challenge facing Aboriginal communities today is to take control of the formal education process. For change to occur in this area, changes to the Indian Act must occur. Governments' refusal to change the Indian Act overall suggests it will be sometime before Indian control of education is fully achieved (Barman, Herbert, McCaskill, 1987).

The position of First Nations people in today's society is not the result of any single factor, but of complex historical and contemporary events. Both First Nations organizations, and government officials have spoken openly about poverty, and associated ills that currently face the First Nations population.

Since the 1960's, efforts by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) have substantially increased its status of Aboriginal people (Frideres, 1998). However, as the data illustrates, these efforts have not been successful. First Nations have achieved some gains with respect to income, education, and certain occupations, but continue to fall behind other ethnic groups in Canada, and within the general population (Frideres, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

From the findings presented thus far it led to the conclusion that there is a low percentage of First Nations students who finish university. However, some First Nations students managed to complete their undergraduate degrees (Barman, Herbert, McCaskill, 1987; Frideres, 1998). In addition, the changing demographics indicated a greater percentage of the First Nations population eligible to enter higher education. The population of First Nations people is increasing at a very rapid rate. For example, from 1981 to 1991, the population increased by nearly one-third, from 735,500 to 958,000. It is estimated there will be a further one-fifth increase to 1,145,100 by the year 2001 (Statistics Canada, 1993).

With these kinds of numbers, it seemed that it would be a wise investment to learn, and find out what those factors were, that contributed to the success rate of some First Nations students. Knowledge of these factors hoped for, will not only provide insight for counsellors, and educators, it will offer some guidelines

to assist with program design, thus effective interventions that will be more commensurate with First Nations students, and their culture. Thus, help to improve the graduation rate of First Nation students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was fourfold: (1) to create a profile of First Nations students who have graduated from a university; (2) map out those experiences that either facilitated, or hindered the student's educational endeavors; (3) explore those variables, that defined how students overcame hindering factors; (4) to develop a grounded theory representative of students' educational achievements.

The purpose for grounded theory here was to provide a means, so that information around events, relating to the participants' educational experiences, could be extracted through open-ended interviews (Grams, 1999). Grounded theory facilitates collaboration between the researcher, and the participant. It is an open process where participants are given the opportunity to provide feedback. A cooperative effort is established, and the participants are not merely under observation, but become an active part of the research. Grounded theory provides flexibility, and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this study, two considerations guided this inquiry. The first consideration examined why some students finished university, and why others

dropped out. The second examined what the students in this study had to say about this phenomenon (Grams, 1999).

Assumptions of the Study

This study was based on the following assumptions:

- 1) More research is needed to understand the experiences of First Nations students who have finished university, and received an undergraduate degree.
- 2) Majority of the research focuses on why First Nations drop out as opposed to why some students stay in school.
- 3) The results will provide insight, and thus encourage other First Nations students.
- 4) These findings will provide a framework for counsellors, and educators to aid in designing programs, and interventions that will be more suitable for First Nations students.
- 5) Data coding, and the constant comparison of data led to a theory that was grounded in the data.

Limitations of the Study

- 1) The scope of this project was limited specifically to First Nations students who successfully completed an undergraduate degree.
- 2) Information collected from participants may be distorted due to memory loss, or reported inaccuracies.

3) Due to the fact that this project was for a Masters' degree, the sample was small.

Definitions

First Nations - this term is used today to indicate the person's origin in relation to North America. In the past, names such as Indian, Aboriginal, and North American Indian were used interchangeably to define the person's identity, and status in relation to a specific indigenous group. In this study, the term First Nations was used interchangeably with other terms as deemed necessary.

Indian Act - defines whether the Indian is status, or non-status, Indian, or Metis. Indians with status, pursuant to the Indian Act, are entitled to be registered as Indian, and a concern to the Federal government. The Indian Act also defines the rights, and special privileges that the person is entitled to.

Significance of the Study

From a First Nations perspective, there were several reasons for conducting this study. First, it was evident from the literature that there is a high drop-out rate for First Nations students; however, some individuals do persevere. Because education is an important factor to improve the condition of one's life, it is vital to examine the experiences of those students who have been successful with their educational goals. Based on these findings, a conceptual framework was constructed, and provides insight, and understanding to the

major factors that contributed to students' success. Consequently, it can also aid in designing programs, and counselling interventions for First Nations. Since First Nations students had direct input into this process, the underlying premise is that these programs, and interventions will be more effective.

Secondly, according to motivational theories, and concepts, people have a strong need for achievement. This need to master difficult challenges, out-perform others, and meet high standards of excellence, has an enormous impact on a person's behavior, and their pursuit of educational, and career advancement (Weiten, 1995). These variables were compared, and examined to determine their relevance to the First Nations students in this study.

Thirdly, the following theory was postulated: To achieve wholeness, First Nations students needed to find, and maintain balance within the parameters of sometimes two opposing cultural influences. These influences came basically from Western culture, and/or the students' own culture, especially if parents came from different ethnic groups. In concert, with the main category, the theory posited consisted of five categories: Personal factors, sources of support, institutional factors, geographical factors, and overcoming barriers. Since this study allowed First Nations students input, and a voice in the process of theory development the data is more representative of their experiences. Since theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the reality of the sought after information, it will offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Fourthly, as the population of First Nations students increase, the number of graduating students from university is decreasing, which suggests there is a problem. For example, most recent statistics revealed approximately 40,000 Aboriginals were enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions, with about "9 percent graduating" as compared to well over "18 percent for Non-Aboriginals" (Frideres, 1998). Non-Aboriginals are one and a half times more likely to finish university as First Nations. It is for these reasons that effective programs, strategies, and interventions are greatly needed to close the gap between First Nations students, and other students who have completed university.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review was to identify significant factors that contributed to the graduation rate of First Nations students, and to provide a context for where, and how these factors fit in relation to their experiences of success. Despite significant differences between American, and Canadian school systems, there tends to be some similarities between Native students, and their educational retention rates in both countries. According to Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991), under-representation of First Nations students in universities in Canada, and the United States has been contributed to the students' lack of ability, interest, and responsibility, and all these justifications place the onus on the student. Similarly, according to Hanohano (1999), the situation between the institutions, and First Nations students is more of a crisis than a problem. Over the years, this trend has become a serious controversial issue that continues to be debated in most universities, thus failing to provide any sustainable interventions that would better the situation.

Wilson (cited in Brady 1986) discusses the relationship between society, and its influences upon student success by saying, "success or failure in school is more of a reflection of society's social, and cultural structure than a result of any persons individual attributes" (p 18). In comparison, Hull (1990), found a strong correlation between the students' economic position, and inclination to drop out

of school. Similarly, Henson (1982) considers illiteracy as a social problem for First Nations students because it perpetuates the effects of colonialism. This is in response to the structural inequalities that deny comparative educational access, and opportunities to First Nations students. Consequently, First Nations students are doubly oppressed: first, historically, they share a legacy of oppressive conditions, and secondly, they are denied full access to the education system that might help them escape, said oppression.

Kehoe & Echols (1994), and Rindone (1988) found Native students to be behind in every measure of student achievement in comparison to Non-Native children. In particular, scores for reading comprehension for First Nations students fell below the 20th percentile, while Non-Native scores rose above the 65th percentile. The dropout rate also was significantly higher for First Nations compared to Non- Native children. Additionally, Benjamin, Chambers, & Reiterman (1993) found being separated from home, and the challenges of attending school directly correlated with Native children's decision to drop out. Non-Native children reported a greater sense of belonging than First Nations students. As a result, according to Rindone (1988), First Nations students generally receive lower grades than Non-Native students.

Moreover, issues such as Native control of education, self-determination, and self- government, must be taken into consideration (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991; Henson 1982). School boards, trustees, administrators, and teaching personnel must work together with First Nations to eliminate systematic barriers

that not only prevent First Nations children from enjoying the same benefits, and privileges that Non-Native children do, but which also increase class polarization, and restrict class mobility (Henson 1982). Failure to act upon these issues will cause schooling to continue to be non-inclusive, racist, discriminatory, and assimilative in practice for First Nations students (Burns 1998; Henson 1982).

It was evident that students of First Nations origins experienced many obstacles to achieving a university degree. Nonetheless, it was also clear that some managed to overcome all hindering factors, and eventually received an undergraduate degree. The aim of this study was to determine what those factors were. From the literature review, and personal interview, a conceptual framework of categories was constructed to help in the construction of interview questions, and to compare them with the students' responses of this study. These set of preliminary categories evolved from the analysis, and include their sub-categories: (1) Personal factors that play a role in student success; (2) All relevant sources of support, and student support systems; (3) Institutional factors that key in to the success of First Nations students: (a) Non-Native institutional factors, and how they affect First Nations students, (b) major components of First Nations systems, (c) support factors found to be specifically effective with First Nations students; (4) Geographical factors that impact on student success; (5) Barriers students experience during their educational period: (a) government policies that impede student progress, (b) hindering factors that stem from the university curriculum, (c) barriers encountered by students in their personal

lives, (d) factors that involve relationships with others, (d) resources, and their effect on student success; (6) Overcoming barriers to educational, and academic achievement: (a) personal factors that contributed to student success, (b) changes identified at the structural, and program level.

It is important to note that these categories, and their sub-categories overlap, and are synergistic with each other. The following will provide a discussion of each category, and offer some insights as to how they played a role in First Nation students' ability to be successful.

Personal factors that play a role in students' success

To function successfully within an education system that facilitates what Beaty & Chiste (1986) refer to as "transformation of perspective" (p 8), First Nations students required knowledge, critical skills of appraisal in relation to learning, and positive attitudes (Brown 1992; Garrett 1996; Cardinal 1998). In one comparative study, according to Lin, La Counte & Eder (1988), some First Nations students felt isolated, and experienced hostility from some professors. Despite these feelings of hostility, and isolation, First Nations students remained respectful toward their professors. In comparison, as Macias (1989) points out American Indian women described themselves as good listeners, and reluctant to pass judgment before careful, subjective reflection is considered. It was also found that most of the students were found to have an opportunistic perception

of receiving a bachelor degree (Benjamin, Chambers and Reiterman 1993; La Counte & Eder 1988).

For some First Nations students, as Cardinal (1998) points out, it was a challenge to be Native. The Native students had to work harder than Non-Native students in order to get ahead. According to Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, (1997), minority students felt that the institution provided fewer supports for them, as compared to the support system for the Non-Native mainstream population. Successful minority students therefore, learned how to adapt to gain the necessary support. They were able to nurture themselves, seek out supportive others, acquire needed skills, and information on their own, and create a niche for themselves on campus. According to Lowery (1997), success for Native students meant having the ability to discern, and differentiate between messages from one's heart, and those from the school, and learn how to pay attention to those often times conflicting messages. Messages that came from the home, relatives, and work experience had the tendency to edify the spirit. Likewise, as noted by Cardinal (1998), success for Native students meant finding a place for themselves', while simultaneously, maintaining a focus on those contributing factors such as helping others, and respecting the Earth. More specifically, according to Garrett (1996), American Indian students had to find the means to satisfy their need for purpose, and their sense of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. In other words, students created for

themselves the personal environmental supports lacking at the institution in order to effectively, challenge the barriers to their success.

A characteristic of persistence for First Nations students was the ability to adopt new traits while maintaining a traditional Native perspective (Benjamin et al 1993). In contrast, as elaborated by Hurlburt, Gade & McLaughlin (1990), persistence, and retention are two sides of the same coin: study habits, and attitudes are merely reflections of the core values imparted by the school systems, and the students' home communities.

In a study of factors that helped eleven American college students persist with their studies, it was found that if they were able to maintain their traditional values, and practices, including such criteria as language, and cultural teachings, and if their values were not in direct conflict with the ideology of their program of studies, the students were more likely to find the determination to persist, and graduate (Benjamin, et al 1993). Similarly, a study involving First Nations graduates, Archibald, Bowman, Pepper & Urion (1995), revealed that their Native home culture played a major role in the students' success.

According to Garrett (1996), a bi-cultural person has greater resilience, and accordingly develops a strong sense of self in either culture. Likewise, (Brown 1992) found that bi-cultural students were able, to weld their older traditional views with newer ones. Similarly, Benjamin et al (1993) found American Indian students were able, to adopt new traits, while maintaining a traditional perspective. Additionally, Padilla, et al (1997) found successful

minority students tended to incorporate their cultural community into the campus community, by joining ethnic organizations where activities, ethnicity, and collectivity were the orientation.

For the purpose of study, the goal is to graduate from university, but for the purpose of life, the goal is to be a functioning, viable, useful member in both communities, and cultures, and furthermore to be comfortable in both worlds.

Michael Tlanusta Garrett sums it up eloquently:

We see the powerful influences of different systems of education, exemplified though mainstream American and traditional Indian values, beliefs, and expectations. We see the continuity of the Circle of Life in stories of images, and experiences that flow from the heart, and we begin to arrive at a better understanding of where we stand in relation to everything around us. We begin to understand the importance of attending to the stories—the meanings, language, experiences, images, and themes of our Indian youth. And we begin to learn, as it has traditionally been taught to us by our elders, that education is a life-long process, just as a story unfolds, and offers the gift of its life to us (Garrett, M.L., 1996).

Some motivating factors, according to Kirkness et al (1991), were found to surpass the interest, and well-being of students, and point to broader concerns such as self-government, policy making, and professional training. On the other hand, as pointed out by (Padilla et al 1997), when students are well integrated academically, and socially, they themselves contribute more to the success rate, and completion of their College degrees. Another factor that contributed to students' motivation, according to Benjamin et al (1993), was the capability of

travelling home regularly in order to help their families, to attend ceremonies, or participate in special family, and community activities.

Personal maturity seems to be a very important contributor to the successful completion of university. The Pueblo woman Christine Lowery is a good example of someone whose personal maturity helped her in her decision to return to school to pursue a different career. She reports:

The return to school would come at the end of a 12 year career as a social worker working on Indian reservations with Indian families. I wanted to be 40 when I returned to school. By then, I would be grounded in what I knew was culturally true for me, but open to learning what would be useful, and unafraid to speak or defend my position, whether it be cultural or academic. At this age, I would be in a time of power with enough strength to integrate, and enough wisdom to teach (Lowery,1997).

It is the acknowledgment of contradictions, and differences, and the willingness to work through these distinctions, rather than the dismissal, and circumvention of the differences that will bring about a productive new consciousness (Hobson 1998). In Padilla's, et al (1997) study, it was found that successful Native students engaged in some mental conditioning before arriving on the campus. They were aware that ethnic minority students would not be treated in equitable fashion, so they mentally, and emotionally prepared themselves, partly by making up their minds, that a college education was valuable to them, intrinsically, and economically.

Sources of support and student support systems

In one comparative study, according to Lin et al (1988), Native American Native students are highly influenced by their cultures, and the customs of a traditional upbringing. Values such as generosity, and the giving of unconditional help are passed on through the families, and elders within their communities. It is through these kinds of close-knit family settings, that Native students learn the precepts of collectivity, respect, sharing, and generosity. In a quantitative study, Rindone (1988) found parents, and family members of American Native students to be the driving force behind them urging them on to achievement. This refutes the assumption, that the low-income, and low-educational levels of parents perpetuate low educational aspirations. It is not surprising, that First Nations students' who have similar experiences need to maintain connections with other family members. Other works, as noted by Archibald et al (1995), pointed out that family members, friends, and elders played a substantial role in providing support for the students. It also helped students to form identities, values, determination, and a strong sense of commitment.

In comparison, in a qualitative study, Lowery (1997) talked about how her journey to success came primarily from what she referred to as "carrying the seeds of her culture." Although many changes occurred within her traditional environment as a child growing up, she needed to touch base with her home, the place where she was raised by returning there on a regular basis. This helped

her to deal with cultural loneliness, and the chance to nurture her spirit.

Likewise, Benjamin et al (1993) found that 56.8% of 155 American Indian students indicated a powerful need to visit home as compared to 16.7% for Anglos. The same study reported that returning home frequently reflected a different set of cultural considerations for Natives, than for Non-Natives.

Similarly, Cardinal (1998) reports that he received guidance from his elders. They told him that it's not how much you know that counts, it is what you do with that knowledge. He was also taught that knowledge is definable, and that which is unknown is also definable, and that creativity lies in the Great Spirit's domain. Once one gets in touch with this ability, one has something of value to contribute to the world.

Other factors associated with support for First Nations students' involved part-time employment. Tate & Scharz (1993) noticed some distinctions between the more commonplace, Non-Native student, and American Native students. Native students were generally older with family, and financial pressures. As a result, the extra responsibilities, and costs of having a family forced students to work at part-time jobs. The extra money from these part-time jobs helped to cover the costs of food, clothing, and shelter.

When First Nations students have to relocate to further their education, their support systems are affected, and therefore they have to rely on alternatives. For some students according to Lowery (1997) and Archibald et al

(1995), connecting with other Native students with similar histories, helped to feed the spirit, and provided an opportunity for students to nurture each other.

Institutional factors relevant to the success of First Nations students

In this part of the literature review, the different factors that contributed to student success were separated into three sections with accompanying subsections. The first section reviews those factors pertaining to the relationship of First Nations students in a pre-dominantly Non- Native institution. The second section reviews those factors relative to First Nations education systems, and their outcomes. The third section reviews those factors found to be effective with First Nations students in both educational systems. These conditions were presented to illustrate, how these factors contributed to the success of First Nations students, and how they were put into practice.

Non-Native Institutional factors and First Nations students

Many studies have pointed out, that the Non-Native Institutional system is not conducive to First Nations cultures (Badwound & Tierney 1988; Brady 1996; Hurlburt et al 1991; & Wilson). In fact, according to Brown (1992), the education system may be facilitating, the assimilation of First Nations students into mainstream culture. Similarly, Brady (1996) discovered First Nations students are not empowered by the educational system, because it is geared to meet the needs, and aspirations of the school's mainstream population.

Much of the literature puts the onus on the student, to find out what factors will further his, or her goals in order to implement them. But there is a growing awareness on the part of many researchers, that improvement in the campus environment relates directly to improvement in academic performance for Native students (Lin, et al 1988). There is also much evidence suggesting, that higher levels of achievement are more likely if Native cultures are taken more seriously, and studies of such are adopted into the curriculum (Kehoe & Echols, 1994).

A primary distinction between the two systems is that American, and Canadian education systems are meritocratic in practice, while Native systems are non-competitive. Meritocracies give rewards on the basis of performance. The greatest rewards go to those who perform the best, and therefore, competition plays a central role. This kind of meritocracy reflects an American, and Canadian preoccupation with measuring, ordering, and ranking. Native cultural practices, on the other hand, are neither meritocratic nor competitive. Rather, values pertaining to generosity, wisdom, and reverence for the Earth are given preference (Badwound & Tierney 1988).

According to Gomme, Hall & Murphy (1993), the primary goal of universities should be to encourage more effective teaching, and evaluation, to reduce class sizes, to increase formal, and informal interaction among faculty, and students, to improve the quality of academic advising, and to support the creation of more equitable financial assistance programs for students. However,

other studies show that contact with professors seems limited at best. According to one report, 70% of students only speak with professors for more than five minutes outside class, either not at all, or only once or twice throughout the semester. Their conversations were only about course-related problems, reviewing assignments, or seeking advice regarding academic programs (Gomme et al 1993).

In one particular study, Kawakami (1999) found successful Hawaiian students had to put aside cultural values, such as cooperation, collaboration, and humility, and adopt values of independence, and competitiveness. In comparison, Hurlburt et al (1991) found First Nations students' negative attitudes toward studying was a reflection of their unmet social needs in a contemporary educational setting. Students face issues of power, control, sexuality, self-worth, peer approval, and social acceptance - issues not dealt with by the contemporary school system. A similar study by Archibald et al (1995) revealed that First Nations students on the whole, reported a negative perception of their university experience. It was more discouraging than encouraging due to the impersonal uncaring nature of the institution, as well as some clear prejudice felt from some of the faculty staff. In addition to an already complex situation, Henson (1982) found that First Nations students are doubly oppressed by the education system, and an ongoing legacy of oppressive conditions.

University survival, and success depends on students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning. Typical results as shown by Beaty & Chiste

(1986) refer to the understanding, that all activities for First Nations students are "gate-keeping" encounters. The university itself is a gate, and the professor a gate-keeper, and thus can affect social mobility. According to McCormick (1995), much of the current educational culture stresses multiculturalism, but First Nations Students are neither interested in, nor consider, their interests to fall under this category, since they are more concerned with their own cultures, and issues.

In an attempt to rectify an illiteracy problem, Henson (1982) observed an inherent contradiction within school mandates. One side of the coin calls for Native youth to receive adequate education, in their respective communities, both rural, and urban, yet, the reverse side showing illiteracy, points out the inadequacy that First Nations students are receiving. The school must realize, that it has a role to play in the promotion of educational opportunity of minority students. Equal opportunity for education, and work needs to be part of the school's vision. In addition, it is the responsibility of the universities to encourage First Nations students, to synthesize mainstream theory into their cultures (Macias 1989). We must understand that not only does the educational system compartmentalize different subjects; it separates society from nature in a manner espoused by Descartes, and Bacon (Sanger 1997).

Major components of First Nations systems

Several key components of an educational system have been identified in the literature that is congruent with First Nations students, and their cultures. According to Armstrong, (1987) traditional education ensures cultural continuity, and survival of the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of the individual, community, and family as a whole. To address the crisis First Nations students are experiencing, Hanohano (1999) contends the educational system must be reformed. This means including Native culture in the curriculum, particularly the sense of spirituality that is missing within the contemporary education system. More importantly, spirituality is not only what students are searching for in their university experience, but it is also a search from within that fosters balance, and harmony. Spirituality is a quality much needed to assist students with the demands, and rigors of university study, and discovering an identity. Kirkness (1998) says that the elders themselves must be involved, for they are key sources to the knowledge of the culture.

In one noteworthy study, Barnhardt (1991) analyzed one hundred programs, and institutions affiliated with Indigenous education, and found several commonalities between the different programs: A collective concern for the community interest, holism, leadership, participation of elders, spiritual harmony, language, traditional methods of knowledge, and the environment.

According to Badwound & Tierney, (1988) status for Native students is measured by how much someone gives away, not by how much he, or she

accumulates, and there is a prevailing concern for the welfare of the group. First Nations view the universe, and the environment holistically, relationally, and spiritually, rather than emphasizing its distinct parts. Wisdom is the highest virtue. Leaders are chosen according to their wisdom. Spirituality is a very important part of First Nations culture, but this is the one component of the students' educational experiences that is sorely overlooked in contemporary education systems. Native people talk about the fatal flaw, when spirituality is omitted from the educational system, because it permeates all aspects of Native life. Yet, they are ignored when they try to offer solutions (Hanobano 1999).

Garrett (1996), and Lowery (1997) briefly discuss the importance of spiritual support in their backgrounds from elders, and medicine people. However, the strengthening effects of prayer, and sweat lodge ceremonies, the importance of a vision quest, the priority of finding one's purpose in life, and the transforming elements of the ceremonies are all First Nations traditional customs, and practices, which play a major role in this way of life. Spiritual leaders can play a significant role in the students' drive to finish university. For example, the influence of pipe carriers, medicine men, and women, and the Medicine Wheel can act as guiding forces in the students' lives, and their identity development.

Kirkness, and Barnhardt (1991) captured a glimpse of the Native spirit cultural style with their discussion of "the four R's": 1) respect - the need for a higher education system that respects who they are, 2) relevance - to their

worldview, 3) reciprocity - in their relations with others, and 4) responsibility – looking after responsibility for their own lives. Further, Native people who come from isolated communities in particular tend to prefer a lifestyle that exhibits a high respect for individual self-reliance, non-intervention in other people's affairs, the integration of useful knowledge into a holistic, and internally consistent world-view, and a disdain for complex organizational structures.

Brown (1992) discusses the term Andragogy, and the importance of understanding the power relationship that exists between First Nations students, and teachers. This term refers to the role of power, and social status where power lies, and how it is used. It is incumbent, that those who work with First Nations understand these students are products of history, and culture, like all social beings.

A fundamental aim of education for First Nations, according to Hurlburt et al (1990) is the realization of each individual's potential, and to facilitate with the process of meeting these ends. Words like "assimilation," and "acculturation" are often understood by Native students as attempts to force them, to adopt a completely different culture, wholesale, and forget about their own traditional cultures. In addition, First Nations students have a different view of science. They believe that time, money, and science will not conquer nature, nor will conquering nature solve everything. The dominant culture's emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge using scientific models tends to minimize human values, and forget the actual person.

One particular study of learning strategies (Macias 1989) found, that Native women preferred essay exams, rather than more objective forms of testing. These findings refuted former studies that claim First Nations learn best by visual presentations, and have difficulty with lectures, and readings. The experience of being Native from a reservation provided these women with an advantage, to evaluate pre-conceived theories for their appropriateness, and applicability. These women demonstrated a cognitive skill that required them to critically evaluate, analyze a concept, and to synthesize information.

According to Hurlbert et al (1990), more research is needed to examine First Nations philosophy, pedagogies in relation to learning styles, and emotional, and motivational needs. Likewise, Kirkness et al (1998) points out a need for more research to develop adequate pedagogies, and to design curriculum in accordance with traditional cultures. Owing to low scores for test taking, time management, and taking into account negative attitudes toward teachers, Hurlbert et al (1990) contend there is certainly a need to examine the requirements of First Nations students. Kehoe & Echols (1994) further suggest more research is needed to examine the disciplining practices of First Nations peoples, as well as their socio-linguistic conventions, social organizations, and cognitive structures within the cultural group.

Success factors found to be effective with First Nations students

A number of factors have been identified that accommodate First Nations students, and their cultures. Badwound & Tierney (1998) outlines seven elements of a system that are necessary in order for it, to be congruent with the ideologies of First Nations culture: Goals, participants, technology, environment, social structure, leadership, and philosophy. (For a complete discussion see Badwound et al 1998, p.13).

Any program that takes into account the cognitive styles of First Nations students, and incorporates their cultural values into the curriculum will be in a better position, to facilitate successful outcomes. Since the oral tradition plays a significant role in Native culture, students have a greater familiarity with the narrative style of passing on information. The use of life histories to gather data is a positive technique that should be increasingly adopted. The method is empowering: to be heard, to tell one's story, especially if it will help someone else, can be both healing, and a journey of self-discovery at the same time (Lowery,1997).

The campus should be a place in which learning is a two-way process. Consultations with First Nations students who have successfully completed their degrees can be used as "expert advice," and their experiences can be utilized to adapt course content, and techniques to First Nations cognitive styles, to foster academic success. In other words, successful First Nations students can serve as models for academic success, and should be used as sources of information, and

be given the opportunity, to share their strategies for academic survival with other students (Macias,1989).

Some studies have found First Nations to be more enthusiastic about their learning, when they felt a sense of inclusion. More importantly, inclusion contributed to academic achievement. According to Atleo's (1991) hypothesis, inclusion, (social, political, and economic) predicted a positive correlation between academic achievements as measured by increasing grade twelve enrolments. A similar study found that most college programs are ill suited to effect change for First Nations students, but when students assume control of their educational process, the result was a better education. When the College allowed First Nations leaders to become involved with providing suggestions for design, and the implementation of programs that would be community based, and locally controlled, it was a highly successful undertaking (Wright 1998).

Barnhardt (1991) asserts, that the most effective faculty are those who engage themselves, and their students in a process of sense-making, and skill-building through active participation in the world around them. Other researchers, corroborate this finding with those features that jointly build knowledge from the ground up with their students, that make teaching, and learning an open two-way process, causing students to experience greater success (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

According to Brown (1992), the curriculum is comprised of a selection of ideas, knowledge, values, beliefs, and philosophies of a specific culture.

Therefore, when First Nations students are involved, it is important that educators modify their programs, by drawing on significant elements from both cultures (Brown 1992). More importantly, as noted by Armstrong (1987), quality education for First Nations students in the future will depend on the basic principles that were already outlined in the First Nations system section.

Moreover, Burns (1998) states that with tuition schooling for First Nations students, there is a need to consider issues of Native control of education, self-determination, self-government, inclusiveness, relevance, and equity in tuition. Neglecting to focus on these major areas, where change may be necessary, will guarantee that, "tuition agreement schooling" will continue to be non-inclusive, racist, discriminatory, and assimilative in practice. Tuition schooling must start at the level of the negotiation stage, and continue throughout the process to its final outcome, to ensure a quality program that promotes equal status for all students, Native, and Non-Native alike.

Inter-face teaching methods were found to be effective with First Nations students. This method holds, that a concept or piece of content be presented to students as a problem, or a question to be analyzed as opposed to prescribing knowledge to be banked (Brown 1992). In comparison, Hurlburt et al (1991) found confluent education to be compatible with First Nations students, and served to meet their needs. Confluent education, which solicits the participation of learners in deciding how, and what to learn, through integrative means is based on a holistic philosophy that emphasizes personal, and societal relevance,

self-determination, creative learning processes, and the integration of cognition, effect, and responsible action. On the other hand, Hurlburt, et al (1991) observed practices like peer-group mentoring, symbolic, and allegorical teaching tales, and cooperative group exercises, revolving around real-life issues, tend to create an environment in which students are empowered, and challenged according to their own stages of development, and learning styles.

Educators, and Social workers need to act as translators, or mediators between the dual cultural views of knowledge. One offered suggestion refers to the role of the teacher, and viewing this position in a new light, as a "participant observer" or "facilitator" or even a "translator." Translators are the people sitting on the boundary, or edge of different systems (Brown 1992). Their role is to facilitate transformations of both Aboriginal, and Non-Aboriginal systems. This new willingness to listen, and incorporate Aboriginal values, can be seen as an opportunity for a reciprocal transformation of both Aboriginal communities, and Canadian social work values.

Garrett (1996) emphasizes the importance of reconciling the values, expectations, and practices of both Western, and First Nations cultures by looking at the influences of family relationships, stories about the culture, oral traditions, healing practices, and decision-making. What students learn and how they learn will essentially be determined by the content of the curriculum, and the methods by which they are taught. Consequently, Stairs' (1991) term "cultural brokerage" means that turning to the students for clues, to their

learning styles, and consulting elders for guidance, and direction, will offer the best strategies to help First Nations students to be successful. In a similar study, Padilla et al (1997) state changes at the institutional level, must come through the student perspective that identifies institutional changes, to either eliminate completely, or at least minimize barriers to success. Achieving a better understanding of the value, and benefits of cultural diversity will ultimately produce positive results (Benjamin et al 1993).

A study at the University of Alberta evaluated the effects of an Aboriginal student policy on the participation, and academic persistence of Aboriginal people at the university. Results showed that the Transition Year Program, an aboriginal student quota, Aboriginal student policy, and Native Student Services were viewed as the most important contributors to success. Other helpful measures were the aboriginal student law program, set-aside faculty seats, outreach programs, better interaction between aboriginal students, and instructors, and special programs for Aboriginals (Burns, 1998). Similarly, Archibald et al (1995) identified First Nations services to be an important determinant to the students' success – including such facilities as the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL), and Ts'Kel program functioned as a caring, loving, supportive structure that embraced the students.

Almost all the present literature stresses the importance of the relationship between the students, and their teachers. If the instructor comes across as cold, uncaring, the Native students are less likely to feel, a sense of belonging, or feel

as motivated to achieve. It was found that, at the primary grade level, especially, teachers who combined close, warm relationships with high expectations, and practical standards of learning, obtained higher achievement results with rural Native children (Kehoe & Echols, 1994). Their research also suggests that higher levels of achievement among Native students are more likely if their cultures are taken more seriously. Public schools would be more successful, if they fostered an environment that teaches students from all cultures to develop more positive inter-group attitudes, take pride in their heritages, and attain equivalency in achievement (Kehoe & Echols, 1994).

In light of the changing demographics, counselling practices will require major changes to account for the needs of diverse clients (Arthur 1998; Hiebert 1996). This also means counsellor educators will need to make changes to curriculum, and methodology practices to keep pace with a changing world. A counselling experience can be more harmful to a First Nations person, if the counsellor is unaware of his, or her assumptions, and privileges (McWhirter, 1998; Pederson, 1995).

The value of listening to Aboriginal people, and their views revolving around their respective cultures in the context of their immediate environment, will provide valuable insight as to what the students need in the way of counselling. According to McCormick, (1995) there are five outcomes that significantly contribute to student learning: Empowerment, discipline, cleansing, connecting, and balance (p 83). Other studies confirm that if counsellors' take

time to learn about First Nations worldviews, beliefs, and values, and are willing to revise their counselling models, they will experience more success in their counselling attempts (McCormick, & France 1995; Wyrostok, & Paulson, 2000).

A post-secondary Counsellor Program has begun, and is currently showing success in the state of Alaska. This is a departure from the university-based strategies in that a post-secondary counsellor, who is familiar with the students, and their families takes on the responsibility of guiding the students, through their college years, and provides support, and system know-how, that middle class students routinely receive from their parents. The counsellor acts as an advisor, friend, and concerned parent. In the district where this program was implemented, the college dropout rate fell from 50% to 16% (Kleinfeld, Cooper & Kyle, 1987).

The Squamish Nation, and Capilano College established a joint venture partnership where the College accepted, principles of self-determination that were defined by the Squamish Nation. Wright (1975) exemplified how this relationship allowed partners from both parties, to design a three-tier transition program, to prepare Squamish students for college by improving basic learning skills, and support services. The students were placed into three different levels, in accordance to a battery of assessment tests to determine their skill achievement level. As a result, experience indicated that more Squamish Nation students succeeded at Capilano College because of this transition program. A similar partnership was established between the University of Northern British

Columbia, and the neighbouring First Nations communities. According to Evans, McDonald & Nyce, (1999) a participatory curriculum needs to be developed that recognizes, and embraces relationships of autonomy, rather than the elimination of such boundaries. Without the acceptance of both parties to outline their assumptions, limitations, and objectives, the potential for institutional assimilation is great. (see Evans et al., 1999 for report on UNBC project). Similarly, Beaty & Chiste (1986) contend that unless universities are willing to accept the different value systems, and worldviews of First Nations people, they may in fact be perpetuating the problem by rooting out the major sources of the students' self-esteem (Wright, 1998).

Geographical factors that impact student success

Of great theoretical, and practical importance, Gallagher (1994) shows that almost all of us rely on nature, whether it is sprouting from the flowerpot, or stretching as far as the eye can see to excite our senses, restore our nerves, invite us to play, enhance our social bonds, and supply meaning to our lives. She further states, that the Alaskan Native people have best maintained an unromanticized, but profound connection to the natural world, one that continues to supply meaning to life as well as put food on their table. In comparison, Hanohano (1999) discovered many terms are used as a reference to First Nations people whose ancestors were once the owners of land, now subject

to rule by other governments, and peoples. Native people are known to have a strong sense of identity that is connected to the land, and culture.

The structure of a system according to Gallagher (1994) that gives meaning, and a deep sense of belonging is tied to the fact, that the more subsistence-type activities you do in that setting, the better integrated you become with the whole social, and physical environment. In a similar fashion as noted by Sanger (1997), the notion of place for First Nations people refers, to an appreciation, and recognition of land, location, and sacred grounds that is imbued with special power, and spirit. This anchors their being, and identity to Mother Earth. This is accomplished through elders who are repositories of knowledge from time immemorial.

Other dimensions of place, as revealed by Ryan (1995) indicate that some First Nations students are faced with the extra challenge of adjusting to a new lifestyle with their families, that interfere, mostly with the students' ability to accomplish any work. Besides dealing with all of the new technologies associated with learning at a university, many Native students had to deal with moving to the city, finding suitable accommodation, handling family concerns, managing finances, and dealing with racial discrimination. Similarly, Archibald et al (1995) reports that students experienced culture shock from being relocated from a rural First Nations setting to an urban one. This separation that lasted for months, and sometimes years impacted not only the students who made the transition, but also on the whole family system in general.

In response to the issues of relocation, Ryan (1995) offers three solutions to deal with these difficulties: (1) leave the structure of the program intact, and provide compensating measures such as limited forms of financial assistance, housing, childcare, and counselling for academic purposes as well as personal, and family; (2) distance learning that can be more flexible in its time demands, and one that does not require a move to an alien environment; (3) a fundamental revamping of programs, and the very nature of education itself needs to occur, perhaps starting with Native people assuming complete control over the education of their own people.

Several studies have succinctly made it clear the importance of a sense of place, and how it contributes to the development of identity, self esteem, and unity (Philippe, 1997; Crumpacker, 1995; Sanoff, 1994; Kawakami, 1999). More importantly as shown by Sanger (1994), education must provide meaning, and value to sense of place, and embed students in the processes of those places. Such an education should include: Concepts that focus on building connections to the land, and building communities through language, and stories, and involving those members of the community who use them. In a project within the community, Sanoff (1994) confirmed the essential elements of place as it generated interactions between First Nations, and townspeople in the process of renovating a partially demolished building, to be converted to an Indian cultural center.

In light of these factors, if there is any hope to be experienced in this matter, that will produce effective outcomes for First Nations, within any kind of educational setting, relates to the principle of unity. This is also supported by the studies referring to sense of place, and how it fostered collective procedures between the university, community, and those groups who use them. By instilling what was meaningful to the participants, it was more relative, suitable, and it provided a sense of inclusion, and ownership (Bingler, 1995; Crumpacker 1995; Sanoff 1994; Kawakami 1999).

Barriers students experience in their educational pursuits

According to Henson (1982) illiteracy is believed to be a social problem for First Nations students, because it perpetuates the effects of colonialism. This is in response to the structural inequalities of educational access, and opportunities that are denied to Native students. Along similar lines, Garrett (1996) reminds us of attempts by mainstream North American institutions, (such as government, schools, and churches) to destroy First Nations culture, and institutions including family, clan, and tribal structure, religious belief systems, and practices, customs, and the traditional way of life.

Policies that impacted student progress

Of great theoretical, and practical importance, as noted by Garrett (1996), policies such as assimilation, and acculturation had a pervasive impact on First Nations students. The Canadian, and American policies of assimilation nearly

decimated the Indian Nations of North America. These historical factors have obviously had deep psychological, economic, and social consequences for First Nations people who still face difficult choices relating to identity, and their place in society. Adjustment to Euro-Western ways has been a difficult, and often painful process, resulting in perpetual unemployment, poverty, family strife, welfare dependence, drug, and alcohol abuse, and despair for First Nations people (Ryan1995).

Conversely, according to Henson (1982), band members of Native organizations, and representatives of the interests of marginalized First Nations people who do nothing to change the situation, only serve to foster colonialism. The roots stem from leading families who are band members, and who continue to exercise assimilation policies that fall under the direction of Indian Affairs.

Hindering factors that stem from curriculum

Typical results point out how the educational system is discriminatory to First Nation students (Brady 1996; Brown 1992). Indeed, as Brown (1992) explains, the curriculum is a selection of certain items such as values, beliefs, philosophies, and ideologies that are based on Western society. Brown further raises the question as to whether it is ethical to teach concepts to Aboriginal students that do not help them, deal with their reality. Finally, Brown finds that Native systems are viewed as romantic, or interesting, but not as something to be of value to society, or the schools. In comparison, Brady (1996) observed

common experiences between Native, and Non-Native students who dropped out of school. Isolation from the mainstream school population, and low socio-economic status correlated with scores of achievement, intelligence, behavior, and self-worth. This became evident in the practice of streaming the disadvantaged into lower track non-academic courses. Students' reports reflected the feelings of being treated differently in relation to rules, and regulations, and to teachers interacting with students. These same practices were further internalized, and reinforced by the other students themselves.

Personal barriers encountered by students

A common theme found in the literature referred to by Brady (1996) as the cultural discontinuity hypothesis. The cultural discontinuity hypothesis states that:

Culturally based differences in the communication styles of the minority students' home, and the Anglo culture of the school leads to conflict, misunderstandings, and ultimately, failure for those students. The research focuses on the process rather than the structure of education, and concludes that making the classroom culturally appropriate will mean a higher rate of achievement (p.12).

Similarly, Beaty & Chiste (1986) found that the communicative style, affected the students' performance in relation to the level of acculturation, and upbringing. Because of some students' ideas of language, and word usage, and discourse, the communication differed, and was sometimes misunderstood, or

negatively interpreted. For many, English was not the students' first language; therefore, it reflected different worldviews.

Other noteworthy studies by Kirkness et al (1991) discovered survival at university for First Nations often involved the acquisition, and acceptance of a new form of consciousness, that not only displaces, but often devalues indigenous consciousness, and for many, this was a greater sacrifice than most students were willing to make. If they dropped out, they were labeled a "failure" by the school, and society. But even those students who kept on going, and made the sacrifice found themselves "torn between two worlds." This led to further inner struggles in trying to reconcile the cultural, and psychic conflicts that arose from competing values, and aspirations.

Other factors that hindered students were fear, and anxiety aggravated by home-sickness, a new environment, and the different level of writing expectations at the university (Cardinal 1998; Macias 1989). As elaborated by Archibald et al (1995), students reported their initial experiences at university were negative, and that they were scared, and lonely. These experiences generally lasted for several months. As for the standards of university writing, one study by Macias (1989) that involved First Nations women, found three considerations that resulted in confusion, and frustration for these students. First, they were required to become impersonal, and analytic with their writing. Secondly, the jargon and terminology common to the profession, and characteristic of journal articles, and lectures also posed a problem. Thirdly,

these women reported difficulty with writing true or false, and multiple-choice exams.

Other works concerning successful adjustment to college involved severing previous ties with family, friends, and past communities (Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Benjamin et al 1993). Yet, it was discovered that attachments to significant others were key factors for a successful transition to college. The severing of ties can be emotionally difficult, and not necessarily helpful, as evidenced by Christine Lowery (1997) who commented that:

Initial separation from my source of strength was painful... sometimes my spirit actually ached. I missed not just the support, not just the opportunity of being surrounded by other people like me, but I missed the shared humors, the sounds, the feel of the spirits of other Indian people (p 3).

Hindering factors that involved relationships with other students

According to Beaty and Chiste, (1986) activities associated with university attendance are viewed as "gate-keeping encounters." First Nations students understand, that the whole Western philosophy of education is an institution, ordered according to different rules, and that the classroom itself is a gate, and the professor a gatekeeper.

According to Lin, La Counte & Eder, (1988) generally, First Nations students GPA fluctuated according to the semester, courses taken, hostility encountered within classrooms, and isolation experienced by students. Some possible explanations are offered by Nora & Cabrera, (1996) who found a

correlation between students' persistence, stereotyping, and negative attitudes held by others. Indeed, perceptions of prejudice, and discrimination have a direct effect on the students' cognitive growth, revealed by such factors as academic performance, critical thinking, and affective development. According to Archibald et al (1995), students experienced racism in various forms. Some students reported that they felt belittled in relation to their different ethnic backgrounds, and culture. Other forms of racism involved comments from Non-Native individuals that demoted First Nations programs, implying them to be inferior to those of the majority culture. Another study (Tate & Schwartz 1993) revealed that some faculty members, actually believed, that ethnic students were intellectually inferior, and they refused to include course content that celebrated contributions of Aboriginal people, and their culture. Similarly, Kehoe & Echols (1994) found that some Non-Native students held negative attitudes toward First Nations students.

Resources and their impact with student success

According to Tippeconnic, (1988) lack of funding was cited as the most important issue facing successful Aboriginal Native education at both the national, and provincial levels. Likewise, Archibald et al (1995) conveyed that lack of funding was a major hindrance to the students' success. Other findings as noted by Brady, (1996) conveyed that the Indian Act makes it impossible to quantify First Nations people, due to the paradox of how they are categorized:

Status, Non-Status, Inuit, and Metis. Further, as noted by Kirkness et al (1998), Indian control of Indian education has not officially occurred for two reasons. Firstly, the education received by First Nations children is a replica of past systems, due to the manipulation of the Indian Affairs. Secondly, fear of the unknown, and gaining independence of colonial domination, prevents First Nations educators from taking action toward designing, and implementing Indian education that is relevant to First Nations students. Similarly, according to Henson, (1982) the Indian Act restricts First Nations people from exploiting, and developing reserve resources. In addition, because First Nations students are marginalized, the problem is magnified, due to the fact, that they do not have access to the resources, and power to make significant changes to their situation. Other factors relate to the downward trend of the economy, and the technological changes that pose yet a greater obstacle to First Nations people.

Overcoming barriers to educational success

Personal factors that contributed to student success

Native students who began their learning careers in their Native tongue, and then had English introduced in later primary grades were found to experience more success than those who primarily started with the English language. It was believed that students were able to develop a stronger sense of identity with their own culture, when first educated in their Native language,

and therefore, developed greater self-esteem that aided students in confronting a different, alien culture (Reyhner, 1992).

Other findings identified by Padilla et al (1996) involved students' recognition, and understanding of specific barriers. Becoming aware of barriers, allowed students to take steps to deal with them. It was also determined, that students should be involved in the process of describing these barriers, and allowed to define effective interventions to overcome them. Another study by Padilla et al (1997) found that successful students mentally prepared themselves by focusing on the positive thoughts that edified their beliefs, about who they were, and what they could do. In addition, degree attainment, depended upon students' acquisition of both heuristic (campus-specific) knowledge, and theoretical (or book-specific) knowledge.

According to Rindone (1988), and (Garrett, 1996), students from either stable, or high-income family environments experienced success, because they had access to methods of conflict resolution services such as counselling. It was also revealed, that these students exhibited certain personality traits relating to family resources, and support that helped them to overcome the many barriers encountered in their quest for a higher education.

As for acculturation difficulties, Tate & Schwartz (1993) offered these important suggestions. Students should be provided with structural group experiences that are led, and guided by other Native faculty. Their valuable experiences as group leaders can be used as a resource to provide topics for

discussion related to social support, cultural isolation, self-esteem, and techniques to increase Native presence on campus. Also, Macias (1989) found some evidence, that academic success is not so much dependent upon the students' level of acculturation, but more upon culturally transmitted cognitive abilities.

One specific study by Garrett, (1996) found that American Indian students experienced cultural conflicts from the influences of two cultures, and struggled to establish an identity, and sense of place between them. To deal with these opposing influences, Garrett (1996) provided a five-stage model, adapted from (Herring 1995; Poston 1990) that outlined the characteristics of a bi-cultural person. According to Garrett a bi-cultural person is resilient, and has a strong sense of self in both cultures. This model consists of five stages to identity development: (1) personal identity, (2) choice, (3) denial/confusion, (4) appreciation, and (5) integration (see Garrett 1996 for a full discussion).

Changes identified at the structural and program level

In his study, Burns (1998) contends that several changes within the structural system of the institution need to occur. School boards, trustees, administrators, and teaching personnel need to work together in a joint effort with First Nations, to eliminate systemic barriers that perpetuates oppressive conditions, that prevents Native inclusion, relevance, excellence, and equity. In addition, the hidden curriculum of domination, control, domestication, racism,

and assimilation needs to be rooted out in structure, ideology, curriculum, and processes of negotiation.

In comparison, Henson (1982) offers several suggestions that involve training, and guidelines for program design, and development. In her analysis of a literacy project, Henson noted eight items to consider, and which can be used as guidelines when developing a program for First Nations students. These items are as follows:

- 1) Basic definition of development must be provided, so programs can be measured, and evaluated.
- 2) Training should take place within the context of community control. Native members set the goals, and control the direction of program.
- 3) Include those stakeholders who will support the project, and keep focused on the interests of those benefiting from the project.
- 4) People of the project it is targeting must be involved at all levels, for they are the real experts.
- 5) Training should be an ongoing process to keep up to date with technology.
- 6) Methodology incorporated must create conditions that allow participants to uncover, de-mystify, and examine those forces affecting their lives.
- 7) Outside technical information can be useful, providing it is assimilated, and controlled by participants.
- 8) Project must not be dictated by state funding agencies whose interests are preserving the status quo.

For more information on design, and program development for First Nations students that operate at the structural, and program level (see Henson, 1982 for a general discussion).

Summary of literature findings

In summary, the process concerning First Nations students, and their graduating from a university was found to be an enormous feat, and the odds against accomplishing such a task was stacked against them. In fact, the situation that existed in accordance with high dropout rates, and student under-representation in Canadian universities was considered to be more of a crisis than a problem. Indeed, the socio-economic factors coupled with oppressive conditions, First Nations had to overcome many systematic barriers. It is not surprising that compared to Non-Native students the dropout rate is a great deal higher. However, some students managed to overcome all odds, and received their university degrees.

In this context, the key factor for students to achieve a sense of wholeness involved finding, and maintaining a balance within the parameters of sometimes, two opposing cultural influences. These influences came basically from Western culture, but sometimes occurred between parents that where from two different ethnic groups. Personal factors such as academic skills, personality, values, and beliefs, played a major role in their success. Providing students possessed competent academic skills, and worked hard, they experienced success. Having respect for others, being non-judgmental, and having an optimistic outlook on career options were also found to promote success. Students who took the

initiative, and were creative in solving their problems found their own means of support. Students who were able to adapt, and maintain ties to their cultural roots were provided with the motivation necessary for them to continue with their educational pursuits.

Other factors related to the students' sources of support. The family was found to be a major source of support, and encouragement for the students. From their home, students received values such as generosity, and the desire to help others, both of which helped them to be successful. It was the driving force behind them, urging them on to achieve. Provided students were able to maintain this connection with their families on a regular basis, they had the support necessary to nurture their spirits. Due to financial circumstances, some students had to rely on part-time employment. For others, it was creating alternative support systems, on campus, with other students, with similar backgrounds.

It is understood that the institution itself is not conducive to meeting the needs of First Nations culture. In spite of the power relationship that exists between professor, and student, it is important that these professors, and other instructors, not lose sight of the fact, that First Nations students are human beings with potential. Teachers have a primary opportunity to edify the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of these students, or to tear them down. Garrett (1996) offers several key strategies to address these concerns, while other researchers call for a total reformation of the education system that is in keeping with a holistic approach. When programs accommodated the ideologies of First

Nations culture, the students, and elders were consulted, and included with program design; thus, the educational systems were more relative and successful.

It is well known, that the identity of First Nations people are tied, and connected to the land, and their culture. It not only put food on the table, but provided meaning, and purpose to their lives. The land is imbued with a special source of power, strength, and nurturance that deserves respect and appreciation. When students had to relocate to attend school in an urban setting, this connection to the land changed dramatically. Students had to adjust, and deal with the added stress of living in a city, finding suitable accommodation, handling their finances, and dealing with racial discrimination. In some cases the culture shock they experienced lasted for years.

Some of the barriers that students experienced related to personal matters. Others were linked to policies, lack of resources, curriculum, and relationships with other students. Students who were taught to speak their own Native language portrayed a stronger sense of identity, and self-esteem that helped them to experience success. Gaining awareness of the different barriers, students were able to work toward finding a resolution. Some students mentally prepared themselves by focusing on positive outcomes. There was some evidence that suggested students' socio-economic status had an impact on their success. Garrett (1996), and Henson (1982) offered several ideas, and strategies to resolve those identified barriers to Native post-secondary academic success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Since the interest of this study related to discovering personal meaning, and experiences that First Nations students attached to their educational achievements, and to develop a beginning theory, grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was selected. The term "grounded theory" described by Strauss and Corbin as "theory that was derived from data systematically gathered, and analyzed through the research process" (p 12). In other words, it allows the theory to emerge from the data. In addition, theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the reality than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience, or solely through speculation (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Due to the fact that grounded theory methodology is a specific, highly developed, rigorous set of procedures for producing substantive theory of social phenomena, (Creswell, 1998: Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), theories drawn from the data are more likely to offer insight, enhance understanding of the phenomena in question, and provide a meaningful guide to action. These procedures are discussed in this section of the paper.

Research Participants

In total there were seven participants that took part in this study. Five were female, and two were male. The students' place of origin included both Canada, and the United States of America. One student was from Ontario,

another student from Manitoba, and another from North Dakota. Two students were from northern British Columbia, while two other students were from central British Columbia. The majority of the students ranged in age from late teens to early thirties. One student that entered university directly from high school dropped out of the program, and returned several years later to finish her degree. A large portion of the students worked for their bands, prior to entering university. Some students worked as professional workers within the community of Vancouver.

Participant selection, and criteria for this study was guided by the procedures of grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The minimal criteria for initial participant selection were as follows: Students were of First Nations ancestry, they completed, and attained an undergraduate degree from a recognized credited university, and they were willing to articulate their experiences of completing, and receiving a degree from a university. A letter of intent described the study, and was distributed to First Nations candidates by employees of the First Nations House of Learning at UBC. Students who chose to participate in this study were provided with the necessary information to contact me, for further information. Students who met the criteria were evaluated during a scheduled meeting, to assess their understanding of the study. Upon meeting this requirement, students were given a letter of consent to sign.

In this study, seven First Nations students were identified who successfully completed an undergraduate degree at a recognized university. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to discuss factors that contributed to their successful completion of programs, leading to the conferral of degrees. Drawing from Grams' (1999) working guide, a theory was developed, and grounded in the data collected from interviewee subjects. Several factors were identified that played a major role in students' motivation, and educational demands. From the literature, and results of a personal interview of my own experiences as a First Nations student, and educator, the following research questions were constructed, and are here presented. It is important to note that these questions acted only as a guide (Grams, 1999).

Research Questions

Academic Factors:

- 1) How many hours did you devote to studying?
- 2) Were you happy with your study skills?
- 3) How was your attendance?
- 4) Did you have to learn or improve specific skills? Explain.
- 5) What were your educational goals?
- 6) Was the curriculum helpful/unhelpful? Explain.

Personal Variables:

- 7) How did you maintain your health? Explain.

- 8) How did you manage your financial affairs?
- 9) Did you have to work while going to school?
- 10) Did you have family responsibilities? Explain.
- 11) Did gender have any impact on your studies? Explain.
- 12) Did age have any impact on your studies? Explain.
- 13) How did you feel about your identity and history at the university?
- 14) Did you have a support system?
- 15) How did you deal with your spirituality?

Social Variables:

- 16) Did you have friends who were supportive?
- 17) Did you belong to any campus clubs, special groups or organizations?
- 18) How was your campus social life? Explain.

Geographical Variables:

- 19) Did you ever live on a reserve? How is it different in the city? Explain.
- 20) Did you live only in the city? Explain.
- 21) Were you closely connected to the land? Explain.
- 22) How did you deal with this major transition?

Institutional Variables:

- 23) What was your relationship like with the instructors and other

School personnel? Explain.

24) How was the institution supportive in your studies? Explain.

Interview Process

From the literature review, and personal interview, a preliminary conceptual framework of categories was constructed to help in the construction of interview questions, and to compare them with the students' responses of this study. The data gathered in each interview were examined to determine, whether the preliminary theoretical categories derived from the literature were supported. A scheduled meeting for an interview with each participant was conducted, at the First Nations House of Learning. The semi-structured interviews averaged one and half-hours in length each. Each interview was tape-recorded. This interview guide of open-ended questions was used only as a framework, to help guide the interview process. To reduce the likelihood of bias, and leading the interview, questions were organized beginning with the most abstract, open-ended questions first (Grams, 1999). My tasks included clarifying, reflecting, paraphrasing, and using open-ended questions, and prompts.

The overriding objective of this procedure was to allow the students to tell their story, and to reflect on their experiences as it related to their educational pursuits. Participants who chose to take part in this study were informed in advance about their rights regarding information, and answering questions. Participants had the option of choosing which questions to respond to, and how

much they wanted to share about its contents with the interviewer. Moreover, participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Transcript Analysis

In compliance with grounded theory methodology, the transcripts were read, and analyzed line by line in an attempt to break the information into segments of meaning. These complete thoughts or ideas communicated by the participant were clustered into themes to form categories. These categories were constantly compared, and checked with preliminary categories that evolved from the literature review, and personal interview. This process continued until categories reached saturation. These procedures, and techniques according to Cresswell (1998) are necessary to assist the researcher to "generate or discover a theory"(p.56). In addition, Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that these kinds of procedures, and techniques are designed to help analysts carry out the steps of theory building such as conceptualizing, defining categories, and developing categories in terms of their properties, and dimensions. These procedures, and techniques are discussed separately under their appropriate headings to provide a more detailed description of their purpose in this study.

Procedures and Techniques

The procedures, and techniques used in this study are based on Strauss & Corbin (1998) approach to analyze data to generate categories, and described the process as "Analysis through microscopic examination of data"(p.57). In this

process, analytic tools such as questioning, and comparing were used to facilitate the coding process. Questions that answered who, when, where, what, and how helped the researcher to understand concepts, and to become sensitized which in turn helped analyst to identify properties, and dimensions of each category. In addition, these questions helped to keep the process moving forward by allowing the researcher to overcome what Strauss & Corbin (1998) call, analytic blocks. The same process described can be applied to a single word, phrase, or sentence.

There are two types of comparisons; the first referred by Strauss & Corbin (1998) involved, "comparing incident to incident, or object to object for their similarities, and differences among their properties to classify them" (p.94). The second concerned theoretical comparisons that involved, "comparing categories (abstract concepts) to similar or different concepts to bring out their possible properties, and dimensions when they were not evident to the analyst" (p.94). As a final note, these analytic tools helped to build creative, grounded, and dense theory.

Other techniques, such as memo-ing, and the use of diagrams, allowed the researcher to keep a record of the analytic process. Memos, and diagrams vary depending upon the type of coding to be conducted. These techniques were as follows:

Memo-ing, and diagramming [started] with initial analyses, and continued throughout the research process. Although memos,

and diagrams themselves rarely are seen by anyone but the analyst (and perhaps committee members), they remain important documents because they record the process, thoughts, feelings, and directions of the research, and researcher – in fact, the entire Gestalt of the research process. From a practical standpoint, if memos, and diagrams are sparsely done, then the final product - theory - might lack conceptual density, and integration. At the end, it is impossible for the analyst to reconstruct the details of the research without memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The procedures, and techniques discussed thus far were used in this study. Through the guidance, and checking with Dr. Gary Grams, this study attempted to generate theory that was grounded into the raw data.

In the next section of this paper a description of the following techniques were provided: Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. A description of each technique was provided to demonstrate how it was used in this study. According to Strauss & Corbin, (1998) breaking the analytic process down is an artificial but necessary task, because it helps the analysts to understand how categories are discovered in the data, and developed in terms of their properties, and dimensions.

Open Coding

Open coding was defined as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this process, the data collected through interviews is broken down into discrete parts to allow the analyst to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional locations. In this way, the data can be closely examined, and given

a code name. The analytic ideas that emerge from the data at this stage contain meaning, and answer the question: What is going on here? With the analytic tools formerly discussed such as questioning, comparison, and the use of memos – the collective data can be analyzed line by line, by sentence, or paragraph, or in its entirety.

In this study the variation of performing open coding resembled Grans (1999) explanation that said, “to code means to identify at the outset, each and every line. Give each new idea a code name” (p.12). In this way the language of the participants guided the development of codes, and category labels also referred to as “in vivo” codes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Furthermore, with reference to conceptualizing the data, “the conceptual name or label [was] based upon contextual factors from where the event was located” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When several codes were identified, and it became obvious that some of the codes could be “grouped under a more abstract higher order concepts” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), also identified as “saturation” (Cresswell, 1998), the process of code analysis moved to the next phase, Axial coding.

Axial Coding

The purpose of “Axial Coding” marked the beginning of reassembling the data that was fractured during open coding, and to identify a single category representative of the central phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Cresswell, 1998). In this way, it allowed the analyst to form more precise, and complete

explanations about phenomenon. To uncover relationships among categories, and subcategories, questions pertaining to why, where, when, how, and what, helped the analyst to “conceptualize phenomenon, locate it within a conditional structure, and to identify the “how” or the means through which the category was manifested” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Using the constant comparative method sometimes leads to contradictions between categories, thus requiring the researcher to dig deeper to find out “what is really going on, which extends the dimensional range of a category, and gives it more explanatory power” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To assist with the organizing of emerging connections, all codes identified in the “open coding” part of the analysis was written down on the left hand side of a clean piece of paper (Gary Grams 1999). As the list of code names grew, I noticed that some of them could be grouped together to form sub-categories. As this process continued, a more in depth understanding of the phenomena in question started to take place. Whenever, I received a profound revelation that increased my understanding of the phenomena, I made a memo of it, and recorded it in my notebook. This process continued until three columns were identified from more to less abstract. These columns represented my conceptual framework: Categories, properties, dimensions (types, circumstances & conditions).

This was for the purpose of not only aiding the crystallization of categories, and subcategories, but also generating theory. An important step to building theory is to understand how categories are related to each other.

Categories identified through open coding were explored, and compared with other categories to help understand, how they were related, and how they played a role with the central phenomenon of this study.

Selective Coding

Selective coding marked the beginning of theory creation where it was integrated, and categories refined. In integration, categories were organized around a central explanatory concept (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The central category sometimes called the core category represented the main theme of the research. It served to explain what the research was all about. Integration occurred overtime, beginning with the first steps of the analysis, and did not end until the final writing. Theoretical saturation occurred when no new properties, dimensions, or relationships were found.

There were several techniques used to facilitate identification of the central category, and the integration of concepts. Among these was writing a descriptive story, based upon the core categories with the following questions in mind: "what is the main issue or problem? And, what seems to be most striking in this story"? (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The use of diagrams was especially helpful in sorting out relationships between concepts. Finally, the sorting, and reviewing of memos, assisted the analyst in identifying concepts in relation to their dimensions. As a special note, the use of diagrams, writing memos, and

writing a descriptive story assisted in the development of a theory that was grounded in the data.

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990) the approach to analyze qualitative data simultaneously employs techniques of induction, deduction, and verification to develop theory. In this way experience with the data generated insights, hypotheses, and generative questions, which were then pursued through further data collection. As tentative answers to questions were developed, and concepts were constructed, these constructions were verified through further data collection.

In the open coding stage I generated categories, and their properties, and determined how they varied dimensionally. In the axial coding stage, I continued to develop categories by linking core categories with sub-categories, to form a conceptual framework. In the selective coding stage, categories were integrated to determine central category, and to refine categories. Some of the techniques already mentioned in this process involved the use of diagrams, and memos.

The central explanatory category for this study was as follows: To achieve wholeness where students were comfortable, First Nations students needed to find, and maintain a balance, within the parameters of sometimes two opposing cultural influences. These influences came basically from Western culture, and/or the students' own culture, especially if parents came from different

ethnic groups. From this central explanatory concept, core categories were related to it, to determine explanatory statements of relationships.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Data analysis resulted in five major categories that were representative of students' educational experiences. The major categories that emerged from the data, as they reached saturation, were as follows: Personal factors, sources of support, institutional factors, geographical factors, and barriers to be overcome. A brief discussion was provided to explain the categories in terms of their properties and dimensions. This task involved several steps: First the core categories were identified, followed by a short description of their nature, and qualities. Then a discussion of their properties, and dimensions were provided. A direct quote from the participants was used to link the major category, properties, and their dimensions to the data. Finally, a summary was provided to show the relationship between categories, and their sub-categories, and how they were linked together. Although the properties, and dimensions of each category were discussed separately here, in actuality they overlap, interact, and build on one another.

Personal Factor

In the *personal factor* category, six properties were defined, and found to have an influence on student success. These properties were: Identity, motivation, family background, age, health, and gender. These properties were further analyzed, to refine each category in terms of their dimensions. Direct

quotes were employed to link the data to each core category. The following outlines each property in terms of their dimensions.

Two dimensions of the property, *personal identity* were identified. The first one, involved student ambitions, that helped foster student success. Students discussed specific ambitions, and desires that eventually led to the pursuit of a university degree:

All I thought about was becoming a dairy farmer. So here I had all these plans about purchasing heifers, and you know, raise them into cows, and start producing them. You know, for dairy farming. (John)

Okay, it was always – I always knew in my mind, that I was going to be a school teacher, and like – when I was six years old – when I was 9 years old – I taught my sisters to read. So, I knew, I wanted to be a school teacher. To get to be a school teacher, you have to go to university – that's what got me into university – that's what it was – and also to – when I look back, I think it was my calling – It was a gift – I just pursued that. (Kate)

I used to always try for something better than what was expected. Like in high school, even though I wasn't doing very well, I used to still take an academic program. You had to sign up for academics even though that probably wasn't expected from anybody – you know, including teachers [who] probably didn't really expect me either to do that - and so I would just say to myself that ideally, I should be going to university, and I should be able to travel. But my support system at home probably didn't gear towards that. You know, my parents would have been happy enough if I just stayed in Port Alberni, and had a family. Right. But my ideal was to be able to travel, and be able to go to university. (Veronica)

A second dimension of *personal identity* involved student needs. Several different types were found to contribute to the success of students. Most of the students expressed not only a love for learning, but for working hard as well:

I didn't really know if I wanted to be a teacher, but I loved learning, and I wanted to learn about that – about learning. So it was really that love of learning - that intellectual curiosity that drew me. (Mary)

I loved doing research, because I learned so much, and I was hungry for knowledge, and it showed, because I was very motivated to learning new things. I asked the teachers many questions. (Francis)

And it's not like it was ever – it wasn't necessarily easy for me, I had to work really hard to do well, but I loved the work. (Mary)

I'd describe myself as a responsible person, conscientious, hardworking, confident, motivated, and very supportive - I learned a lot about Native people. (Francis)

Other dimensions of student needs related specifically to helping their families, relatives, and other First Nations people. Being part of, and members of a family system, that valued principles of collectivity, student roles within that system provided the students with a sense of community, and belonging. When students made the transition to a different environment such as the university, they were forced to maintain this sense of community, and belonging in different ways:

So whenever they are in financial difficulties, or whatever – I would help them out – I would even take my mom shopping, cause it made [me] feel good. The same for my brothers, and sisters, whenever, they need help. I would help them out too. (John)

I sort of reflected on this once, actually, when I was a student, and other students would go out – single students would go out, and party, and socialize, and do all of this stuff, that met their emotional needs - there needs for a sense of community, and belonging. I didn't have to do that, mine was right at home – my kids were really important to me, and really provided me with a lot of, a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning. (Mary)

To be able to help children get through things academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally, and psychologically – to get them on that road strong, and healthy. Achieve - like they can have high standards for themselves, and for their lives, and not feel like they're not capable. Like every child has that capability – every person. (Kate)

For some students, a more specific dimension of student needs involved not only learning about their cultural roots, it also meant learning about other cultures, and respecting them for their teachings, and traditional ways. This new knowledge not only provided personal strength, but also enlightenment:

I realized, I was getting in touch with my own inner self as Native, and that's where my strength came from. It was when I realized, I'm proud to be Native, and all Natives aren't alcoholics – they're not stupid. (Francis)

The smudging ceremony, for example, that's not really our ways of doing things, but I do it anyways – you know - because I'm interested in learning a little more about that - and plus, out of respect to other First Nations people - that practice, the smudging ceremony. (John)

And what really drew me to (NITEP) was that it was a program for Aboriginal people, and I wanted to be able to work in an Aboriginal context. (Mary)

An important dimension of student needs meant becoming a responsible student. Students soon learned that if they were going to be successful at university, they would have to make some sacrifices. This engendered getting priorities in order, learning to say no to family members, and friends, understanding one's limitations, and sticking to a schedule:

I have to stop myself, and let people know – sorry I really can't be a part

of that, or whatever, because I'm only one person. I think you know - putting too much on my plate during school years also interfered with my studies.

(John)

The first year I really worked on school work, and didn't go any place - socialize at all, because I didn't know anybody, but after the second year, I was spending time with all these people - I went out more, and socialized, and did things with people from the university. And by the third year, I was starting to feel like huh... oh no. What have I done, I'm spending way too much time socializing. (Kate)

Because of my responsibilities, I simply couldn't stay up all night studying. That wasn't something - that, I could do, because then, I wouldn't have been able to interact in a good way with my kids. (Mary)

The way he described it to me was - he said, university is like a regular job. You get up in the morning, you get ready to go to work, you're in school all day, and if you're not in actually taking classes, then you should be at the library. You could be at the library doing your papers or your homework, and in the evening, you take a little break, and then you have to do your homework again. It was like at boarding school, I mean, I knew what the routine was there, but then I thought, oh well, I'm on my own, and I could make decisions, and I don't have to do that, kind of... so much - and actually, I had to go back to it. Then when I did, it worked. (Helen)

Another dimension of student needs referred to personal characteristics, such as having the ability to evaluate personal circumstances, take initiative, independence, being open-minded, being creative, and making wise choices:

Having a diploma, or degree, or even a Master's degree, or graduate degree opens doors for you, and that's not always true - but that works both ways now, you know - it may open doors for you, and it may not open doors for you, and if it doesn't open doors for you - you have to be the one to open those doors yourself, and I think, that's what I done with my degree. I mean, I basically created this position here on my own.

(John)

I think that was one of the things, that I try to do in my life is look at the challenges, and then think about it – so there are these challenges, so what. You know, what are you going to do about it? Right, and then you take that opportunity, because it's an opportunity for learning, and teaching others. (Mary)

I would describe myself as open-minded – very flexible, I believe, that I'm the kind of person who looks at everything. If I had to make a decision on something, I look at everything, yeah, I weigh everything. From every kind of angle, and imagine, what the other person might feel, or think, everybody involved, before I make a decision. (Helen)

For some students, a dimension of student needs meant, deciding upon a personal career goal that would give them direction, and be worth the effort to work toward. This was accomplished through practical experience, and taking different courses:

I think having that practical experience, showed me what I was heading towards in achieving educational goals - because I know a lot of students who come here to do their degree, and sometimes, they don't have a goal – they just have that educational goal, and I think the practical working goal, and educational goal, goes hand in hand. (John)

I didn't have any particular goal in mind, I just had the luxury of taking courses, that I wanted to take, over a couple of years. So, I completed my first year of university credits that way, and I think, one of the things that happened is that, I found out, that I loved learning, and that, I was curious about many, many different disciplines, and I developed a really positive sense of myself as a learner. (Mary)

I didn't know exactly, what I wanted to do really. I took things - that I was interested in, and most of the things, that I was interested in was Art history, and English, and Anthropology. I didn't really know, until I took those things, that I was interested in them, and from that, I became really interested in archaeology. (Helen)

The next property discussed involved students' *motivation*. Some notable dimensions of this attribute related to having a vision, or desire to teach, determination, and persistence to move forward in spite of many obstacles:

I always knew in my mind, that I was going to be a schoolteacher, and like when I was six years old – when I was 9 years old – I taught my sisters to read – So I knew, I wanted to be a schoolteacher – to get to be a school teacher, you have to go to university. That's what my motivation was – that determination to be a school teacher – that's what got me into university – that's what it was – and also too – when I look back – I think it was my calling. (Kate)

[Another] reason why I wanted to go to university – society was part of that school system – when I was growing up, there was a lot of prejudice, and just really negative feedback from some teachers, and a lot of students, that really made me press on – like that – I think that was my drive, and determination to prove all these people wrong. [that] Native people aren't failures – so it was negative then – but it was rough – but those negative things – I try to turn that around to be something positive. (Kate)

I had a lot of different jobs, and I couldn't figure out what job I wanted. I wasn't happy. So I made a harsh decision, and moved out, and went back – that's when I went back to Langara College. (Francis)

Another important dimension of student *motivation* stemmed from a legacy of family values, encouragement, hopes, and dreams:

A lot of it to was my mother, and father, and my family saying how important education is - there was always that. Yeah, A large role – my mother did not go to university, but she always wanted to – her father said to her, that she should just go to be a secretary, and that was not what she really wanted to do, anyway, she was frustrated, and she always said, If you had the opportunity, and I think you do, so you should go – so she always encouraged me, my mom. (Helen)

I don't know, it's kind of different, because of my dad from our band was the first person to get a grade twelve diploma from our reserve which was very interesting to know - and then finding out, that my uncle was the first one to get a university degree - so it's almost like following footsteps I guess. Almost like a family tradition. (John)

I grew up in a family that really valued reading, and lively intellectual debate, and intellectual curiosity; those were the things, that I think inspired me to attend university. (Helen)

A specific dimension of student *motivation* included the support, interest, and the willingness of the students band to support, and sponsor their education. In some cases, the interest of the band was the recruitment of First Nations educators:

The education coordinator called me, and said, they're looking for people to attend university to become teachers, and my band was willing to sponsor me. I value education, and I always wanted to be a teacher. (Frances)

Another dimension of student *motivation* stemmed from the former experiences of public school, teachers, teaching styles, classroom structure, and the content of the curriculum:

I went to a boarding school - Navajo Methodist mission school. There were only 9 - 12 of us in each class, so we got so much individualized attention. And the teachers there were very caring teachers, and it was very academic, also because we lived there, they had a lot of huh, I guess control over our lives of how our time was spent. In that way - it was very good, so academically - it was good that way. (Helen)

Another property defined was *family backgrounds*. A specific dimension

of this characteristic involved a strong connection with those family members, who valued education:

I think one of my strengths is a strong connection with my family, and my Nation – you know my cultural background – personally, I’m not a quitter. You know if I fail, I get back up, and continue on, so I’m committed to my work – committed to my studies. (John)

Clearly, the biggest strength that helped me is coming from a very strong, stable, loving family where reading was highly valued, and where lively intellectual debate around the kitchen table was the norm. (Mary)

My mom was always really supportive of anything, that I needed while I was in school. My father was a tribal judge for a while, so he always valued education too - so it was good, cause he said, you have to always look at the whole picture of everything, that includes your life, and education plays a big role in that. (Helen).

The next property identified referred to *age*. There were some advantages, and disadvantages to this property. Specific dimensions to the students’ ages included maturity, and becoming independent learners:

If you end up going to college straight out of high school, a lot of students don’t know about - that you have to pay the rent – pay your phone bill- pay your cable – whatever, right. I think a lot of the students that come out of high school, don’t have that sense of responsibility yet – I think for me, going to school in my mid-twenties, kind of prepared me for that. (John)

I think that my age was also an advantage to me, because of the maturity that comes with age. And because of that maturity, I was able to be – possibly more focused on my studies, than I would have been a decade earlier. (Mary)

And being a mature student helped a lot, because when I wrote my papers I had to relate that experience to myself somehow – I had to put my experience into the paper. (Francis)

A drawback to student *age* related to self-image, and lack of life experience. However, through support, and hard work, students managed to overcome hindering age factors:

I was afraid to go to school, because I was older now – mature woman - single parent – my mother, and father always supported us - without that kind of background, I don't think, I would have tried to enter university. (Veronica)

Well some of the courses that I took – there were a lot of mature students in the course - and so – I think they were able to write good papers, and like effective papers, because of their experiences in school, or in their jobs however – whereas, I had to just totally draw from book knowledge. Like I had to really read, and read a lot to write a good paper, whereas, some of them could draw from their experiences at work – like there were teachers there - and summer courses – a lot of summer courses – there were mainly teachers, and they drew from their experiences at work, and I had to go by what I had read – maybe a few practicum's along the way. (Kate)

Another property that contributed to student success had to do with *health*. A dimension of student health revealed that regular exercise, and eating healthy foods helped them to succeed:

I belonged to Fitness World – I still belong to Fitness World – I think I got my membership when I was 19 – I still belong to them – You need to burn off some stress – like mental stress is very hard on the body right, but when you exert physical exercise, it helps to relieve the mental stress of studying. (John)

The assets that I had were very, very strong, and I was living a life very much in balance, and I continued to go to aerobics, and swimming. (Mary)

My first year - it was quite positive, because I made sure, that I looked after myself like – ate healthy – jogged everyday – and when I went to the

university, I went swimming every morning – I was like in really good health. (Kate)

My physical and mental [faculties]– I think they were positive, I learned how to swim there – I didn't know how to swim before. So, that was good. (Helen)

An important dimension of student *health* included behavior changes, and eliminating bad habits:

I had to change my study habits, and my eating habits as well, and plus, I smoked at the time to, and it's been like seven or eight years now, I haven't smoked. (John)

For some students a dimension to maintaining good *health* involved talking, praying, and expressing issues of concern to friends, and/or a spiritual entity:

Yeah, talking with my friends, and just hanging out with them at their place. I've had some of the same friends for 13 years that I met at College. One of my girlfriends – we're still good best friends. Then coming out here, things really improved, once I came to (UBC), because there were more opportunities, and more – like the one professor I had, he was really helpful. (Veronica)

Mentally, I had to deal with talking to my friends, and my mom about things, then I'd feel better just to lighten my load of, whatever, and then my mom would always say pray, and I would pray, and I'd feel better, and she would pray. (Francis)

The last property concerned *gender* roles. Most male students did not mention their gender; however, female students had positive experiences:

I found that the university supported females, and males – maybe females more so – during that time females were getting more of a grip – more of a – being able to stand up more, and express themselves – like more of a voice in university, so it was pretty positive – especially being Native, and female, because more and more women were stepping out, so there was quite a support there. (Kate)

My gender as a female, I think was positive, because Navajos are matriarchal, therefore, women are considered to be important. They have an important role in my culture, so in that way, I felt, that I was respected. The other cultures that were with me at the university, I know, that Apaches are matriarchal too, I'm not sure – don't know about the Utes, but the Pueblo people, also respected their women in their culture. So I didn't feel like I was disrespected. (Helen)

However, not all women found their *gender* roles to be a positive experience:

Well I had a negative effect a couple of times, and I've talked about this with a few other students. There were a couple of situations where I think you [because I was a woman] appear to be perceived to be a bit weaker, or something. I just accepted it. (Veronica)

In summary, students were influenced both by internal, and external factors. Some internal influences referred to personal ambitions that stemmed from students' early childhood that eventually led to their career choice. Other students were influenced by their personal needs such as love for learning, helping family relatives, and by other First Nations people. Some students needed to learn about their cultural roots, while others, gained knowledge from other cultures. Students were required to make sacrifices in relation to a lifestyle that called for independence, following schedules, and thinking objectively. As

for age, it provided an advantage to some, and a disadvantage to others. In reference to external influences, family, and community had a major influence on students' success. A family system comprised of values that fostered education provided encouragement, and support to students. Band sponsorship was also seen to have an important impact on the temperament of students, and their success. Finally, teachers, and the curriculum had a particular effect on the students' determination to succeed.

Support Systems

In the next category, support systems, five properties were found to have an impact on the students' success. These properties are as follows: Family, institutional, community, spiritual, and financial. To refine the category each property was further analyzed in terms of their dimensions. Direct quotes were used to link the data to core category. The following provides an outline of each property in relation to their dimensions.

A notable dimension of *family support* related to encouragement.

Comments from students, reported that encouragement came primarily from the immediate family:

My mom and dad said, yeah, that is a really good idea - they were very excited for me to attend, and I said - geez - it's going to take a long time. My mom and dad said, oh you can do it - you can do it - so yeah, I can do it. (Fay)

Probably my sisters - my older sister - my mom - they always encouraged me to keep going - they were always in the cheering section. (Kiana)

Some students talked about their grandparents, and how they were helpful:

My grandmother – when I was at university, and sometimes I would get so confused about everything – not lost – just confused - you know, because everything seemed to be happening, so quickly. You know, university does that – everything is almost turbulent, because everything is happening – I mean it seems, and I would go to my grandmother, and I said, grandma I'm just feeling really confused, I don't feel like, my head is all going like this, and she would sing, and massage me back into harmony, basically, and put my mind – clear my mind up, and it worked every time. (Ruth)

She just looked at me, and said, don't let the system beat you – that's what she kept telling me – she said, you have to challenge that system, and the only way you can challenge that system is to study hard. (Jack)

Other dimensions of *family support* came basically from family, and extended family members:

Not financially, but more emotionally on a practical level – like babysitting, all the time – whenever, there was a problem, like my baby was sick, or anything, they would help out in any way they could. They were always there. (Kiana)

Yeah, my mom is really supportive, and proud. When I first started going to college at Malaspina, she came to look for a new place for me to live, and help me to set up, when I first started. After that, I was fine right, but she always helped me, to find a place to live, and make sure I'm okay. (Violet)

I had very strong social support – very strong. I had a strong network – very strong relationships with my family, and I know, that I've mentioned my mother before, but also my brother, and my sister. (May)

My parents were really supportive, and my parents were raising kids too, and they - well they got me a car, which was nice. It wasn't a new car, it was just a putt-putt, but it started, it was warm, and it had a radio, and that's all I needed. So I had a little car, and it was okay, they helped wherever they could. (Ruth)

Another dimension involved the *institutional support* that the teachers provided. It was found that certain high school teachers, and counsellors had a huge impact on the students that helped students to be successful. These influences had long-term effects as students moved through the education system that eventually led to higher educational goals:

They taught me how to look at the whole world, and how you fit in it, and how you might be able to fit in it too. They taught us things like the environment, racism, different cultures, and different colors of people, and how we all - it doesn't affect how we are all the same in so many ways, I guess, to respect everybody, no matter what color they are. (Ruth)

I answered the phone... he said, you haven't been in class for three or four days. I said, yeah, I'm home, and I'm sick with the flu, right, and he says, well you better get one of your cousins to come by, and pick up some homework for you. And that was it, because he hung up right after that - that really helped me. (Jack)

It was positive, because of the teachers we had were extremely supportive, through high school - they were very supportive, and I have a few teachers, I'll never forget. (Fay)

Other dimensions of *institutional support* came from the university that the students attended. Students reported that professors were flexible, understanding, supportive, and respectful:

There was support from teachers, and there was one teacher, one professor, who was a First Nations, and then there was one Mexican, and several of them were Caucasian, but they really sincerely cared about the success of the Native students there. (Ruth)

If I had problems – personal problems, I would go and see him, and tell him, how it affects my studies, and you know, requesting extensions for some of my assignments right, and so he would always be understanding, and supportive in that way. (Jack)

When you get into Arts, then you have to learn how to write a research paper, and do research, and so you need to take extra steps by picking up certain guides, and my professor, and my instructors would share that with me, saying well here's a good book, and here's a good guide. (Jack)

Someone that just treated me with more respect, you know, treated my point of view with more respect, than the other professors, that I had - she really gave me a lot of confidence in my past final years. (Violet)

Anytime I got low in my confidence, I went, and talked to a teacher, and got some help – it's the only way I made it. (Fay)

A specific dimension of *institutional support* came from a Non-Native counsellor:

I went to UBC counsellor at one point, when I was going through a hard time – when I had too much on my plate at one time in the five years of coursework, I had to talk to a couple of Lea's (Non-Native) counsellors – women studies counsellors, and they were great. (Fay)

Another kind *institutional support* was the acquisition of knowledge, and information from university courses, extracurricular activities, and guest speakers that were inspirational and encouraging:

We did things like have poets come in - we had poetry readings, and those were really good. Or we would just get together, and talk about different

issues, and they organized a pow-wow once a year, or they always organized things to get together, social gatherings, to get together. Just to reinforce, the encouragement to finish. (Ruth)

So I think, that getting that undergraduate degree, provided me, a bit of a focus - of an educational goal in achieving my Master's. (Jack)

Other kinds of *institutional support* came from family housing on campus, where students shared with other students the responsibility of raising children, and doing things together such as cooking, sewing, and baking:

We shared responsibilities with the children, looking after the children so we'd trade back - you know - One day I'd look after their children, and they'd look after my children, which was important, when you don't have money a lot of times for a babysitter. That was important, we shared clothes, we cooked together, and ate together of course. We sewed together, baked together - it's lot of simple things that are really important to me. We also of course talked about what was going on in our lives, so we talked about the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of our lives. They were really important people in my life, the friends that I've made. (May)

It helped with normal life events too. If for example, you're the parent of a teenager who's acting out, you sometimes think, that you're doing something terribly wrong, or whatever, but you know, you talk with other people, and watch them with their kids, and you see that it's normal, that it's a part of - to a certain extent it's normal - that it's just the part of the lived experience, so you have a larger reference group for issues than just yourself. (May)

A specific dimension of *institutional support* came from other First Nations students, and the staff at the First Nations Longhouse:

I think one of the things I used a lot was peer support, like studying with other students. (Jack)

The counselling services at the Longhouse helped me out quite a bit – you know, just to go there, and talk to them... I got a lot of support, and loving, and caring from them, and plus they weren't judgmental, or anything like that... [Other staff] she was a secretary for Health Careers, but she was also to me, like a personal counsellor – she was always involved with the students. (Jack)

Being involved with activities - like with the Longhouse, kind of gave you the sense, that you belong to a community – kind of gave you a communal feeling. I think that helped a lot with my studies – it kind of gave me that so called emotional support. (Jack)

I didn't want to talk to anybody, so I kind of kept it in, and then finally, I couldn't keep it in, and I had to talk to somebody, and when I talked to her, she was extremely supportive – very understanding - she'd been through the ropes herself, and she knew exactly where I was coming from, and so I really confided in her with many things. I didn't have to see a counsellor - I saw her as my faculty advisor, counsellor, friend - colleague. (Fay)

Another property of students' external support system was the broader *community*. Students talked about different dimensions of *community support*, and how friends, neighbors, community programs, and volunteering played an important role in their success. From friends, students received companionship and support:

Yes, my two friends right through were my best buddies, whom I could confide in. (Fay)

I met a girl, that I became best friends with, and stayed friends with, and she was – we were like this in every class – we did every thing together – we called each other - we supported each other. (Fay)

I had friends – I was leaning on my friends, and I still have some of the same friends that I had then. (Violet)

Other dimensions of *community support* referred to neighbors, and how they helped students with their education:

The people that lived above me were Filipino, and sometimes, she would come down, and bring us some soup – my daughter and I. (Fay)

They invited me to their Thanksgiving dinners, like sometimes, when I could not make it back home – You know, they were happy to see me graduate – they actually came to my graduation ceremony at the Longhouse – if I was having a tough time financially, they would allow me to pay my rent late. (Jack)

A specific kind of *community support* involved volunteer work, and helping others by participating in different social functions, and community events:

Social activities at the Longhouse, and volunteer work at the Trout Lake pow-wow. Put up Christmas dinners for elders at my mom's building every Christmas. (Fay)

Another type of *community support* mentioned referred to a special school program designed to help the students' with children with their homework:

And my children went to a school that had a First Nations worker, and so they would go to the after school programs, sometimes, and do their homework, and what not. (May)

The next property of the students' support system referred *spiritual support*. Students talked about different approaches, they took to meet their spiritual needs. Among them Christianity was found to be of major importance,

for without it, students would not have succeeded. Turning to God, and relying on His guidance, and support through prayers, students received strength, protection, and the courage necessary to continue with their education. Other approaches involved the practice of traditional Native beliefs, and ceremonies:

I didn't know how to handle it so I did – turn to God – and Christianity – that was a really big influence in my life because I went – I took a year out actually to pursue this, and I went to a short term missionary school where I was just able to deal with a lot of problems from the past, and forgive, and that's what I learned – to forgive, and go on – to keep pressing on. (Kiana)

Some students attended church, and became involved in Bible study:

I actually went, and took my kids quite often to the church – a Native church on Franklin Street, and my kids, and I would go there, and we would – there would be Bible study, and there would be crafts, and then at the end, we would eat together. So that kind of eating with community members was important to me, because it was something that was very common at home. (May)

So I think the Church helped in, that it protected us, and my father liked that, because he liked all his daughters to be – you know, he wanted to look after us, and he didn't want us to date, and he didn't want us to have children early. (Fay)

A specific dimension of *spiritual support* meant getting spiritual needs met through personal prayers, and receiving prayers from others:

Anytime I had a hard time, I would always pray, and say like – I need some money for this, please help us to get it – help me to get through this... I was just too scared – I would have to pray hard, before I went to school that day, because I was so frightened of the exams, and thinking I won't make it. (Fay)

You know my mother was just amazing, amazing, and prayed for me all the time, always remembered me in her prayers... I have an extraordinary mother. (May)

Another dimension of *spiritual support* was attending either Native ceremonies, and/or the sweat lodge:

I use to go to the sweats. We use to have sweats over at the museum, and I use to go to this [ceremony] that was positive. (Violet)

Anytime there was a ceremony at one of the pueblos, or at one of the reservations somewhere, we would all pile into the car, and go to it. So we were always connected culturally, and spiritually. (Ruth)

The last property referred to students' *financial support*. Students talked about different needs of support to pay for tuition, living allowance, and basic needs such as food, transportation, and clothing. An important source of *financial support* came from the students' bands:

Plus, I also had some support from my band as well, even though it wasn't much – you know, Vancouver is an expensive city to live in, and at that time, I wasn't getting that much from the band. (Jack)

I didn't have to work. I got two different...one was a grant that was called, pal-grant, which was what they had in the United States, and the other one was a scholarship from the Navajo tribe. (Ruth)

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal councils [were] very generous with their scholarships, and I got scholarships three times. (Violet)

They're looking for people to attend university to become teachers, and the bands would sponsor me. (Fay)

Another dimension of *financial support* came from part-time employment:

The work that I did really helped me – also, in what I was doing. For example, I worked for two years in (NITEP) library, and as a person who's teaching in training, I got access, and got to know the resources really well, so even though I was working, it kind of contributed to my educational experiences as well in many ways. (May)

I always tell students if you can get a job with parking, and security – that is going to be the best job you are ever going to have as a student, because you're getting paid to study. (Jack)

Financial matters were really difficult for the first couple of years, because I didn't know about other money through the university, and I found out later, so I worked in the work-study program. (Fay)

I always was employed, right, like I worked at my cousin's shop at Granville Island, and that just helped me a lot. Helps to have employment. (Violet)

Another dimension of *financial support* was applying for bursaries, and/or student loans:

I was available to get money for bursaries, where I didn't have to pay it back, providing, I got the right marks, and everything like that – which worked out fine. (Fay)

I had a child, and so there was not enough money to get us through – not at all - and I had to apply for loans, and I applied for every bursary possible. (Kiana)

A final dimension of student *financial support* came basically from family, and their bands:

During the first years when this gentleman was the Education coordinator, he made sure that we were well funded. (Kiana)

My dad would phone me, and ask how I was doing. I would tell him, and three hours later, he would be knocking at my door with a hamper of food, sun dried salmon, bread. (Jack)

In summary, students received support from a variety of different sources.

Among them, from their family, students received encouragement, strength, and support in relation to physical, emotional, financial, parental, and mental needs.

From certain high school teachers, students received support, and encouragement to pursue personal dreams and visions. Other means of support came from the university itself. Students reported that certain professors were: understanding, flexible, caring, warm, respectful, and resourceful. In some cases students met with Non-Native counsellors. A specific kind of support was the knowledge, and information gained from taking courses, guest speakers, and extra curricular activities. Another type of support that provided a sense of belonging and community, came from family housing, and living on campus.

For many students, this same feeling of belongingness, came from the First Nations House of Learning, and the staff. Other means of support, came from the community. It was found that certain friendships played an important role in the support that students received. For yet others, neighbors were helpful in special ways on those special occasions. Other kinds of support involved volunteering, and special school programs that helped students with children, to improve their academic skills. A special kind of support that provided spiritual

support came from God, attending church, studying the Bible, and prayers.

Other students participated in the Native traditional ceremonies. The final source of support related to financial support that came primarily from band sponsorship, temporary part time work, bursaries, student loans, and family.

Institutional Factors

In the next category, Institutional factors, four properties contributed to the students' success. These properties are as follows: Skills, curriculum, relationships, and building. To refine the category, each property was further analyzed in terms of their dimensions. Direct quotes were used to link the data to core category. The following provides an outline of each property in relation to their dimensions.

The *skills* property was further separated to distinguish academic, and social skills. Starting with *academic skills*, several dimensions of this property were revealed. Students talked about a variety of study skills, and how these helped to improve efficiency, and make studying easier:

[What]I learned to do over time was to work more consistently. So that it could be balanced out, so that those pressures would be spread over a longer time, so that I could get things done in the right time. So, no last minute papers, the night before their due kind of thing, it meant, that I started the work as soon as I got it, and I paced myself. (Mary)

I think its Koerner Library now, but back then it use to be Sedgewick, and learning how to research, and that was totally different from high school... the Longhouse library helped me out a lot too - how to use the computer. you know, the terminals in the library. (John)

I think registration was a new experience - like you had to - you're the one who has to devise your own schedule, and that was based on whether you could register for that course or not, and that was a tremendous learning experience. (John)

Another dimension of *academic skills* referred to the students writing abilities:

I think I was in my fourth year, I finally learned that skill of writing a good essay - it took a long time - you know, some of the students would say that - oh they could write an essay at no time at all, and it took me like a long time, and the reading too. (Kate)

It was very difficult, because I needed a lot of work in my English - so then, I was writing papers - I had to write, and rewrite them, and I never had a computer. (Francis)

When you get into Arts, then you have to learn how to write a research paper, and do the research. (John)

A notable dimension of *academic skills* related to the competency of students' skills, and expectations of the university:

I think if I hadn't had English, and had been drilled on it so much, I would of - I think, I probably would of struggled a great deal. It was the English, because that's how everything is communicated. (Helen)

I had the advantage of having very strong grades. I could always get into the line up early. So they would take me before - they would take somebody with an A before somebody with a C. So I always got to go first. (Mary)

You had to research on your own because in high school, they just gave you a textbook. In university, sometimes, they didn't give you a textbook. They just gave you a photocopy of notes from the instructor, and then on top of that, they gave you additional readings, and you had to go to the library for these additional readings. (John)

For some students, an important dimension of *academic skills* required extra help to develop, and improve certain academic skills:

Yeah, I probably needed help with writing. I remember getting help one year with a paper, and I think, I only went once through a tutor.
(Veronica)

When I was in university, I had to have some help with Science. I loved Science, but I found it difficult. So I did go for help for that. (Helen)

I got a tutor to help me – third or fourth year... I asked my counsellor, can I get some tutoring please, and I got the extra help for doing papers, and direction, so that was good. (Francis)

As for *social skills*, several dimensions of this property were found to have a major influence on students' personal lives that contributed to their success:

I don't think if I got married earlier, I would of insisted on a Nuu- Chah-nulth wedding, but I got married after, and I asked for a traditional wedding - right - and that was the first sort of traditional thing, that I got, and that's when I got my Indian name - when I got married. I got my name from my granny. So I don't think, I would of participated or initiated my – any of the traditions, if I hadn't been educated, maybe, but I can't say for sure, right. (Veronica)

Actually there were other students' [from] other cultural backgrounds, which was kind of interesting too – it helped to open my eyes, to other people, and other cultures... I learned a lot, you can learn a lot from another culture. (Kate)

I think meeting all these other different First Nations people – people from different First Nations backgrounds, helped me enhance my appreciation of my own Nation. (John)

Students talked about the different opportunities that allowed them to socialize, not only with other First Nations, but Non-Native students. This not only contributed to student success, it played an important role to improve their *social skills*:

Being involved with activities, like the Longhouse, kind of gave you the sense that you belong to a community... I think that helped a lot with my studies. (John)

They had organized a pow-wow once a year, or they always organized things to get together, social gatherings to get together. Just to reinforce the encouragement to finish. (Helen)

The Longhouse is there, and when you want to be with Native people, you can go down there, and socialize. (Francis)

I look forward to the annual barbecue at (NITEP) – the graduation – there were always different things that were set out for the students – those were pretty important and – really helped with the support, I think from the staff of (NITEP), and the students. (Kate)

Other situations that provided First Nations students with opportunities to socialize, and improve their *social skills* and success was living on campus:

All sorts of processing issues, caring, and nurturing each other, and each other's children - a lot of joy, and laughter – a lot of tears... Sharing, and reflecting, and understanding from different people's experiences add to your own understanding of things. (Mary)

The second year, I was spending time with all these people – I went out more, and socialized, and did things with people from the university. (Kate)

A specific incident, that helped to foster student *social skills* and their

success involved an off campus activity:

I took an East Indian cooking course with some girlfriends, and that was a wonderful thing to do. And it was off campus, so I actually left the university which is a challenge, when you're a student - sometimes with children getting off the university can be a real challenge - so it was really fun to be in this totally different setting that didn't involve students, that didn't involve academics, we had a good time learning how to cook, it was fun. (Mary)

The final set of circumstances where students were provided with an opportunity to socialize, and improve their *social skills* was belonging to a certain club:

That women's club - for a couple of years - I joined that - mostly students' - other First Nations students from (NITEP). They were my friends for a long time at (UBC). I don't think, I went to other health clubs or anything. (Veronica)

I was part of the Bio-chemistry club as well, and they had social functions - like every month or so - Each time they had a gathering, they had beer gardens, and being involved with that they had at these beer gardens to - was they had - we had access to old exams, and stuff like that as well. (John)

The next property found to foster student success was the content of the *curriculum*. Several dimensions were uncovered when the *curriculum* was separated to distinguish First Nations, and Non-Native content. In the beginning students sometimes felt challenged, and a bit apprehensive by the Non-Native *curriculum*, but towards the latter part of their studies, it became more relative to them. More often students were familiar with the *curriculum*, because of the

exposure of living in Western society. More importantly, they gained awareness to the conditions, and causes of First Nations social situations:

I think, the beginning of the program, it kind of created a conflict – You know - you were forced to take all these courses, and you didn't know why you needed to take these courses, and I think, the latter part – the first two years were hectic, and I think that's where the conflict is... then after, you get into third year, you start to specialize – you know, you start to figure out what you want to focus on, and I think 4th year, helped me out quite a bit. (John)

Actually, I found it relative to my life, because I felt like - because I was mature, that all the things, that we talked about in school related to my life in some way, shape or form... I was raised in a white world, and the white society was not new to me. I lived in it. In Washington, it was all white, except for a couple of Asian students. (Francis)

I learned, that when I was taking Anthropology courses, and doing – writing papers, and reading, and finding information about what other people thought about Carrier people - like Diamond Jenness, and some of the different papers, that's written about Carriers – I never looked at it from the perspective, they looked at it – I just was in it, and didn't realize, that I had a strong sense of that already inside of me. (Kate)

Another dimension of the *curriculum* referred to how students were affected by its content:

As I said before that my life experience - wasn't very broad, when it came to academic learning, or just knowledge about the world in general - around me, so – there were many times, when I felt challenged about, what I had learned, and – I guess, different courses were affirming what I knew, and challenging. (Kate)

Coming to the university allowed me to see, how other people saw my people, and that was interesting, and sometimes it challenged me to reflect more upon who I was, and why I was like that in my history, and what not. And so sometimes, I would get really frustrated with the kind of narrow perspective that was there. (Mary)

For some students a dimension of the *curriculum* provided them with an opportunity, to expand their understanding of their socio-economic conditions:

I came to terms with a lot of dysfunction, that I observed in my family, and other family - so I could understand things intellectually instead of just sort of emotionally... the reserves - there's a lot of alcoholism, and all that. And I never knew the reasons why, it just was - you know. That's just the way things are. That's just the state of things, and so coming away from that - I was able to see the reasons, why all of that existed. So, I became educated about all the reasons, why things were the way they were. (Veronica)

I did find it challenging, and it did open my eyes, and I felt that was the best part of my education - was to be able to view somebody else's view - to hear it - to listen, and then possibly change my mind from what I use to believe. (Francis)

Several dimensions of the *curriculum* were identified by students' who talked about the different courses, relevant to them. They also reported, that more courses relevant to First Nations culture were continually being added to the roster of program course work to this present day:

I think that even in the 80's - (UBC) offered quite a number of courses dealing with First Nations issues, and I was able to take a number of those courses. I remember when I was in the (NITEP) program, there were courses in the program that dealt with First Nations issues that were mandatory or required. Secondly, I took a number of courses in Anthropology, and Sociology that really allowed me, to explore that area. (Mary)

Now there are - in creative writing - they have First Nations creative writing. So when I was going to school, you didn't have that selection, so now, there's a lot more course selections with First Nations content. (Veronica)

I think, they just started, and now they're starting to develop more courses which is good to be part of – I am witnessing the changes now, here at (UBC) and it's really good to be part of. (John)

(NITEP) was relevant but some of the other courses, I had to do, were not relevant. (Veronica)

A specific dimension of First Nations *curriculum* was how it was influential to students' creativity:

Within those five years - because of the (NITEP) program – I also extend that over to my family - started learning how to sing in the Native tongue, and now we are going to make a CD. (Francis)

For the property *relationships*, several dimensions were identified, and separated to distinguish those *relationships* with professors, and other students. Further, the student *relationships* that existed between First Nations, and Non-Native professors were separated. Overall, the *relationship* that existed between students, and Non- Native professors were supportive, positive and flexible:

He was a professor in the Faculty of Science, and he's also in charge of student services through Faculty of Science. You know, I [experienced] a very strong supportive relationship from him. (John)

I had – during my last two years, I had one professor who was really good, and really supportive, and had the best sense of humor, and just really supportive. (Veronica)

Generally, I got along very well with my professors - not in the kind of - you know – very formal relationships between professor, and students. I wasn't good friends with any of my prof's in my undergraduate years, and that was just fine with me, because I wouldn't of wanted to be friends, you know, I like the formal relationships. It suits me. (Mary)

I would say it was quite positive – there were times when I felt some of the younger professors didn't really understand Native people, or especially in Anthropology – in History – there was some things – but when I or another Native student – or a group of us would get together with the professor, and explain – they were pretty open, and they were willing to listen to us – they didn't belittle us, or get on the defense when we mention something – they were quite open. (Kate)

As for those *relationships* that existed between students, and First Nations Professors, they were also positive, and supportive:

Once I was in the program, though - In a professional program that was helpful too - you know - because all of your courses were sort of related. That was a good program, and the coordinators – the (NITEP) coordinators were helpful. (Veronica)

The faculty advisor from the Longhouse was extremely supportive, and I wouldn't have made it without her. (Francis)

I got a sense of a lot of support, and loving, and caring from staff at the Longhouse. They weren't judgmental or anything, like that. (John)

As for the *relationships* with other Non-Native students, they were open, positive, accepting, and mutual:

I started to make friends, my family, so my friends were my constant support. (Veronica)

I expected to be treated really negatively, because I heard stories, but actually, when I arrived to Vancouver - I had doors opened for me, and I couldn't believe it. (Francis)

I think it's because of the people in the university were open to cultures – that's one thing about the university - was that there were so many cultures – everybody was able to express. I think because we were all students, we just felt, that we were all in the same boat – all going for the same goals. (Kate)

I find that again, generally, a very positive relationship with the students, that I worked, or hung out with - Yeah, very positive relationships, and a lot of close friends, that I still have today. (Mary)

The *relationships* with other First Nations students reported by students were also very positive, and supportive.

I don't think any of my relationships, actually my friendships have hindered my studies. I actually think, they enhanced it quite a bit, because they were supportive, and just going back to what I said again - you know, sharing our experiences with each other of what each student is going through, and then getting that sense, that you're not alone. (John)

I went to (UBC), I met a girl, that I became friends with, and stayed friends with, and she was - we were like this in every class. We did everything together. We called each other. We supported each other. (Francis)

I think it only helped. Because like I said earlier, we did things together, we had a lot of our meals together, cooked at somebody's house, and hung out, and did things together. It was good. I don't see anything negative. (Helen)

The next property, *buildings* and structure of the classrooms was found to be important for the success of First Nations students. To be in the classroom with other First Nations students, and knowing the Longhouse was situated on campus, provided a sense of security that was helpful and encouraging:

I needed to really be proud, or comfortable in my own skin as a First Nations person, and then, I had to see, that I was respected for that by many different professors, and other students as well. So, other First Nations students, helped me, to really see that, and being in a class with other First Nations students, a small class with not more than ten First Nations students - that gave me a lot of confidence - you know - because

they had the same background as me. Together we tried things together, we took risks together. (Veronica)

The Longhouse is there, and when you want to be with [other] Native people, you can go down there, and socialize. (Francis)

Another dimension of the property *building*, was the fact that changing classrooms usually meant having to change buildings:

I like the way (UBC) is set up – You go from one class to another, and then you could just walk across campus – get some exercise, and see other people, and enjoy the outdoors. And you walk with your friends from your class, and they have snacks available – coffee, and cinnamon buns, which I ate a lot of. (Francis)

Well, you got a lot of exercise by walking to classes – Sometimes, I would do that though – like I would try to power walk between classes – like there's certain ways that you can walk, where you get a lot of exercise by power walking to classes. (John)

Another dimension of the property *building* related to the age of the buildings:

I guess old meant – to me old means established like – kind of reputable – like the old library, it was kind of neat to wander around in there, and just be a part of it, because you knew, there was such a history, I guess – like you know, the history of a place always reflects, I think – like Native people, and history, go hand in hand – like anything old – historical – I always think of my grandparents, or you know, what I mean – it was – always ties back to elders, or old things, and to me, I always had a respect for anything that could last through war. (Kate)

A specific dimension of the property *buildings* was living on Campus in family housing, or residence:

I lived in the high rises on campus for a year, and that was really a good thing, because there were other students in there who were committed to studying, and they were a good influence – like helping me to set up – to realize oh yes, I should be studying instead of watching T.V. or - you know - whatever – even though, I didn't develop any kind of lasting friendship, or anything with the people, that I shared a room with – it was still friendly – we shared an experience together like going to school, so that was good – there was no Native students in that kind of setting that was kind of different. (Kate)

When I did get into family housing up at UBC - it was wonderful, you know, not having to deal with the traffic anymore...living on campus was a lot more positive. (Mary)

Despite the convenience of living on Campus, it was not always a positive experience for all students:

I lived with a family on campus in family housing - that was fine, because I always liked being around families, but the only problem with living on Campus was – you kind of get the sense that you haven't left school. (John)

In summary, a number of academic, and social skills were uncovered that contributed to the students' success. Students learned to work consistently, and paced themselves as they received class assignments. Students acquired a number of library skills, and learned how to use the computer in response to the growing technology, and vast amounts of information available. In some instances, extra help was necessary with writing, to bring students up to par with university standards. Students gained insight, and awareness from other students that influenced them personally. Some students reflected on their own

cultures, and in some cases took part, and participated in some of the traditional customs, and practices. This helped students to feel good about their identities, develop a positive self-image, thus positive self-esteem. Learning to get along with other students was part of developing an alternative supportive base, and becoming part of an extended family system within an educational setting. It made the long haul of receiving a degree more fun, and bearable. Depending upon degree of acculturation, students' encountered conflicts, challenges, whereas some students excelled in this kind of environment. In some cases, students were encouraged to explore their history, and cultural roots. Due to new programs oriented for First Nations culture, and the many changes to the curriculum, students were excited about being in university in this era, and to be part of this legacy. The relationships that existed with professors, and other students were generally positive, supportive, open-minded, and flexible. They experienced love, care, and acceptance from staff members who worked at the First Nations Longhouse. Students were provided with an opportunity to be heard, respected and to develop confidence. Just to know that the Longhouse was there on Campus was reassuring. It was a place where students could go, and be with other First Nations people. The lay-out of the university was appealing for to change classes, usually meant changing buildings. This allowed students to get fresh air, talk to friends, and have a bite to eat. An interesting comment from one student, about the older buildings around the university, provided her with a sense of admiration, respect and stability.

Geographical Factors

In the next category, Geographical factors, three properties contributed to the students' success. These properties were as follows: Living on campus, campus environment, and adjusting to new environment. To refine the category each property was further analyzed in terms of their dimensions. Direct quotes were used to link the data to the core category. The following provides an outline of each property in relation to their dimensions.

Starting with the property, *living on campus*, some students found it a convenience to live on campus. It was a real blessing for their families, and children. In terms of finding suitable housing in Vancouver, and commuting back and forth to the university, it was a real stressor:

When I did get into family housing up at (UBC), it was wonderful - you know - not having to deal with the traffic anymore...much more convenient, much more efficient in terms of time. (Mary)

Easy for me to go to (UBC) – I had my own car. (Francis)

My kids had a lot of freedom too – especially my two older ones, just to sort of be out there, and ride their bikes all over the trails, and what not. (Mary)

In spite of the advantages of *living on campus*, some students preferred living off campus:

The problem with living on campus was you kind of get the sense, that you haven't left school...being on campus, that was the rule you know, you had to be studying all the time. (John)

I moved off campus, because I had my daughter, and that was tougher but in some ways, it was better, because there was more freedom – that's when I had my niece living with me, and my cousin, and my mother was living with me, and my sister. So, I don't think, I could of done that living on campus readily – like – having all my family moving in with me. (Kate)

Another dimension to the *campus environment* related to how the surroundings of the campus, satisfied students' aesthetic needs:

The campus is so incredibly beautiful, and that really is nourishing - the beauty of the campus itself. (Mary)

I think (UBC) is just so beautiful because of its natural environment, you know the mountains, the water, and all that being close to the water so being in that kind of place really helped... I guess (UBC) having that natural environment almost gave me the sense, that I was tied to the land again. (John)

I really like the landscape out here, and even coming from the west side to here, you can really feel the difference in temperature. It feels like my home out on the peninsula, you know there's more of a breeze out here. I actually didn't mind it despite the distance, but I had to go. (Veronica)

Any of the trails, you can go through in the Endowment land. Knowing, that those trees are there – altogether, is kind of homey for me right now. I feel kind of at home, knowing that it's a quiet place. It's much more quiet out here than anywhere else in Vancouver. (Veronica)

It was set aside, and I guess it sort of gave me - sense of pride, the fact that I was part of this – aesthetically (UBC) is a very nice campus... even though I didn't realize that when I was going there – but just that there are a lot of trees around – just like - a park like setting – that really helped. (Kate)

An important dimension, and determinant to student success related to how well students *adjusted to a new environment*, and its challenges:

I learned to love the city again, of course at first it was – I mean the noise level, it was always noisy. You've got to learn to live with that. (Mary)

It was quite a change. Traffic was the worst part, the traffic was just – you don't deal with one-way streets in Port Alberni – there are no one-way streets. (Veronica)

The transition of moving to the city, compelled some students to make changes to how they interacted with the land, participated in outdoor activities, and the kinds of food they ate, where it came from, and how it was produced:

I had a huge, huge garden, and I grew a lot of my own produce, and it was all, organic. So, the quality of food was really good. When I lived in the country, I would do things like - go fishing, go hiking all the time. Well, obviously, when I lived in the city that connection changed, and I no longer gardened. I was no longer eating organic foods, as a result of that... Just getting out there, and working the earth wasn't something I was doing a lot of. I still went out for hikes, and walks, and camping trips with my kids, and that kind of things, but it was much more structured, and organized than it had been previously. (Mary)

We lived off the land. We grew our fruit, and vegetables from the land. We got our heat off the land, because we actually used a lot of wood - you know - to keep us warm in the winter, and then moving into the city - you know - moving away from that kind of severed – you know - ties from the land, because now, I am living off the grocery store. (John)

Growing up, my family depended on hunting, and fishing. At an early age, I learned how to clean fish, dry fish – Even when I lived in Prince George, I was able to go back home for the summer, and get fish, and get canned meat with my aunt, and my mom – but when I moved to Van. That was really hard because I didn't know where to – we had to just buy from a grocery store. (Kate)

That's my healing source is the land. I like running, the reason I like to run is because of the landscape. Hiking, I like anything outdoors, kayaking. For a while, I got to go for a boat ride with my stepfather on a boat. (Veronica)

So my relationship with the land, in a sense, got more formal, when I moved to the city. I would have to plan it out - right - before, I could just hop in the car and - because I drove, when I lived in the country too. So I had a car, and the kids would jump into the car with me, and we'd go someplace you know, and just do it. Now, when we moved to the city, it had to be planned, then because, I didn't have a car anymore, and it took a lot of work to get out of the city. (Mary)

In summary, some students found it to be a real blessing to live on campus. It was convenient, time saving, and eliminated the stress of commuting back and forth to school. Compared to living off campus, it allowed more freedom to those students with children, and it was less worrisome for them. In spite of these advantages, some students preferred living off campus for different reasons. For one student, it gave him the impression that he never left school, and that he should be studying. Another student had several family members living with her, and felt this would not have been possible living on campus. Other contributing factors, related to how the campus environment, satisfied the students aesthetic needs. It was nourishing for students, because of the natural surroundings. The scenery was beautiful with the mountains, and water in the background, and the smell of ocean in the air. For some students, the environment was similar to the place where they came from. It provided students with a sense of peacefulness. Despite the secluded location of the university, beauty, and serenity that the campus environment provided, students had to adjust to living in an urban setting inclusive of its challenges. What seems to stand out is the noise level, and traffic that comes with urban life. Living on

campus eliminated a lot of the stress that comes with urbanization, but cannot always be totally avoided, especially if you had, or preferred to live off campus. Another change related to the land, and how it was important for students in different ways. For some students in particular, the land was a healing source. This connection to the land was achieved through outdoor activities such as running, hiking, kayaking, and camping. Upon moving to the city these activities became more formal, structured and needed more planning. Another area that was affected related to the students diet, and a lifestyle that was based on subsistence, and living off the land. The land provided a lot of food that the students themselves planted, gathered, hunted or fished. In the city this relationship to the land became obsolete as students became more and more accustomed to buying their food at a grocery store.

Overcoming Barriers

In the next category, Overcoming barriers related to the steps, and actions students took to overcome them. Overall three properties were defined that capsulated, origin of barriers, and what students did overcome them. These properties are as follows: Resolving personal issues, overcoming institutional obstructions, and adjusting to geographical changes. To refine the category, each property was further analyzed in terms of their dimensions. Direct quotes were used to link the data to core category. The following provides an outline of each property in relation to their dimensions.

Starting with the property, *resolving personal issues*, several dimensions of this property were identified. One student experienced identity confusion, because her parents were from two different racial groups. The Non-Native side of her family background was emphasized, while her First Nations background was neglected. This confusion was eventually resolved, when she started to learn about her First Nations background:

I went to this pow-wow thinking I'm Native, and I'm going to go. I wanted to know more about it, so I went – this was when I was 35, and when I went, I had to tell you this - it was the most wonderful experience. I was watching Natives dance – the drum beating, and I always felt, I wasn't a part of Natives... I couldn't sit still, I couldn't stand still, I felt the drum beat, I felt one drum beat for all of us in unity, and I never had that feeling before... I was in touch with my roots, with myself that I was proud to be Native. (Fay)

I don't think anyone, if they're on a path, and they can't find their path - how are they going to find roots, and make [himself/herself] strong. I think, that is the only way I made it. (Fay)

Another dimension of *resolving personal issues* related to an unrealistic fear, and overcoming this fear:

I confronted my father about his alcoholism, and wrote him a letter, and told him how much it hurt me, for him to drink a lot... He was really touched by the letter, and he stopped drinking for a while. (Fay)

I don't think I would have found this inner strength, and face reality as different from what I've learned. I don't think I could of made it. I think I would've fallen, if I didn't face my father with his alcoholism, because I always thought, I was going to be one. Everyone said you were – you are going to be. I said that is not so, then when I realized, I am not going to be – that's what gave me power, because it – I am my own boss. (Fay)

A specific incident of fear involved a situation from the past where student neglected to *resolve personal issues*. Consequently, it kept cropping up, and subsequently, prevented her to seek, or ask for help. As a result, the students' behavior prolonged her studies for several years. Through trial, and error, raw determination, and grit, this student eventually completed her degree:

I guess the students that I was in contact with always did so well – that's what I sensed from them – there's always – I think I always sensed that everybody was doing really well, and if they were doing poorly, I think we didn't want to admit it – because we didn't want to look bad or whatever. I think it's because we were Native – I was Native, and just feel like – always going back to the thing – where – dumb Indians, you know – I'm just a dumb Indian, and I thought that's probably what I am – if I don't know how to read, or write an essay properly, and going to university – that's probably what I am – you know, you just like hang on to it – like it's hard to get rid of that – you know – that negative thought – image of yourself all the time – I think that was a really big thing there. (Kiana)

I think it took that many years, because it took that long to learn all that through trial and error – it took 13 years of my life, to learn how to budget time, and budget money – learn how to write a good essay. (Kiana)

Another dimension of *resolving personal issues* related to the students acceptance of different cultures:

My father and mother - they come from two different Nations... I was getting conflicted, between whom I was supposed to follow... I guess, I would receive a bit tension from both families – you either do it this way, or you do it that way, so I asked them - why I can't I do both...? where does it state that there is a rule - that - we have to follow your mother's side, or follow your father's side. I don't know if you notice every time I speak in public now, when I acknowledge myself, I acknowledge my

father's side, and I acknowledge my mother's side. In other words, I acknowledge both Nations. (Jack)

I think that my teachings have taught me an acceptance of intergenerational differences, because I'm taught to be respectful, and listen to – so I have maybe a better understanding in some ways of where people from different generations are coming from, and I don't have a great need to try to change their perspectives necessarily, but just to accept them. (May)

Another dimension to *resolving personal issues* related to how students dealt with emotional issues. When students faced their problems, and dealt with them, they experienced success and confidence:

I really found my strength, in those times with my family at home, and like fishing – being in that situation with the land – that is where – being confident in that – I think helped me... connecting with the land... maintaining a connection with family members. (Kiana)

One student had difficulty dealing with contemporary issues such as the Oka crisis, and road blockades by other First Nations groups. These issues were dealt with by talking with his mother:

Well, I talked to my mother about things like that. You don't have anything to apologize for, and that is how she would look at things. It was kind of in the way - that my mother would say - that is your own way of preparing for the worse. (Jack)

Another dimension of *resolving personal issues* involved gaining awareness of having the right to education, and the fact it was bought, and paid for:

You know, I forgot who told me this, but you know, they're saying, you're paying for your education. You have to take ownership of your education. (Jack)

Other dimensions of *resolving personal issues* involved budgeting, setting priorities, and finding a balance, between the expectations of the university, and family responsibilities:

During the last year because I had a child, I found, that I would get sick a lot because of our nutrition. We didn't have a lot of money, and so like we struggled financially. She was nursing, and so I was nursing her, and going to school at the same time... I really learned to budget money – like totally budget my money where every cent counted – that's what got us through. (Kiana)

My older sister left her – actually a few of my family members – my uncle and my older sister – left their teenage daughters with me during the years of going to university... I needed to really buckle down here, and I'm a mother now, to this twelve year old, and I'm going to school – like I need to be an influence here - like a good influence, so that helped me in that way to – right - even though it was hard. (Kiana)

Because of my responsibilities, I knew - simply couldn't stay up all night studying. That wasn't something that I could do, because then I wouldn't of been able to interact in a good way with my kids, and it meant that I would have to go out, and do things with my children, so I think balance - it was also stressful sometimes, because always the deadlines of papers or exams, or what not. (May)

Another dimension to *resolving personal issues* meant finding a balance, that involved having to sometimes say no, to other family members, or students:

I guess I'm spreading myself too thin sometimes, and I have to stop myself, and let people know – sorry, I really can't be part of that, or whatever. (Jack)

I had to tell her to go somewhere else, but it was just too much of it. Doing too much, because I don't have a husband in my life - I guess she thought, Oh Fay is free to do it - she can do anything... I realize now, I'm pulling back - I am able to say no to my mom, whereas I couldn't before. (Fay)

For one student, finding a balance, meant working extra hard on school assignments in order to account for time spent participating in cultural activities such as the traditional, Winter dances:

I would get a call from my mother saying, ok we're going to be going to Musqueam. Your cousins are going to be dancing... and she said, I need to be there, and that took me away from my studies... I had to find ways to study harder. (Jack)

The next property defined, *overcoming institutional obstructions*, several dimensions were found that helped students experience success. Among them, students had to deal with racism, conflict, criticism, and stereotypical perceptions from both First Nations, and Non-Native students. How students dealt with these incidences, varied depending upon the student, and the circumstances. One incident involved a Non- Native student, who on Halloween, mimicked a Native person to be intoxicated:

I remember one Halloween day, and this one girl - I had this one negative effect from her. She was dressed up like a Native, and she was Non- Native, and that insulted us, and what was really bad, I almost just wanted to deck her was that she was acting drunk on top of that too - like she was a drunken Indian... My friend she was really upset about that, and she didn't know how to deal with it, so we went down to the Longhouse, and we had to tell someone what we saw right, and I think

going to the Longhouse, and sharing it with other people helped us a bit.
(Jack)

Another dimension of *overcoming institutional obstructions* involved other First Nations students, and personal conflicts:

We thought we didn't have to take them, and then we realized we had to – well I guess what it was – was because of the conflict with the group sometimes, that made it a negative experience – it wasn't the content so much, but the group made it negative, at times. So, that is why we didn't want to be with the group - the (NITEP) group. It was the different issues within the group, I didn't like. (Fay)

Over time, however these conflicts worked themselves out:

Yes it did, then I was really glad to be in the (NITEP) class. (Fay)

Sometimes the option to deal with criticism from other students was simply ignored. One particular incident related to Non-Native students who believed, that the (NITEP) program was a watered down program:

I would just ignore it, and let it go - just never really – and kept my distance from those students. (Kiana)

Oh, we just, nobody dealt with it right. We talked about it - us First Nations students talked about it together - that's about it. (Violet)

Despite the negative experiences with other students, it was not all dark and gloomy. There were many positive incidents that were enlightening, and edifying because students felt accepted, included:

All my growing up years that was a negative thing – oh smells like fish – or you know – whatever – like oh, you eat dry meat – like it was really negative, when I was growing up, but when I got to university, there was people craving – Non-Native people craving for fish, and thinking wow – you have smoked salmon, you know – really, almost worshiping you – whereas, when I was growing up, it was negative – it was a negative thing – so it was encouraging. (Kiana)

I needed to really be proud, or comfortable in my own skin as a First Nations person – and then I had to see that – I was respected for that – by many different professors, and other students as well – So, other First Nations students helped me to really see that, and being in a class with other First Nations students, a small class with not more than ten First Nations students, that gave me a lot of confidence - you know - because they had the same background as me. Together, we tried things together, we took risks together. (Violet)

Another dimension to *overcoming institutional obstructions* involved, how students interacted with professors, to resolve personal grievances:

I just went to their office alone, and talked to them – and point it out, different biases that they had, and just oh - that sounded really bad - you know, just explain that – that's not really how it went – and that's not really how it is. (Kiana)

One student felt her point of view was disclaimed without sufficient ground due to the professor's personal bias. She did not challenge her position, because she did not feel confident enough, or possess the skills to argue her case:

I just accepted it. And then during graduation that year, the year that I graduated, I saw the same professor at one of our open houses here, and I felt like telling him, now you're on my turf...but I didn't. (Violet)

One student withdrew from a course because of a grievance with a

professor, and was too tired to dispute her case:

I can't write any more letters. I don't have any more energy to write a letter, anymore to (UBC). I am just going to let it go, but then I am going to talk to the people at (UBC) - that are human rights people, or whatever you call it, and they said, that I would probably have a case, when I explained it to them... I told the counsellor, I don't want any more negative. I can't handle it anymore - just let it go... I withdrew, and felt better with a W. (Fay)

With the help, and support of an advisor from the First Nations

Longhouse, this same student was able to get through a difficult practicum:

So she helped push, and assert myself, and just held my hand through the whole thing, and I made it through, and I felt like a better person for it, but it was a struggle with this person in the practicum - it was odd. (Fay)

Another dimension to *overcoming institutional obstructions* related to

how students' resolved their circumstances, about the lack of knowledge they possessed about First Nations culture. One student had to rely solely on books:

Age was kind of a hindrance in a way, because just my lack of experience of life - like not having the experiences in life - I felt a little vulnerable, and maybe naïve to a lot of things people were saying - professors were teaching... I had to go by what I had read. (Kiana)

For one student, being First Nations, other Non- Native students

assumed that he was the expert about all First Nations groups and issues. He

had to inform students, that there were differences between First Nations

groups, and that they have protocols that need to be respected:

Well what I try to do is, I try to explain to the people, about how different we are. In comparison, to the Makaw people - like you know - where I come from, we don't do whaling. We don't practice that. The only thing I could say is that is their right. They fought for that right, and it is their treaty - their legal right that they fought for - it is the same for the Nishga treaty. So, I guess what I try to do is - I try to come across as a bit of a diplomat... answering a lot of issues like that, diplomatically. (Jack)

A specific condition to *overcoming institutional obstructions* involved being creative, and developing sources relevant to First Nations people:

Coming to the university, allowed me to see how other people saw my people, and that was interesting, and sometimes it challenged me to reflect more upon who I was, and why I was like that in my history, and what not. And so sometimes, I would get really frustrated with the kind of narrow perspective that was there... The positive outcome was that it made me think, and it made me write, and it made me get a better understanding about those things for myself... So yeah, it was frustrating, and it was sometimes demeaning, and it was - but it provided an opportunity to create new material. (May)

The last property defined, *adjusting to geographical changes*, several dimensions were identified that contributed to student success. The transition to an urban setting, impacted the students in different ways. Living off campus was not only stressful for students, but it caused a lot of anxiety that related to safety, and security:

My first - about ten months when I lived in Vancouver, I didn't actually live on campus. I spent about ten months living on the east side. And during that time, there was a bus strike, and I actually had to bike from Broadway, and Clark all the way up to (UBC), and I thought, I was going to die every day because of the traffic. All this traffic drove me nuts. So, when I did get into family housing up at (UBC), It was wonderful - you

know - not having to deal with the traffic anymore. I found when I was living on the east side - it was much different than living in Cumberland. There was a park nearby where people would drink, and do drugs, and what not, so I was quite worried about my children's safety in that context, but again once you moved to family housing things were fine. (Mary)

I was living in Coquitlam, we lived on the ground floor, now I won't ever live on the ground floor apartment ever again, because the first time I moved to Vancouver, I got broken into, and the second time, I got broken into again, ground floor. And all my stuff was getting stolen right, so that was really disruptive. I remember I had to move, so I moved closer to school, and that was a lot better. But finding a good place to live in Vancouver is also hard. (Violet)

Another dimension to *adjusting to geographical changes* related to how students dealt with feeling lonely:

When I first moved to Vancouver, every once in a while, I would get lonely for being around lots of people - and I remember that - I also utilized community resources - so I remember Cedar Cottage - one night a week you can go there for a dollar, and they would feed you dinner, and it was mostly Aboriginal people that went. And so we would go to that Cedar Cottage thing, and just - mainly because I wanted to be around a big crowd of Indian people - you know - at dinner time - So it would feel like more of being home, right. (May)

I took advantage of lots of the fun things you can do in Vancouver, lots of concerts, and movies. I phoned home every other time. (Violet)

When I moved to Vancouver that was another story - that was really hard - the year I moved to Van was the summer - everybody had left - all the people I had known at the university were gone, and I had to sublet a family home - family housing from a couple and - it was very quiet, and I didn't know anyone, and there was a bus strike, and I didn't know how to drive so that was really - I felt very secluded... I remember spending a lot of time in the bush - in the back of family housing area there because - there was trees, and of nature - I bought a bike, and I would go through those trails all the time - my sister and I - we spent a lot of time there-

like walking, and hiking in those trails on the weekend – and then we would go to the beach to. (Kiana)

In summary, students took several actions, and steps to overcome barriers that hindered their educational pursuits. These factors related to personal issues, institutional obstructions and geographical changes. To begin with some of the personal issues, students had to resolve experiences of identity confusion, irrational beliefs, and unrealistic fears. In fact, for one student, fear of what others might think, prolonged her studies for several years because she was afraid to ask for help. It is not surprising due to our human nature, students' deal with their problems differently. It was revealed when students faced their problems, and dealt with them they experienced a sense of triumph, satisfaction and confidence. Students had to deal with contemporary issues affecting First Nations people, and misconceptions about their educational rights. Students had to find a balance between the expectations of the university, and family responsibilities, roles and obligations. This required students to work extra hard, prioritize, and sometimes this meant saying no to family, friends, and relatives. As for institutional obstructions, the First Nations longhouse staff, and other students played a big role in helping students to deal with racism, prejudice and stereotypical perceptions. How students dealt with different issues varied in relation to students' temperament, energy level, knowledge, and skills. Some students confronted their problems, and took steps to rectify the situation while others chose to ignore the problem or leave it up to time. As for geographical

changes, students had to find suitable housing that was affordable, secure and safe. Living on campus met those needs and more. The environment of the campus helped students to deal with loneliness that was common for students, who moved from a rural area.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Strengths and limitations

It is important to remind the reader, that this study was conducted to develop a theory. The data from this study is not intended to provide all of the solutions to the problems, that First Nations students experienced at the university. What these data do, however, provide additional insight into the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions that these students experienced at the university.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) a grounded theory "denotes a set of well developed categories that are systematically inter-related through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework, that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational or other phenomenon" (p. 22). They contend, that the theory is discovered, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection, and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship exists among the data collection, and data analysis. In the initial stage, a theory is not present. But as the process evolves, theoretical constructs, and concepts that are relevant to that area are allowed to emerge.

The interview technique, and the constant comparative method of theory generation are complimentary research techniques. The interview as a research

tool compiled large volumes of data, and was constantly compared to other previously gathered data to generate grounded theory. The result of these two techniques contributed to the validity of the study. According to Cresswell, (1998) theoretical sampling is used to help researcher best form the theory. The more sensitive a researcher is to theoretical relevance of certain concepts, the more likely for the researcher to recognize indicators of those concepts in the data. As a First Nations person that completed, and received an undergraduate degree, I developed an interview guide that was based on the literature, and my own personal experiences. This interview guide of questions was used to check, and compare information with key participants who were also First Nations, and completed an undergraduate degree.

The theory proposed in this study does not generalize to a larger population. The specific conditions under which the phenomenon exist applies to the students in this study, but to no others. When conditions change, then the theoretical formulations will also change. The purpose of grounded theory must always be kept uppermost in mind. It can't be judged by using the usual criteria, because its purposes, and procedures are quite different than quantitative research.

This theory is subjected to further empirical testing, because now we know the variables of categories from the data. This information can also help to guide, and form relevant questions for further future investigations. The insight,

and conclusions from this study can be tested with other groups from different environments.

Theory postulated

This study identified five core categories that became sufficiently saturated with the data, to support the following theory proposed.

To achieve wholeness in relation to identity development, and sense of belonging, students had to find, and maintain a balance within the parameters of sometimes two conflicting cultural influences. Namely, Western culture, and/or First Nations culture especially if the parents were from two different, ancestral ethnic groups.

The relationship, specifically with the university, reported by students in this study was described as impersonal, where students felt like a number, or a subject. In spite of students' level of acculturation, and that the learning environment was not a problem for some, it became important for students' to establish an acceptable identity, that was suitable in both Western, and First Nations cultures. In addition to the fact, First Nations values, and beliefs were not given any weight, or credibility, or that they could possibly be of some value to society was disappointing. For some students, this meant they had to put their cultures on hold, and replace it by adopting conflicting values, and beliefs of the mainstream culture. First Nations people are collectively concerned for the group as a whole, as opposed to individualism. Another area neglected by

the university referred to having spiritual needs met. This area important for First Nations people was not given any recognition, or acknowledgement by the institution.

Teachers must realize, that they have a responsibility to uphold, and that is to promote equal opportunity for all students. Anyone who works with First Nations students needs to be cognizant of their own personal bias, and their motive for working with them. More harm occurred when teachers, counsellors, or social workers made decisions that were based on misconceptions. An important factor that warrants attention, points to the students' potential to succeed in higher education. They enjoyed the challenges of pursuing a degree, and demonstrated the ability to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information. In fact, when asked to develop curriculum, some students' accepted the challenge with glee.

It is important that educators make attempts to develop an understanding of First Nations culture. Students preferred teachers who exhibited the following qualities: Understanding, flexible, caring, warmth, respectfulness, and resourcefulness. Teachers who encouraged students, helped to edify students' self-image, and self-esteem. To be treated as equals was favorable to students. It was encouraging when students experienced this kind of response, and support especially from their teacher. Likewise, inspirational speakers provided students with insight, and knowledge about expectations of the university, and those required of the students. Finally, teachers need to understand Brown's (1992)

term "Andragogy," and the power relationship, that it represents between the students, and teacher.

First Nations people have a special relationship with the land that is sacred, and inter-related with their identities, meaning, and purpose in life. Depending upon students' connection with their home environments, it had a direct impact on students' transition to a new urban environment. For some students, the relationship, and connection to the land changed in relation, to how they interacted within that environment. What students did previously in their home environments, now required more planning, and preparation. It also impacted, how their children interacted, within this new environment. Dependency, upon the land for the subsistence of certain foods switched to a complete dependence on store bought food from grocery stores and sometimes family, friends, and relatives.

Students equipped with strong confident self-images, and knowledge about their identities generally felt excited about their university experience. It was an enjoyable experience for them. Other students' however, were not so fortunate. In fact, they experienced frustration, pressure, and conflict. It became apparent, that the students' identity became an important factor in their educational pursuits. If this area needed to be addressed in the students' life, they turned to their own culture, or urban culture that was available. There are major differences between the different ethnic groups, but there is a common bond that helps to meet the spiritual needs of all First Nations people. When

students had the opportunity to learn about their traditional cultures, it made them feel good about who they were, thus contributed to their success. Another factor that fostered student success, and enhanced students self-esteem, and confidence referred to academic skills. When students had the necessary skills, and felt prepared, they excelled in their programs.

Some students with negative self-images had low self-esteem that greatly affected the students' university experience. A great deal of this fear, and feelings of inadequacy, originated from past experiences either from home, school, or both. Fear of rejection because of being First Nations became problematic for some students. They remained reserved, and generally kept to themselves unless required to participate in social activities, and functions. Some students were afraid of what others might think, therefore, they never asked for help. It was through pure determination, and extra work output that allowed these students to be successful. To overcome unrealistic fear, and irrational beliefs, some students conditioned themselves by focusing on thoughts that reinforced the belief, they were capable of learning, and they could do it. For some students, the negative experiences from others that doubted, criticized, or antagonistic, became the driving force that compelled these students to prove to these people, that they could do it.

Some major influences that impacted students' identity, and source of support included the students' immediate family, friends, relatives, and communities. Reliance on family, and spiritual strength was cited as being

equally important in sustaining a positive attitude. Other influential factors came from the students' personal early childhood hopes, and dreams whereas for some students, it was a pure love, or hunger for knowledge. With the advent of pursuing a university degree, however, it also meant being separated from major sources of support. To accommodate this missing important ingredient in students' life, some students phoned, and/or traveled home on a regular basis. Other students became involved with volunteer work activities, to organize pow-wows, potlucks, or barbecues. This provided students with an opportunity to interact with others, meet new friends, and learn about First Nations culture. The First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) also provided students with guidance, support, and essentially a sense of belonging. Other sources of support involved university housing accommodation, and programs that supported those students with children. Finally, the students' band, and family provided financial aid that also consisted of bursaries, fellowships, and student loans.

The students soon realized, that they were basically on their own. They had to take the initiative to become independent learners, and develop strong defense mechanisms, necessary, to combat the many obstacles, they faced at the university. To believe that racial conflicts do not exist, because the rules no longer tolerate such behavior, ignore the evidence, that students in this study, felt isolated, ignored, and discriminated against by other students, instructors, and university personnel. The First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) became

a place of refuge, where students could go, and vent their feelings by sharing their experiences, and stories with other students, and staff. Some of these stories, related to the hostility, and discrimination felt in the classroom, and the campus environment.

Another important success factor that the data suggests, involved the resolution of identity confusion, irrational beliefs, and unrealistic fears. For students to become whole, and comfortable with their new identities as students, they needed to find, and maintain a balance between the expectations, responsibilities, roles, and obligations of both the university, and family. Students had to learn how to prioritize, and sometimes this meant saying no to family, friends, and relatives. For some students, it meant making sacrifices that were sometimes painful, and difficult to deal with.

For students to make the transition from their home environment to an urban one required some major adjustments. For some students who depended upon the land to supplement their diet, meant a complete shift of dependence to grocery store bought food. Although the surroundings at the university were similar to some of the students' home environments, they still experienced loneliness. Spending time around the endowment lands, participating in outdoor activities with other students at the (FNHL) helped substantially, to alleviate some of these lonely feelings.

Implications for the research literature

This study employed the constant comparative methodology to generate a grounded theory of First Nations students who successfully completed an undergraduate degree. The study drew from documentary research, personal experiences, and data from seven semi-structured interviews.

From the literature review, and my own personal experiences as a First Nations person that received an undergraduate degree, an interview guide was designed, and a set of preliminary categories was framed. With this interview guide, I interviewed students in succession, and constantly compared, and checked new data with preliminary theoretical categories, to determine if they were supported. These preliminary categories were the beginning stages of generating theory. Each interview in some way supported, and refined preliminary categories. These categories over time made up the conceptual framework that delineated a personal profile of First Nations success factors that contributed, to the completion of an undergraduate degree. This process continued until categories were saturated.

In comparison, several factors were found that supported the literature. For example in the Personal factors category, a condition to being successful was determined by the students' attitude, level of skill development, maturity level, and willingness to take on responsibility for personal advancement (Brown, 1992; Macias, 1989; Lin, La Counte & Eder 1998). Another specific condition to success involved the ability to maintain traditional values such as generosity, sharing,

and helping (Cardinal, 1998; Garrett, 1996; Benjamin, et al 1993). A similar characteristic found to promote success for students in this study, resembled the abilities of a bi-cultural person who could adopt new traits, and still maintain a traditional perspective (Garrett 1996; Benjamin et al 1993 & Brown, 1992). In comparison, with (Weiten 1995) motivational theories, the students in this study displayed a strong desire, and determination to pursue with their educational goals that stemmed mainly from family, and early childhood experiences. Students attempted to bring their hopes, and dreams to fruition such as becoming a teacher, or to be in a position where they could be helpful to First Nations people in general. For some students' success, related to needs such as having a love for learning, or a hunger for knowledge.

In contrast, to Weiten (1995) motivational theories where the motive for achievement was to master difficult challenges, outperform others, and meet high standards of excellence, the following factors did not apply to the students in this study. The students wanted to be able to help family members, relatives or other First Nations people. Some students wanted to prove either to themselves or those critics, unbelievers, or antagonists that they could be successful.

This study added the importance of personal health as a factor that contributed to the successful completion of a university degree. Students in this study soon realized, that if they were going to be successful, they would have to eliminate unhealthy habits, and behaviors that jeopardized their educational

goals. This meant exercising regularly, and eating healthy food. For others, this meant talking to immediate, and extended family members, friends, or praying to God.

A specific condition to student motivation for the students in this study meant traveling home regularly, in order to help their families, attend ceremonies, or participate in special family, and community activities.

In the Sources of support category, several dimensions were identified to support findings in the literature. Students received strength, support, and encouragement primarily from family members (Lin Lin, & LaCounte & Eder 1988; Rindone 1998). This kind of support helped to meet student needs physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. It also played an important role in identity formation, and maintaining a stable First Nations identity. Students who possessed a strong self-image, and held high aspirations considerably excelled in their educational pursuits. Other contributing factors involved university professors, Non-Native, and First Nations students, counsellors, and university personnel affiliated with the university who demonstrated the following qualities: Understanding, flexibility, caring, warmth, respectfulness, and resourcefulness (Archibald, Bowman, Pepper, & Urion 1995; Lowery 1997). A special type of support that contributed to students' success involved part-time work (Tate & Schwartz 1993).

An area of support lacking at the university but very important for students success referred to getting their spiritual needs met. God, prayers,

attending church, and reading the Bible were found to help students' substantially. Other kinds of spiritual support involved participating in sweat lodge, and traditional ceremonies (Hanohano, 1999; Barnhardt, 1991; Garrett, 1996).

This study added the value of certain elementary teachers, and the long-term lasting impact, they had upon the students. Teachers who possessed an attitude, and a belief, that the students had potential played a very important role in the students' success. From these educators, students received equal treatment, support, encouragement, insight, and inspiration that greatly impacted students' self-image, and self-esteem. These teachers also prepared students by informing them about racism, and discrimination. Another kind of support that was very inspirational for students were guest speakers, who informed students about their educational experiences, and expectations. Other contributing factors related to the circumstances of being away from home, and family support. To deal with this situation, students participated in community, and social functions such as volunteering to organize cultural activities such as potlucks, pow-wows, and barbecues. A special type of support involved programs, and functions that supported the children of those students who were attending university.

Another kind of support that contributed to student success related to the students financial conditions. A major source of financial support came from the

students' band. Other types of support came from grants, scholarships, bursaries, and student loans.

For the Institutional factor category, several dimensions were found to support the literature. A number of academic, and social skills helped to increase the students' level of self-esteem. Sometimes the students needed extra help to bring their skills up to par with university standards. Due to similar findings, Gomme (1993) stressed the importance of effective teaching methods, smaller class sizes, and strategies to improve the student/teacher relationships. An effective teaching method, "Interface teaching," challenged the students by presenting them with a problem to solve (Brown 1992). In addition, Hurkburt, Gade & Mclaughlin (1990) stressed the importance of recognizing, that First Nations have potential. In fact, the power relationship between First Nations students, and teachers termed, "Andragogy," must be recognized, and treated with caution for these same students are products of history, and culture like all social beings (Brown 1992).

Another dimension found to support the literature related to knowledge about traditional culture. Some students turned to their respective cultures, and participated in some of the traditional ceremonies, and practices because it helped them to feel good about being First Nations, Consequently, helped to develop, and promote a positive self-image. Similarly, Badwound & Tierney (1988) found First Nations students preferred values of generosity, wisdom, respect, reverence for the Earth, and disdain for competitiveness. In response to

similar findings, Brown (1992) encouraged educators, and counsellors to act as translators, or mediators to facilitate the transformation of both Aboriginal, and Non-Aboriginal systems. More specifically, Wright (1998) found a correlation between success, and First Nations input to design, and implementation of programs.

An important condition to success related to Atleo's term, "Inclusion," and students ability to get along with each other. There were many important reasons given by students that referred to learning from each other, but more importantly, the new relationships developed with other students at the university, ultimately, became the students' new family. In comparison to Archibald et al (1995) findings, students received support, love, and encouragement from other students, and the staff that worked at the First Nations Longhouse. Likewise, (Atleo 1991) found, "Inclusion," contributed to academic success. Other works encouraged educators to be sensitive, and take the cultural teachings seriously when working with First Nations students (Echols 1994).

Brady (1996) claimed First Nations students were not empowered by the educational system. More precisely, Brown (1992) felt that the educational system was facilitating the process of assimilation. In fact, according to Wright (1998) unless universities were willing to accept First Nations value systems, worldviews, they may be perpetuating the problem. In contrast, some of the students in this study, excelled in this kind of environment, because they grew

up in this kind of environment, they were familiar with the system, and practices. In some cases, it was the only environment that the students knew. Ironically, as already been mentioned, some students purposely set out to learn about their traditional cultures, and were encouraged to explore their history, and cultural roots by certain professors. In other words, level of students' acculturation was of a lesser factor, and concern for students' success than establishing an acceptable identity that works, or fits well in both Western, and First Nations cultures.

Due to new programs, and courses oriented for First Nations culture constantly being added to the curriculum, students felt excited about being in university, and to be part of this legacy. They were allowed to be part of the process, and to address the problems, and make changes where it was needed. The relationships that existed with the professors were generally professional, positive, supportive, open-minded, but the students preferred this kind of formal relationship.

For the geographical category, several dimensions were found to support the literature. For instance Gallagher (1994) emphasized the connection, and dependency that First Nations understood in terms of receiving meaning, and food for their survival. Similarly, the students in this study, connected with the land through activities such as planting, gathering, picking, hunting or fishing. In contrast, to Gallagher's findings referring to dependency upon the land for

survival, the students in this study became dependent upon getting food from the grocery store.

Another dimension of the geographical category reported by students, related to the land being a healing source. Activities that facilitated this connection, involved outdoor activities such as jogging, hiking, kayaking, and camping. In comparison, Gallagher (1994) says integration is determined by activities that involve the land. This involvement according to Hanohano (1999) fostered a strong sense of identity for First Nations that is connected, and inter-related with the land. In addition, Sanger (1997) found First Nations to have an appreciation, and special relationship with the land that is sacred. Other findings by Sanoff (1994) recommended educators develop, and implement programs, that facilitate the process of connecting with the land, and to build communities by involving those families, and communities that use them.

Another dimension that supported the literature, involved the stressors experienced by students. For some students, it was a real blessing to live on campus, because it was more convenient, saved time, and eliminated the stress of commuting back and forth to school. It was also less worrisome for those students with children. The noise level, and traffic seemed to attribute to the most amount of stress. Similarly, Ryan (1995) found students were bombarded with new technologies, and the stress of urban life. Other works by Archibald et al (1995) found that some students experienced culture shock that sometimes lasted for years, and affected the whole family.

This study added the importance of place, and how First Nations people connected with the land. Upon moving to the city, this connection, and relationship to the land became more structured, and formal for students. Everyday activities that happened at the spur of the moment became more complicated that required more planning, and preparation. Another area referred to conditional preferences, where some students, chose to live off campus. Living on campus gave some students the feeling, that they should be studying all the time, and they never left school. Another condition involved several family members living with a student that would not have been possible had the student lived on campus.

For the overcoming barriers category several dimensions were found to support the literature. The students in this study had to resolve identity issues that created confusion for them. They also had to overcome irrational beliefs, and unrealistic fears. Similarly, Garrett (1996) found that students experienced cultural conflicts from the different cultures that impacted students around issues relating to identity and sense of place.

It became apparent that students who faced their problems, and dealt with them accordingly experienced a sense of triumph, and satisfaction. This not only impacted the students' self-image, but it raised the students' level of self-confidence. In comparison, an earlier study Padilla (1996) found students who were aware of their problems were in a much better position to solve them. A second study, Padilla (1997) found, that students' who mentally prepared

themselves by focusing on positive thoughts, and having a positive outlook on the future, greatly enhanced their success.

Another dimension that contributed to students' success consisted of different sub-categories. For instance, the students' energy level, health, temperament, knowledge, and skill development gained from personal life experiences greatly helped them to succeed. Likewise, Padilla (1996) found students who were aware of their problems, and possessed the necessary coping skills were able to take the appropriate steps to resolve them.

Another dimension found to support the literature, referred to where students fit, in relation to having a sense of belonging. Students had to find, and maintain a balance between the expectations, responsibilities, roles, and obligations of both the university, and family. In a particular study, Macias (1989) found a relationship between academic success, and the students culturally transmitted cognitive abilities. Other works found that when students experienced a sense of belonging, it had a positive impact on their motivation, and fostered positive relations (Sanoff 1994; Philippe 1997).

This study added to the literature in three important areas. First of all students were required to work extra hard, prioritize in the things they had to do, and sometimes this meant saying no to family friends, and relatives. Another area involved the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL). From this resource, students' received guidance, support, and encouragement. It was a place where students' could go, and receive support, and means to deal with the experiences

of racism, prejudice, and problematic issues generated through stereotyping. The final area involved housing accommodation provided by the university. It helped students to deal with the loneliness, students experienced upon moving away from their home environments to a new urban one. It also provided students social support in the way of developing new friendships, and especially raising their children. Overall, the environment had a positive influence upon the students.

Implications for practice

From the data, First Nations students are convinced that the benefits received from a university degree are worth the extra effort, and struggle necessary to achieve success. In response to what was aforementioned, anyone who works with First Nations students needs to become familiar with First Nations cultures. They need to facilitate activities that will enhance interpersonal relationships between the faculty, staff, and important members within the community. They need to be more emphatic about their commitment to promote equal educational, and employment opportunities for all students. In spite of the different programs, and courses being added to the curriculum, I believe, that the university would agree there is still more room for improvement. Indeed, the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) plays an important role in providing students with guidance, support, and basically a home away from home. For a hypothetical purpose, what if this resource did not

exist? When students initially moved on to the campus, they felt isolated, and lonely. Where could they turn too, for help? What about those students who felt like a number, subject, or those students who felt out numbered in some classrooms? More training to sensitize instructors, and other students around these kinds of special needs must occur.

Implications for research

Quantitative studies can be conducted to test core categories of the theory proposed. Comparative studies should be conducted with both Non-Native, and Native oriented institutions to strengthen validity of theory. Surveys can be conducted to determine reliability of study with other First Nations students, or groups. Other studies could take a closer look at how students, coped with the daily frustrations, experienced at the university. A more in-depth analysis of student identity, traditional culture, and its role for fostering success would be a very useful, and interesting study. A study to determine students' motivation to achieve at a university level program would be very useful. Finally, a study to determine how poverty impacts the students' motivation to succeed would be very useful.

REFERENCES

- Akan, Linda. (1999). Pimosatamowin: Walking and Sikaw Kakeequaywin Talking: A Saulteaux Elder's View of Native Education.
- Archibald, J., Bowman, S.S., Pepper, F., Urion, C. (1995). "Honouring what they say: Postsecondary experiences of First Nations graduates". Canadian Journal of Native Education, V.21 (1) 1-222.
- Armstrong, C.J. (1987). "Traditional indigenous education: A natural process". Canadian Journal of Native Education, Vol.14 (2), 14-19.
- Arthur, N. (1998). "Counselor education for diversity: Where do we go from here?" Canadian Journal of Counseling, Vol. 32 (1), 88- 103.
- Atleo, R. (1991). "A study of education in context". B.C. Studies, Vol.89, Spring, 104-119.
- Badwound, E. & Tierney, W.G. (1998). "Leadership and American Indian values: the tribal college dilemma." Journal of American Indian Education, 2 (4), 9-15.
- Barman, J. & Hebert, Y. & McCaskill, D. (1987). Indian Education in Canada. Vol.2 Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Barnhardt, R. (1991). "Higher education in the fourth world. Indigenous people take control" Canadian Journal of Native Education, Vol.18 (2), 199-232.
- Beaty, J. & Chiste, K. (1986). "University preparation for Native American students: theory and application." Journal of American Indian Education, 26 (1), 6 -13.
- Benjamin, D.P. & Chambers, S. & Reiterman, G. (1993). "A Focus of American Indian college persistence." Journal of American Indian Education, 32 (2), 24 - 39.
- Bingler, S. (1995). Place as a form of knowledge in Designing places for learning. Ed. Anne Meek Alexandria, VA: Assoc. for Supervision and curriculum development.
- Brady, P. (1986). "Native dropouts and nonnative drop-outs in Canada: Two solitudes or a solitude shared?" Journal of American Indian Education, 35

(2), 10 – 20.

Brown, L.A. (1992). "Social work education for Aboriginal communities" The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 22 (3), 46 –56.

Cooper, M. & Karlberg, A. & Adams, L. (1991). Aboriginal Suicide in British Columbia, B.C. Burnaby: Institute on Family Violence.

Cresswell, J. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crumpacker, S.S. (1995). Using cultural information to create schools that work. In Designing Places for Learning. Ed. Anne Meek Alexandria, VA: Assoc. for Supervision and curriculum development.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). Strategies of qualitative inquiry. U.S.A. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dey, I. (1999). Grounding grounded theory. Guidelines for qualitative research. U.S.A. Academic Press.

Frideres, J.S. (1998). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Contemporary conflicts (5th ed). Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall Canada.

Garrett, T.G. (1996). "Two people: An American Indian narrative of bicultural identity." Journal of American Indian education. 23 (1), 1 –21.

Gomme, I. M. & Hall, M.P. & Murphy, T.J. (1993). "In the shadow of the tower: The view of the undergraduate experience." The Canadian Journal of Higher Education 23 (3), 18 – 35.

Grams, G.D. (1999). "Rudiment in the process of conducting qualitative research: A working guide to the use of "Grounded Theory." Unpublished Manuscript, University of British Columbia.

Hanohano, P. (1999). "The spiritual imperative of Native epistemology: Restoring harmony and balance to education." Canadian Journal of Native Education, Vol.23 (2), 206-219.

Hiebert, B. (1996). "Coping with the transition to Post- Secondary education." Canadian Journal of Counseling, Vol. 30 (2), 93-103.

Hobson, Peter. (1998). "Adult development and transformative learning." International Journal of lifelong education, Vol. 17(2), 72-86.

Hull, J. (1990). "Socioeconomic status and Native education in Canada." Canadian Journal of Native Education, 17 (1), 1 –13.

Hurlburt, G. & Gade, E. & McLaughlin, J. (1990). "Teaching attitudes and study attitudes of Indian education students." Journal of American Indian Education, 29 (2). 12 – 18.

Hurlburt, G. & Kroeker, R. & Gade, E. (1991). "Study orientation, persistence and retention of Native students: Implications for confluent education." Journal of American Indian Education, 30 (3), 16–23.

Kawakami, A. (1999). Sense of place, community, and identity. Bridging the gap between home and school for Hawaiian students Education and Urban society, Vol. 32 (1), 18-40.

Kehoe & Echols. (1994). "Improving achievement and other outcomes among urban Native students. The Canadian Journal of Native studies, 15(1), 61-75.

Kirkness, V.J. & Barnhardt, R. (1991). "First Nations and higher education: The four R's – respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility." Journal of American Indian Education, 30 (3), 1 – 15.

Kleinfeld, J. & Cooper, J. & Kyle, N. (1987). "Post – secondary counselors: A model for increasing Native Americans' college success." Journal of American Indian Education, 27 (1), 9 –15.

Lauer, R. (1989). Social problems and the quality of life. Dubuque, Iowa: C Brown Publishing.

Lin Lin, R. & LaCounte, D. & Eder, J. (1988). "A study of Native American students in a predominantly white college." Journal of American Indian Education, 27 (3), 8–15.

Lowery, C.T. (1997). "Hearing the messages: Integrating Pueblo philosophy into academic life." Journal of American Indian Education, 36 (2), 1–8.

Macias, J.C. (1989). "American Indian academic success: The role of Indigenous learning strategies." Journal of American Indian Education, 29 (1), 43-52.

McCormick, R. (1995). "The facilitation of healing for the First Nations people of British Columbia." Canadian Journal of Native Education, Vol. 21, 252-319.

McCormick, R., & Honore, F. (1995). "Counseling First Nations clients on career issues: Implications for the school counselor." Guidance Counselling, Vol. 10 (2), 27-30.

McWhirter, H.E. (1998). "An empowerment model of counselor education." Canadian Journal of Counselling, Vol. 32 (1), 12-26.

Mustard, F. Dr. (1997). "Means to combat child poverty. [video] Ottawa, Ontario. Cable Public Affairs Channel.

Nora, A. & Cabrera, A.F. (1996). "The role of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on the adjustment of minority students to college." Journal of Higher Education, 67 (2), 119-147.

Padillo, R.V. & Trevino, J. & Gonzalez, K. & Trevino, J. (1997). "Developing local models of minority student success in college." Journal of College Student Development, 38 (2), 125 -135.

Pederson, P. (1995). "The culture- bound counselor as an unintentional racist." Canadian Journal of Counselling. Vol. 29 (3), 197-205.

Philippe (1997). "The art of Placeful experiences: Site specific installations and learning in/ from/ for place" Unpublished Masters Thesis, UBC.

Reyhner, J. (1992). "American Indian cultures and school success." Journal of American Indian Education, 32 (1), 30 - 39.

Rindone, P. (1998). "Achievement motivation and academic achievement of Native American students." Journal of American Indian Education, 28 (1), 1-7.

Ryan, J. (1995). "Experiencing urban schooling: The adjustment of Native students to the extra-curricular demands of a post-secondary education program." The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 15 (2), 211-230.

Sanger, M. (1997). "Sense of place and education." Journal of Environmental Education, Vol.29 (1), 4 -7.

Sanoff, H. (1994). Pembroke State University Native American Center School Design, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Spencer, Metta. (1996). Foundations of Modern Sociology, (7th ed.) Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice- Hall Canada Inc.

Strauss, Anselm L. (1987). Qualitative analysis for social scientists. Cambridge: University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1997). Grounded Theory in Practice. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Tate, D.S. & Schwartz, C.L. (1993). "Increasing the retention of American Indian students in professional programs in higher education." Journal of American Indian Education, 33 (1), 21 – 31.

Te Hennepe, S. (1993). "Issues of Respect: Reflections of First Nations students' experiences in postsecondary anthropology classrooms." Canadian Journal of Native Education, Vol.20 (2), 193 –260.

Tippeconnic III & John, W. (1998). "A survey: Attitudes toward the education of American Indians." Journal of American Indian Education, 28 (1), 34 –37.

Weiten, W. (1995 and). Themes variations: Psychology (3rd ed.) USA Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Wilson, W. (1994). "The professor/student relationship: Key factors in minority student performance and achievement." Canadian Journal of Native Students, 14 (2), 305 –317.

Wright, D. (1995). "Preparing First Nations students for College: The experience of the Squamish Nation of British Columbia." Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22 (1), 85-92.

Wyrostok, N., & Paulson, B. (2000). "Traditional healing practices among First Nations students." Canadian Journal of Counselling, 34 (1), 14 –24.

APPENDIX A**LETTER DESCRIBING THE STUDY AND CONSENT FORM**

APPENDIX B

FRAMEWORK OF CORE CATEGORIES AND THEIR PROPERTIES

FRAMEWORK OF CORE CATEGORIES AND THEIR PROPERTIES

<u>Core categories</u>	<u>Properties</u>
Personal factors	identity motivation family background age health gender
Support systems	family institution community spiritual financial
Institutional	skill development curriculum relationships housing buildings
Geographical	living on campus campus environment adjusting to new environment
Overcoming barriers	resolving personal issues overcoming institutional obstructions adjusting to geographical changes