THE NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE: 
ITS IMPACT ON CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

BY

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ABSTRACT

Few, if any accounts of First Nation history and their struggles with aboriginal land questions and rights focus on the "creative political vitality of the Indian peoples of British Columbia" (Tennant, 1990). Instead, researchers usually regard aboriginals as objects of history. First Nations' school experiences and the negative outcomes have also generally been biased toward the notion that First Nations have and continue to be victims of colonization and a "superior" people who have and continue to oppress them.

This study examined the contexts and reasons First Nations graduates gave for choosing to attend a First Nations specific institution and recounted their school experiences in relationship to First Nations culture, identity and educational and career outcomes.

The process of research involved working with a research team that developed a survey questionnaire and utilized the focus group method. The participants of the study were the students who were enrolled in one of the six Skills Training programs at the Native Education Centre and who graduated during the years 1989 to 1992.

The qualitative analysis of the focus group results provided texture to the quantitative analysis of the survey questionnaire data. From these findings, the researcher discussed the role of a First Nations specific institution in addressing the needs and goals of the adult learners.
Based on the positive feedback of the graduates, I present a plausible argument that there is a critical need for the existence of places of learning such as the NEC.

The study also accounts First Nations in British Columbia as politically active participants of their history who have and continue to be outspoken and active about their concerns regarding the education of their children and communities. First Nations are also characterized as actively involved in challenging federal and provincial policies which do not meet their needs in the advancement of their people. In this study of graduates who attended a First Nations specific post-secondary institution, the researcher recognized First Nations as being involved in the planning, development and implementation of educational practices to meet the needs of their communities.
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INTRODUCTION

THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY
AND ITS PURPOSE

THE BACKGROUND

Aboriginal peoples around the world are taking control of their destiny (Barman et al., 1987:1).

Organized action by First Nations in Canada continues to grow resulting in the abandonment of the federal government's official policy of assimilation. The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and other organizations across Canada forced the government to withdraw the 1969 White Paper Policy that would rid the First Nations of Canada of all special rights. Three years later (1972) the National Indian Brotherhood (now Assembly of First Nations) presented the Indian Control of Indian Education Policy to the federal government, which accepted the policy in principle. This policy has been at the heart of the move toward First Nations control of First Nations education today. Parental responsibility and local control, the fundamental principles of the policy, are vital to ensure First Nations' languages, beliefs, values, identity and traditions are transmitted through well planned and implemented curricula for quality educational outcomes.

First Nations of Canada and British Columbia face the challenge to continue to demyth and resist stereotypical images and efforts of domination by Euro-Canadians who have been active in eroding First Nations' languages and cultures during the last five centuries. The same influence of
genocide has been prevalent in British Columbia for almost a century and a half, and First Nations continue to confront the issues that have threatened (and in many contexts continue to threaten) cultural survival today. First Nations' education levels, however, continue to accelerate changes locally, provincially and nationally.

The development and implementation of culturally specific learning experiences for First Nations people have gained recognition in British Columbia. Several bands across the province have established schools on reservations and over the past decade aboriginals have developed and established adult education institutions. These changes have been brought about by the clearly articulated concerns of First Nations since the beginning of the century about the quality of the learning experiences (Haig-Brown, 1991:64) to reflect their reality and cultural imperatives rather than educational practices of assimilation.

First Nations have been determined to prepare learners to be qualified to work in their communities and/or to be able to compete in the wider society (British Columbia, 1916; Canada, 1927; Cardinal, 1969:51; 1977; NIB, 1973; Longboat, 1987:23; McKay, 1987; Chrisjohn, 1988; Atleo, 1991; Kirkness, 1992; Shortt, 1992). This commitment becomes most critical because of the failure of First Nations children and adults in schools administered by governments and churches. As First Nations
articulate concerns about education at all grade levels and in adult education, they continue to practice and insist on governance of education (Penner et al., 1983; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; MacPherson, 1991).

First Nations leaders, through the consolidated efforts of the Association of First Nations Post-Secondary Institutions (AFNPSI) (which became a legally registered society in March 1991), clearly enunciate the goal to govern post-secondary education. Ten First Nations institutions in British Columbia are members of the Association, and the potential exists for others to join.

Mr. Ron Shortt, the past President of the Association of First Nations Post-Secondary Institutions, challenged the participants of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges on November 15, 1991 to consider that the founding educational principles and practices of the Canadian educational system are based on the social imperatives which perpetuate that society. Shortt stated that such a philosophical approach and practice have been at the root of the dismal result of that educational system for First Nations learners (Shortt, 1991).

The deliberate and systematic attempts of the church and state to assimilate First Nations through education, points to a lack of respect and appreciation, and to the rejection of First Nations rights to thrive within cultural and social institutions which are distinctly First Nations.
First Nations demonstrate individual and communal commitment to survive into the twenty-first century and beyond. This study investigates First Nations' views as they relate to their past, present and future educational goals.

First Nations societies practiced a balance between individual and group rights long before it became a matter of general academic discussion in the old world (Atleo, 1991:49).

Atleo goes on to add that the Europeans in their attitude perceived First Nations to be "unequal and not quite human". Such beliefs about First Nations resulted in legislation and practices that have failed First Nations.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology (now Skills, Training and Labour) in response to the Report of the Provincial Advisory on First Nations Post-Secondary Education (1990) has attempted to address the lack of First Nations participation in post-secondary education. First Nations institutions throughout British Columbia, however, continue to grow and provide educational opportunities for First Nations adults. The Native Education Centre has grown each year and delivers Adult Basic Education and Skills Training Programs in Vancouver and in various First Nations communities in the province.

While community colleges in the province are implementing measures to better meet the First Nations learner needs, they are desperate for curricula and methods to implement for positive outcomes. The dilemma of the colleges to better
address these needs results in continued attempts and research by other than First Nations who are faced with the challenge of interpreting First Nations knowledge.

RESEARCH ROLE

An employee of the Native Education Centre since 1989, and the Assistant Administrator of Programs and Student Services, I am responsible for the development, delivery, and evaluation of all programs. In meeting the mandate of education of the Centre, I have also been involved in the development of the Cross-Campus Committee of Vancouver Community College as it evolved to respond to recommendations of the First Nations Provincial Advisory Committee on post-secondary education.

While one may speculate that these responsibilities may influence or bias my perceptions, as management one hopes that the benefits and understandings of the whole process will outweigh these dangers.

Our everyday lives teach us skills which we use to observe and reflect on our experience. We focus on problems, ask questions, collect information and analyze and interpret "data". We already "do research" as we interact with the everyday world (Kirby et al., 1989:17).

Furthermore, by knowing my involvement at the outset, the reader may be more open to look for bias. During the last five years of employment at the Centre, I have been faced with the reality of the struggle of First Nations to implement programs under severe budgetary constraints while the Centre is unable to receive direct formula funding from the province.
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Within the context of the history of First Nations education and the sociopolitical relationship to Euro-Canadians the researcher will explore what factors influence the choices of adult learners to attend the Native Education Centre (NEC) and investigate what expectations they had of the NEC in meeting their goals in education. It is important to listen to why the learners had chosen to attend the NEC to pursue their educational and career goals.

What are their educational experiences? Is learning with other First Nations people important? What experiences of education at the Centre do they find memorable and why? The researcher wishes to examine the role of a private First Nations specific institution in the education of First Nations adult learners in British Columbia.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose is to investigate the reasons First Nations adults choose to attend an exclusively First Nations post-secondary institution and to raise the question of what, in the words of the learners has facilitated their successes. Success is defined as graduation from one of the Skills Training Programs offered at the NEC. The second purpose is to test survey questionnaire and focus group discussions as methodologies which were already developed and implemented by the First Nations House of Learning at University of British Columbia.
Given the level of retention and success of students within an institution such as the above, this study attempts to understand the process by which First Nations learners experience an institution as an accepting, positive environment. In so doing, the researcher hopes to arrive at: a) a better understanding of the role of a First Nations-specific institution; b) the extent to which appropriate ways of effectively working with First Nations learners is dependent on separate facilities or whether the processes are more central regardless of context; and c) a better understanding of where other 'open' institutions may incorporate dimensions found positive in this setting, if processes can be separated from structures.

**THESIS OVERVIEW**

Chapter 1 presents an account of the founding and development of the NEC, the Urban Native Indian Education Society (UNIES) and its goals and a description of the Centre's infrastructure. Chapter 2 provides the sociopolitical context of the study including policy making, First Nations educational context and history. Chapter 3 describes the background to the methodology and the survey questionnaire and focus group methods of research. Chapter 4 is a descriptive analysis of the survey and focus group results and Chapter 5 summarizes the results and discusses the role of the NEC in program delivery.
CHAPTER I
THE NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Native Education Centre is but another example of the vision and unrelenting determination of First Nations people to take control of their own lives. The NEC has secured and facilitates a process of education to meet the cultural, educational and career goals of First Nations adults in urban Vancouver, throughout British Columbia and some of the western provinces in Canada.

The development of the Centre has evolved within a context of political action by many grassroots First Nations people and First Nations leaders in Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada.

This chapter describes the founding years of the Centre; the first education programs; the development of the Urban Native Indian Education Society (UNIES), its goals; philosophy, affiliation and accreditation; period of growth; Skills Training Programs; admissions process; the role of program coordinators; and major evaluations and studies.

THE FOUNDING YEARS

The founding years section is an account of a ten year period (1967 to 1977) when academic and life skills training began and when strong community support rose to maintain the operation of the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. Mr. Ray Collins, in a brief essay written
in 1984, documented some of the highlights of those first ten years. The first classes during that period were held at 326 Howe Street in downtown Vancouver. Over eight hundred men, women, and youth utilized the Centre. Mr. Collins reported the dedication, determination, and successes of the students who were anxious to learn new skills to better equip themselves for everyday living.

The Centre provided a refresher program to improve academic skills so that students could continue their certified upgrading at another institution or seek employment. The education was limited to grade eight equivalency. In addition, the school provided life skills training which focused on alleviating social and economic challenges experienced by the students while making the transition from the rural communities to urban Vancouver.

After several threats to close the school, the Department of Indian Affairs planned to discontinue funding to the educational facility in 1977 when Collins was planning to retire. This threat did not go unnoticed by several First Nations people in the city. The Allied Indian Metis Society rallied strong support through the meeting of January 18, 1977 and the Executive Director, Mr. A.F. Anderson, submitted a letter to Mr. Larry Wight, Regional Director of the Department of Indian Affairs in Vancouver. The letter outlined the importance of the educational setting in serving men on parole during the three preceding years.
At the same meeting, Ms. Jean Diespecker, resource worker for the above organization, acknowledged the extent to which Mr. Collins developed testing, teaching, and counselling techniques that made it possible for students to enter the Centre at anytime throughout the school year. His techniques were contrasted to the endless amount of red tape required to apply to schooling through Canada Manpower. Mr. Collins had created a school which was geared to meet the needs of the individual students.

Ms. Marge Cantryn, former United Native Nations President of Local 108, spoke very supportively of the Centre. Mr. Danny Smith, former Director for Legal Services to Indian Centres of the province, also spoke in support of the continuance of the Centre. Mr. Smith emphasized the frustration in lengthy waits required to place many First Nations adults in upgrading programs to prepare them for vocational training. The January 18, 1977 meeting resulted in a resolution being passed which forwarded the issue to an Indian Educational Conference held in Kamloops on January 26, 1977. The resolution recommended that the school continue to operate and that someone be trained to replace Mr. Collins.

THE URBAN NATIVE INDIAN EDUCATION SOCIETY

A major action by the First Nations community was to form a committee which would later become the Urban Native Indian Education Society. The committee negotiated with the Depart-
ment of Indian Affairs for over a year until funding was restored to continue the operation of the Centre. Mr. Collins retired at the end of the school term in 1978. The new principal and the committee sought additional funds to maintain the operation of the Centre. Programming expanded through co-operative arrangements with Vancouver Community College and Canada Manpower to include Basic Education Skills Training (BEST), Basic Skills Training Development (BTSD), and Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT).

In 1979, UNIES registered under the Societies Act of British Columbia and established seven goals which encompassed the educational, community, occupational, and service needs of the urban First Nations people. The Society also became active in creating better understanding between the Native and non-Native communities. The seven goals are:

1) to help meet the educational needs of the people of Native Indian origin who have made or are making the transition to Urban living;

2) to provide central and suitable facilities where educational meetings may be held;

3) to encourage fuller participation of people of Native ancestry in educational and community affairs;

4) to assist in and to undertake if necessary any educational program or activity designed to promote the welfare of Native people in the community;

5) to aim for the creation of better understanding within Native groups and between Indian and non-Indian groups and citizens for the general benefits of Native education;
6) to plan and develop with agencies of the governments, churches, businesses and benevolent organizations, the increase and improvements of educational, occupational and other beneficial services and facilities for Native people in the community; and

7) to manage and operate an Indian Education Centre.

In September 1981, just three weeks prior to class commencement, the Centre's funding for BTSD training was withdrawn by Canada Manpower. After discussions with Ms. Adrian Blunt of Vancouver Community College and Patsy George, Coordinator of Family and Child Services of Region 15, Ministry of Human Resources, a new program began at the Centre. The Native Adult Basic Education (NABE) consisted of academic, life skills, culture, and leisure and would continue to grow to include as much as possible, the values, beliefs, history, literature and culture of First Nations people.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION....POST-SECONDARY BRANCH

The Ministry funded Native Adult Basic Education through its Regionally Accepted Courses (RAC). Due to its continuous development, the student population at the Centre outgrew the 326 Howe Street facility and moved to 224 West Broadway in 1982.

By 1985, through newly acquired funds under Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, the Centre developed Skills Training Programs such as Native Public Administration, Secretarial Office Training, and Micro-computer Training. These funds became available through a Skills Growth Fund and
provided the revenue for the East 5th longhouse building where the Native Education Centre is presently situated. The Native Tutoring Centre, Native Youth Job Core, NABE and College Preparation Program continued to provide upgrading for First Nations adults in Vancouver. The development of Outreach programs in different communities throughout the province also began during this time. The growth of the Society programs saw the increase of the student population from 40 in 1982 to over 300 by the end of the 1989 academic year.

**PHILOSOPHY**

The Native Education Centre is an adult training facility committed to providing educational opportunities to First Nations adults within their cultural values and beliefs. The Centre is committed to quality programming consistent with traditional values and needs of First Nations people and to building on the strengths and skills that the adults bring to the learning environment.

The learning goals and objectives are consistent with First Nations goals of self-determination and self-government. The Centre exists and grew out of the educational and career goals and needs of the First Nations community.

To meet its mandate of quality education, the Centre employs program coordinators and instructors and staff with the skills, training, commitment and vision to support and guide the learners to meet their educational goals.
AFFILIATION AND ACCREDITATION

The history of NEC's and Vancouver Community College's (VCC) relationship coincides with the development and registration of UNIES as a non-profit society in 1979. Six years after the former administrator of the NEC, Mr. Howard Green wrote a letter to Grant Fisher (then Deputy Minister of post-secondary education) to meet and discuss the issues of (a) NEC gaining certification as a community college; (b) the accreditation of NEC programs as accredited ministry of education courses; (c) interfacing of the centre with the Ministry in terms of developing a native community college network in British Columbia; and (d) the centre receiving financial support from the ministry for core funding to stabilize planning beyond one fiscal year at a time (Green, 1985:2-3).

The Deputy Minister wrote to Green a few weeks later with a negative response to all four issues and suggested that the (UNIES) continue a "...close working relationship with the VCC to better serve the needs of the region's residents..." (Fisher, 1985:1-2).

In February of 1986, Mr. Green followed the advice of the Deputy Minister and submitted a letter to the former president of VCC to expand NEC's "relationship while maintaining its unique cultural identity while access(ing) the college system, credibility and stability in the British Columbia post-
secondary college network, core funding and possible program expansion and development" (p. 1).

From there the former administrator on behalf of UNIES maintained contact with the Deputy Minister while meeting several times with VCC's president and "selected" officials from VCC (Green, 1986:1)

To attain affiliation the society presented several draft proposals to VCC outlining a rationale, philosophy and negotiations of the "basic elements of affiliation and funding to a final proposal submitted to the ministry as an excellence in educational proposal" Green, 1986:1).

At a regular VCC meeting, the Board adopted a resolution in support of the Draft proposal for Affiliation of the NEC with VCC (Jarvis, 1986:1-2). In June 1987, the Ministry released a Ministry Bulletin that NEC would receive over $300,000. through VCC. In July, 1987 VCC and NEC agreed to utilize the Draft Proposal for affiliation. As of April 1988, NEC became funded by the Province. VCC assigned an affiliation coordinator to NEC.

The draft proposal outlined funding details, program delivery and library services. This agreement is renewed each year. The Ministry of Skills, Training, and Labour funds the Adult Basic Education programs at NEC plus fifty percent of the full-time equivalencies (FTEs) in the Skills Training Programs.
THE PERIOD OF GROWTH:

The primary focus of the Society's activities has been the Native Education Centre. As a result of that focus, the Centre has been able to expand into a valuable resource for First Nations people. An integral part of that resource is a team of three full time counsellors for learners who may be experiencing personal struggles, a student placement coordinator, a library and First Nations Family Violence Resource Centre.

The following highlights of 15 years development indicate UNIES's commitment to education of First Nations people:

- expansion from one (pre-employment) program to 17 programs ranging from basic literacy to first year college programs in 7 areas of study;
- initiation of a program of studies in Native Adult Basic Education from Level 1 (grade 3) to Level 4 (grade 11);
- initiation of College Preparation programs with 2 concentrations - general college entry - health/science careers;
- construction of a Haida long-house to accommodate the expansion of NEC;
- all programs enjoy ongoing curriculum development with the aim of providing a First Nations context which enables learners to better interpret their experiences;
- development of culture and life skills programs which give the learners "hands-on" experience with culturally related activities for program credit in all NABE classes;
- annual Centre/community events - Christmas Party, Elder's Day, Cultural Festival - to develop and strengthen the community relationship;
development of outreach education whereby the programs and curricula of the Centre are directly available to First Nations communities. In 92/93 the Centre operated programs in 9 communities throughout B.C., with a total enrollment of 163 learners;

devlopment of the reputation of the Centre as academically, administratively and fiscally responsible. The Centre is a well respected institution in the educational system of the province and is regarded as a model to emulate as a First Nations controlled educational facility (Shortt, 1993:5); and

establishment of formal affiliation with Vancouver Community College to provide joint accreditation of academic programs).

THE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS

There are presently six Skills Training Programs offered at the Centre which focus primarily on preparing the students for employment. These programs are Office Administration Training, Native Public Administration program, Native Tourism Supervisory Development program, Native Family and Community Counselling program, Early Childhood Education program, and Native Criminal Justice Studies program. This diverse range of programs combines theoretical and practical skills training over ten and a half months each academic year. Each has its own unique history of development, design, and implementation.

Office Administration Training Program

This program is an amalgamation of two separate programs known for several years as Secretarial Office Training (SOT) and Microcomputer Office Training (MOT) programs. The curriculum "is designed for students interested in acquiring computer and word processing skill in business, administrative
and management offices for the 1990s" (UNIES, 1994).
The students learn to utilize the most up to date software and
gain practical skills training at the Centre. There are two
intakes per academic year providing training for a total of
24 students. They participate in job placements at the end of
the first semester and the end of the program.

Native Public Administration Program

This program focuses on training "students in the policy
and practice of public and business administration" (UNIES, 1994) as it applies to First Nations people. The program
prepares the students with the skills to gain employment in
First Nations organizations, tribal councils and bands. Some
students may choose to work in the private and government
sectors also. At the end of the first and second semesters
the students are placed in a practical work experience. These
placements are related to the aforementioned businesses and
organizations.

Native Tourism Supervisory Development Program

This program trains in basic supervisory skills required
in the tourism industry and introduces the students to the
industry sectors related to First Nations communities. The
"curriculum is adapted to the experiences of "First Nations
people and contains "several courses directly related to the
development of a tourist related business within the Native
community" (UNIES, 1994). This group of students also
complete job placements at the end of the first and second semesters. The placements are closely related to the theoretical and skills training received throughout the academic year.

Native Family and Community Counselling

This curriculum in this program is adapted to the needs of the learners and includes cultural and spiritual development. The program content includes "related personal and family crisis situations" focuses on the development of counselling skills in family violence and (UNIES, 1994).

Once again, the training prepares the students for employment in bands, tribal councils or in First Nations organizations as entry level counsellors. The students in this program also participate in two practical work related experiences at the end of the first and second semesters.

Native Early Childhood Education

The curriculum in this program incorporates content and methods that relate to First Nations cultures and is designed to develop practical management skills required in a day care setting. The training is divided into four semesters with several blocks of practical work experiences.

The Centre assists the graduates in securing a child care placement to complete their 500 hours of work experience which leads to the child care provincial license.
Native Criminal Justice Studies Training Program

The curriculum in this program consists of criminology courses, writing skills and First Nations Studies. Where possible, the courses are adapted to incorporate First Nations related issues in the criminal justice system. The students also participate in two work related experiences at the end of semester one and two. Graduates may work in related fields such as policing, victim assistance, probation, parole, native courtworkers, institutions and with offenders (UNIES 1994).

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The NEC is open to adults eighteen years and older. The admissions department clearly informs all its applicants of the specific steps involved in acceptance and admission.

The five steps in the admissions process are: completing an application for admission; writing an assessment test along with a one page essay; making an appointment for a personal interview; arranging for tuition and book fees, daycare and other personal matters; and finally participating in an interview by at least two staff members including a counsellor and admissions coordinator.

The purpose of the interview is to ascertain the level of commitment and readiness of the applicant to enter a full-time rigorous training program.
PROGRAM COORDINATORS

The coordinator/instructors of each of the programs have six major areas of responsibilities as outlined in their job descriptions. The first priority is to: "co-ordinate the administrative and academic components of the program; assist students in the program in overcoming academic and/or personal problems which may negatively affect their success in the program; co-ordinate and develop appropriate Native curriculum materials for use in the program; assist students upon completion of the program to find employment in a job related to their training; assist in assessment, interviews and orientation of all students applying for and accepted in the program as required; and to perform other duties as required by the NEC administrator" (UNIES, 1994).

Beyond these priorities, specific objectives are detailed in the job description to assist the program coordinator/instructors to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

EVALUATIONS

In 1986, the UNIES Board of Directors conducted an evaluation of the programs of the NEC (Echols, 1987:4). The evaluation reported that NEC's programs were in high demand and that the success rate with First Nations students ranged from sixty-five to eighty percent compared to seventeen percent success rate of the public schools (Echols et al., 1987:65).
Echols et al., (1987) commented on the clearly defined goals and purposes of the Centre; the expectations that the learners "...attend classes, be punctual and do their work" (p.66). They also characterized the leadership of the Centre as "strong, effective, and purposeful" (p.66) and the teaching staff as "...respectful of their students..." (p.66) as well demanding for positive outcomes.

A second study in 1988, by the First Nations Federation of Adult Educators reviewed the programs and services for Native Adult learners in British Columbia. "The Federation members were the senior administrators and education directors of the First Nations controlled adult education programs or institutions of British Columbia" (Merritt, 1988:1).

The NEC administrator was a member of the Federation. Funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training (now Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour); the study was a survey of the status of First Nations Adult education provided by First Nations controlled institutions and the community colleges in the province and a review and assessment of models of joint programming and services between the First Nations institutions and the colleges.

The highlights of the results are as follows:

Most colleges do not consider serving the special needs of the Native Indian community as part of their institutional mandate. This is reflected in the absence of members of the Native Indian community on college boards.
Special services and programs that acknowledge the cultural differences and unique learning styles and requirements of Native Indian students are not available in most of the colleges in the Province.

Colleges appear to be far more successful than Native controlled institutions in obtaining funding support from the Province for providing programs and services to meet the educational needs of Native students. Thirteen of the colleges (80%) and two of the Native controlled institutions (25%) reported having received funding from the Department of Advanced Education and Job Training specifically for Native student programming and support (Merritt 1988:6,8).

Finally, Haig-Brown through ethnographic research "explores the ways that people within a First Nations adult education centre make sense of taking control of education" (1990:ii). Her study is based on a year of fieldwork during which time she observes, interviews, and participates as a teacher at NEC. The words of the Board of Directors of UNIES, of the staff, teachers, and students provide a basis for her discussion about the implementation of the Policy of Indian Control of Indian Education.

She recognizes that the common goal of UNIES board and the staff is to "offering improved educational" opportunities and their commitment and flexibility in offering "culturally based" education (p. 308).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The literature review section outlines the elements of policy making in Canada: the history of First Nations education in British Columbia; organized political action; the educational policies for First Nations in British Columbia; the impact of schooling on First Nations; and theories (explanations) for academic failure.

POLICIES

Since Confederation, four major elements have emerged from a context of the federal government's processes in Canadian First Nations policy making (Tennant, 1988). The first element is the conversion of First Nations to Christianity; the second, the signing of Treaties and confining First Nations to reservations, the establishment of which was completed in British Columbia by 1920. The third element is the compulsory 'schooling' of First Nations children in government financed religious residential and day schools. And finally, the fourth element in policy making is that First Nations were forced to adopt government structures and processes from British and American models.

HISTORY OF FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION IN B.C.

By the 1850s, the Methodist church through William Duncan became involved to Christianize and to civilize. He arrived
in Fort Simpson during the winter ceremonies and dancing, and was appalled to find the Tsimshian enveloped by the dark mantle of superstition. Within a year he had built a school near the fort and began to "educate" the children. To reinforce his influence as teacher, Duncan established in four short years a Victorian village site. He maintained close supervision and control with the help of constables. He also isolated the Tsimshian from contacts and association with white men. Duncan's form of education and control of the people were based on several rules: "to attend religious instructions; to send their children to school; and to cease potlatches" (LaVoilette, 1973:29).

Within a few short years other churches would follow Duncan's model of education. The missionary influence in education would extend from day schools on reserve to the residential (industrial) schools. When British Columbia joined confederation in 1871, the government of the province was not interested in taking control of the education of First Nations. In 1878, I. W. Powell, Indian Commissioner in Victoria believed that establishing industrial schools would be most effective in "Christianizing" and "civilizing the Indian".

Because the missionaries did not separate western Christianity and western civilization, they approached Indian culture as a whole and demanded a total transformation of the Indian proselyte (Fisher, 1977:144-145).
By 1880, missions and/or schools were established in the Okanagan, at Nanaimo, near Victoria, in the Nass Valley and New Aiyansh. Barman (1986) and Haig-Brown (1988) both recount the goals of the missionaries at All Hallows School (Anglican) at Yale and Kamloops (Roman Catholic) respectively. Bishop Sillitoe (1880) believed that establishing a school at Yale would raise the people from servile work and give them an equal chance in society. The oblates also recognized the strong influence of the residential schools to isolate the children from the daily influence of their parents, their language, and total way of life. Being at residential school from August to June with limited visits from home made it possible for the indoctrination of the Christian ethic. Moral and religious training was at the core of the teaching.

Their aim was the complete destruction of the traditional integrated Indian way of life. The missionaries demanded even more far-reaching transformation than the settlers and they pushed it more aggressively than any other group of whites (Fisher, 1977:145).

Several residential schools, Alert Bay, Alberni, Christie (Clayoquet), St. Joseph's (William's Lake), Kamloops, St. George's (Lytton), Kootneys, St. Mary's (Mission), and Coqualeetza (Sardis), were opened throughout the province. Many of these schools remained in operation until the early 1960s. St. Mary's at Mission, however, finally closed operation in 1988.
During the 1950s and 1960s the policy was to integrate First Nations children into the public schools. Integration became possible through the "Master Tuition Agreement" which transferred educational responsibility from Canada to the province of British Columbia.

ORGANIZED ACTION

Haig-Brown (1991) emphasizes that First Nations leaders in the province have expressed since the beginning of the century, concerns about educational practices. These concerns were articulated at meetings and in letters to those legally responsible for education. Many leaders continue to voice the importance of First Nations acquiring educational tools for an improved lifestyle and to meet local community needs (p.64-102).

Furthermore, Haig-Brown (1991) showed that First Nations treat concerns about education and land title as inseparable issues. She established her position through a close examination of the McKenna-McBride Report, the activities of the Allied Indian Tribes of B.C. to "...challenge the outcomes of the McKenna-McBride hearings" and their presence at a 1927 meeting with the federal government (p. 80).

On August 9, 1923 the Reverend Peter Kelly reiterated statements made during the McKenna-McBride Commission (1913-1916) which emphasized the importance and need for higher education and training (Haig-Brown, 1991:81).
We would like to have an institution where our men and women would be so fitted that they will be able to take their place in the larger public life of this country, and feel that they are equal to any life (Conference Minutes 1923:118).

He suggested financial assistance for "Indian boys and girls who are aspiring to be qualified doctors or lawyers" (p. 121). Four years later at a meeting with a Special committee of the House of Commons and the Senate, the Reverend P. Kelly reiterated his concerns. Neither educational concerns nor land title were settled as a result of that 1927 meeting.

The committee's concerns reemerged in the 1940s and First Nations from B.C. bands and support groups made many submissions to the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons which were appointed to review the Indian Act. First Nations at that time voiced many concerns about poor care and treatment of children attending residential schools. They raised the issue of having qualified teachers and advocated that First Nations children attend provincial schools (Haig-Brown 1990:77).

In the mid 1960s, about thirty First Nations communities in the province formed education committees and delivered a wide variety of adult education programs. These programs flourished to eventually involve about twelve hundred First Nations in B.C. (Collins, 1984).
During that time, the education division of Indian Affairs expanded to include vocational training and subsequently added an adult education subsection. In the summer of 1965, ten educators were appointed and trained in a two week session to deliver adult education programs and began to work in different regions of Canada. Ray Collins worked in the British Columbia region for three years and it was during this time that he founded the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, B.C.

In the late sixties, First Nations in Canada organized to formulate the Indian Control of Indian Education policy which was presented to the federal government. Many recommendations of the policy have had significant impact in educational changes in Canada and B.C. One of these changes is the training of teachers of First Nations ancestry. Of particular interest is the implementation of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at U.B.C. (Archibald, 1985; Kirkness 1985; Lawrence, 1987:3).

Many of the graduates are meeting educational needs and goals in the First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Even though NITEP trains only elementary school teachers the demand for First Nations teachers in adult education provides employment for many graduates.

More recently, Barnhardt (1991) describes the salient characteristics of indigenous higher education institutions in
the world and includes Canadian examples. He groups the institutions based on the extent of their autonomy (independent, affiliated, or integrated). This quality determines the cultural context of the institutions (1991).

Barnhardt (1991) recounts the First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) as an 'integrated' model, its establishment at the University of British Columbia and its purpose and major activities. The FNHL coordinates the UBC First Nations programs on campus which include Ts'kel graduate programs in education, the First Nations Health Care Professions Program and the Native Law Program. FNHL is committed to accessing UBC's resources to B.C.'s First Nations People and in aiding the University meet the needs of First Nations (FNHL, 1994).

Another major form of political action of First Nations people is the establishment of the Mokakit (Indian Education Research Association (1983) which is committed to the excellence in First Nations education and research.

While the political activity of First Nations people in Canada has culminated to "the process of constitutional revision centering on historic rights, past injustices and differences from the broader Canadian community (Wherrett 1991:ii)"), First Nations people continue to develop facilities and programs specifically designed for First Nation children and adults. Several First Nation post-secondary institutions in British Columbia are providing thirty-one certificate,
diploma, and university transfer programs (Dennis et al., 1994: table 5-1).

"The ten institutions of The Association of First Nations Post-Secondary Institutions enroll a total student population of 1729" with the total aboriginal population of 1551 and the total aboriginal post-secondary student population of 1102. There are 156 First Nations Bands, four nations and twenty-four independent nations represented in the AFNPSI (Dennis et al., 1994:1)

Finally, the organization of a First Nations Post-Secondary Advisory Committee to the Ministry demonstrated the commitment of First Nations political and educational leaders in the province to address the quality of post-secondary education for First Nations People. A major recommendation is that the Ministry enact enabling legislation to provide First Nations institutions with direct formula funding by April 1990 (Jones et al., 1990:30).

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Educational policies of First Nations education in British Columbia are divided between federal and provincial jurisdiction. The Indian Act (1876), The Master Tuition Agreement (1969), The Ministry of Education Policy (1979), the revised Master Tuition Agreement (May 1988), and Local Education Agreements have determined the education of First Nations children in British Columbia.
Sections 114 to 123 of the 1951 Indian Act deal specifically with the education of First Nations children "normally living on reserves." Section 114 authorizes the Federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to "establish, operate and maintain schools for Indian children". The Minister may enter into agreements for education with: a) the government of a province; b) the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories; c) the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory; d) a public or separate school board; and e) a religious or charitable organization.

The Master Tuition Agreement (MTA) of 1969 was between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia. This Agreement was possible through Section 114(1) of the "Indian Act" and "Sections 17(f) and 157(1)(d) of the "Public Schools Act" which provided the agreements between Canada and British Columbia for the education of Indian or other students for whose education Canada assumes responsibility. The agreement outlines the responsibility of Indian Affairs Canada for tuition, operation and capital expenses.

The Minister of Education's ten point policy of Indian Education (1979) had the goal of parity as priority for First Nations Children.
The Public Schools Act provides a mandate to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to deliver educational services through provincial public school districts to all school-age children which includes all native Indian children (Section 158:1). For public school purposes, native Indian means all children of Indian ancestry - status, non-status and Metis - and all native Indian children have equal and universal access to the public schools of the province irrespective of tuition support for some Indian children by the federal government.

The Master Tuition Agreement (1988) has the same definition as the 1969 Agreement between Canada and British Columbia. The old agreement had the following major components: federal contribution was based on provincial average per pupil costs for the previous school year; there was no provision for agreements between bands and school districts; and there was no provision for evaluation of educational progress. The new agreement has however, the following major components: the federal contribution is based on school district average shareable budget per pupil cost; there is provision for agreements between bands and school districts, and the federal government is to provide a letter of understanding guaranteeing settlement of any disputes arising out of local agreements and British Columbia in consultation with Canada is to undertake an evaluation process which would indicate the educational progress of status Indian students towards the goal of Educational parity (Peel, 1988:1).
The **Indian Act** and the **Master Tuition Agreements** detail policy for the education of status Indians living on reserve or crown lands who attend the public schools of the province. The 1979 Ministry of Education Policy on Indian Education on the other hand, accounts for the education of "all children of Indian ancestry - status, non-status and Metis" (1979:141). There are approximately 30,000 native Indian students in the province, 7,515 of whom are Status Indians living on reserves or crown land (Peel, 1988:10).

**IMPACT OF SCHOOLING ON FIRST NATIONS**

A further review of the literature reveals how schooling offered to First Nations children by government and churches has resulted in dismal failure and high drop out rates (Hawthorn, 1958; 1967; Lane, 1972; DIAND, 1980; Thomas et al., 1970; More, 1984; Haig-Brown, 1988a; Sullivan, 1988). A recent report (1990) of First Nations participation and completion in post-secondary colleges, institutions and universities in British Columbia cites a 3% completion rate compared to 15% of the general population. Yet positive changes in these failure rates is evident since the beginning of Indian Control of Indian Education (Barman, 1987; Charleston, 1988; Atleo, 1991; MacPherson 1991; Kirkness, 1992). The success rate of First Nations controlled adult education institutes is cited at 85% (Antoine et al., 1990).
In 1954, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, which at that time had jurisdiction of The Department of Indian and Northern Af British Columbia to thoroughly study the First Nations of British Columbia. The study Indians of British Columbia, was published in 1958. It covered the historical and cultural background of First Nations in the province and examined their role in industry, their education, and living conditions. The study recognized cultural differences of First Nations children attending residential, federal, public, and private schools and recommended special training for teachers to address the high attrition rate of the children. This special training began to take place approximately fifteen years later. The Native Indian Teacher Education Program, for example, began at the University of British Columbia in 1974 and several similar First Nations teacher education programs were established in many provinces in Canada (Lawrence 1987).

A second study, A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada, (Hawthorn et al., 1967) revealed a dismal picture of the education of First Nations children in Canada. The statistics of school population loss between grades one and 12 was 96% compared to the national rate of 12% for non-native children. The study also pointed to an age-grade retardation of 2.5 years and an extremely small portion of First Nations learners in Canada who attended universities. The failure
rate of the children was attributed to the following factors: irrelevant curriculum to meet their needs, rigid time-scheduling, the fear of punishment, ridicule, and failure.

As a result, recommendations for change were made based on the assumption that schooling be modified to meet student needs, and that First Nations be encouraged to maintain their cultural identity even though they would continue to depend on the economy and technology of the Euro-Canadian culture. Despite the many recommended changes which had been implemented, positive outcomes increased only slightly. Lane, (1972) blamed the failure rate of First Nations education on the absolute lack of First Nations involvement in the design, implementation, and administration of education.

The high school completion rate of First Nations children in Canada remains less than one quarter of the national rate (Indian Conditions, 1980). Average achievement levels of two or more years below grade level are common (Thomas et al., 1970;16-19; More, 1984). Even more recent research attest to the continued struggle of the schools to meet educational objectives for First Nations children.

One of the most important and longstanding issues in education in British Columbia, indeed across Canada has been the provision of suitable schooling for Native youngsters. Using any typical evaluative criteria, it is apparent the province has not achieved its enunciated goal of 'parity for Native children....within the public schools' (Sullivan, 1988:205).
THEORIES FOR ACADEMIC FAILURE

Explanations for minority failure have generally focussed on cultural differences (Hymes, 1974; Cazden et al., 1972; Feuerstein, 1979; Philips, 1983; Emerson, 1987) structural forces and internalized barriers. In British Columbia for example, the cultural difference theory was suggested during the late 1950s (Hawthorne, 1958) and educational anthropologists began to actively debate the cultural difference theory in favor of the cultural deprivation theory in the 1960s (Foley, 1991:60-61).

The cultural difference theory points to any of a range of cultural characteristics that theorists believe may have significant implications on minority ethnic school progress. These include value orientations and learning styles with a specific focus on speech styles and communicative competencies within the concept of sociolinguistics (Cazden et al. 1972; Scollon & Scollon, 1982; Philips, 1983).

Hymes, however focused on institutionalized communicative practices of school authorities which discriminated against black youth in schools (Foley, 1991: 62-63). Ogbu (1974) questions why immigrant minority groups usually succeed in school while non-immigrant ethnic minorities tend to experience school failure. Ogbu (1981) expands the application of "micro ethnographies" which focus heavily on classroom and school in a decontextualized way. He advocates
a "macro" style of school ethnography that has closer connections to a historical and ecological concept of culture. He argues that socio-linguistic and sociological studies with a "micro" ethnographic approach have a limited focus and application which break down when different ethnic minority groups do not all have the learning challenges that others have.

Another area of research discusses the importance that First Nations children's cultural/social experiences, and that concepts of achievement be congruent to their educational experience. Other researchers argue that schooling is a contradictory or even hostile environment to First Nations children's everyday lives (Phillips 1975; Carnew 1984; Chrisjohn 1988). The areas of difference that Carnew focuses on are cognition and the affective.

The affective or feelingly (Cassivi et al. 1985:17) must be considered in the school curriculum. Gibson interprets 'feelingly' as emotions, hopes, aspirations, ideals, and beliefs which rest in one's feelings. Because of different cultural and social experiences, minority or First Nations may experience undue stress by being placed in an environment that contradicts, invalidates, and undermines their whole way of life and being. Kleinfeld (1971) discusses the importance of high expectations and rapport and trust in motivating students to achieve.
Furthermore, research by Feuerstein (1979) posits that students with strong cultural identities adapt quite readily to other cultures and conversely, students who have been denied the opportunity to develop a strong cultural base do not adapt as readily as the first group. Emerson (1987) argues that cultural discontinuity results in the absence of a cognitive-cultural link. Mediation of the student's world results in a generation capable of relating to present western institutions such as health, social welfare, education, economic development, and psychology. A strong cultural identity provides a comparative base whereby the student can interpret another cultural world.

Research by Feuerstein and Emerson support the importance of the "intergenerational transmission of culture." Otherwise, cognitive functions of learners are at risk. Such information should motivate policy makers, curriculum planners, and educators to redefine their roles within the classroom, the community, and society at large so that role definitions result in interactions whereby children achieve academic success rather than failure (Cummins, 1986:33).

Cummins (1986), however suggested that such conditions of school failure and lack of participation are embedded in the relationships between teacher and students and between schools and communities. These relationships demonstrate the power structure of the 'dominant' society through the educational system and educators.
To address the patterns of school failure of minority students, Cummins recommended an empowering theoretical framework of: a) incorporating minority students' language and culture into the school program; b) encouraging minority participation as an integral component of their education; c) promoting intrinsic motivation on the part of the students to actively use language in order to generate their own knowledge; and d) involving professionals of assessment in becoming advocates for minority students rather than legitimizing the location of the 'problem' in the students.

The first and second points of Cummins' theoretical framework are philosophically related to the principles of local control and parental responsibility of the Indian Control of Indian Education Policy. And a review of the research in First Nations education shows changes in school achievement and completion since the beginning of Indian Control (Barman et al. 1987; Atleo, 1990; Kirkness, 1992).

The theories generated and presented by several researchers fail to address the racist implications inherent in making summations and assumptions about First Nations People based on "tests with people for whom they were not intended for" in the first place. Chrisjohn et al., (1993) argue further that the way in which educators treat psychological test results as absolute measures violates ethical standards (p.2).
The researchers point out that even with "the present ethical codification, standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1985)" that only three graduate programs in Canada having even one course in cross-cultural psychology results in further bias and violation of "existing ethical guidelines" (p.14).
BACKGROUND

The First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) at UBC spent many months developing the process model which involved designing, testing, and implementing a graduate survey and two focus group sessions.

Research is a cultural, human activity and like all cultural human activities it should proceed from the culture (Archibald et al., 1993:13).

Developing the process model began in the spring of 1992 when the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (now Skills, Training and Labour) asked the First Nations House of Learning to develop a research study that would follow-up on First Nations graduates of private institutions, colleges and universities in British Columbia.

The FNHL however, proposed to study only UBC graduates. This decision was made primarily for two reasons: that the diverse range of variables from many institutions would be too broad, and that First Nations educational research should include the stakeholders in both the design and in the implementation phases of the research process (16).

A team of four researchers of First Nations ancestry and/or extensive knowledge and experience in First Nations research issues and methodologies worked closely in many of the decisions and steps. The team agreed to respond to the
Ministry's questions to determine: the relationship between post-secondary education and employment, the factors contributing to successful graduation and the challenges and barriers experienced by the students and how they overcame them (Archibald et al., 1993:16).

A second aspect of the FNHL research was to invite another post-secondary institution to adapt and pilot the model, namely the NEC. Finally, a third aspect of the research process was sharing it with other interested post-secondary institutions in the province (Ibid. p. 16).

The Native Education Centre (NEC) was involved in adapting and piloting the University of British Columbia (UBC) research questionnaire and focus group methodologies.

The UBC research process provided an opportunity for NEC to interact with the UBC research team over a period of six months beginning in February 1993. The interaction consisted of meetings about the details of the UBC graduate survey process, findings and ongoing implementation.

Once NEC decided to participate as a separate First Nations post-secondary institution it became involved in the following research steps. The steps included: adapting and implementing the questionnaire and focus group research methodologies; and examining the substantive findings of the focus group data and interpreting them.
THE PROCESS MODEL

The initial steps in the research process model discussed by Archibald et al. began in 1993 with an evaluation method called impact assessment which establishes as clearly as possible "whether or not a program is producing its intended effects". The impact assessment also "estimates the magnitude of the effects", and reveals both positive and negative intended effects. The final aspect of the evaluative model investigates "extraneous factors such as maturation processes, social processes, political change, or changes in family status or composition" (Archibald et al., 1993:17).

The six basic components of the research process model are: "deciding about the questions to be answered; deciding about populations and samples of former students, as well as the definitions of such terms as 'First Nations'; deciding about methods of gathering information from the students, and about relevant data/measures; deciding on a data gathering and analysis time line; gathering and interpreting the information; and communicating the research and its results to others"(Archibald et al., 1993:18)

The research team reasoned that post-secondary impact on the students would be long term beginning when they first decided to attend their programs and would extend to their experience both during and after program completion. Formative evaluation would encompass both the objectives of the Ministry and the process model.
The process model involved conscious and conscientious review and questioning by the research team as each phase of the research process evolved. The factor of graduates in the First Nations community "giving back" for the benefit of other First Nations post-secondary education graduates contributed to the dynamic process of developing a research model that would be adaptable to future users.

The research team decided to adopt a predominantly qualitative research design. Quantitative data was also gathered and analyzed.

The research team deliberately designed a reasonably short questionnaire which would likely influence response rates. The design of the questions included restricted-choice and open-ended narrative-responses which would provide the opportunity for the respondents to: explain reasons for choosing to go to UBC; recall situations that affected their progress; describe their perceptions and attitudes; and in retrospect assess how well UBC had prepared them in their future education and employment (Archibald et al., 1993:33).

The questionnaire was piloted with six UBC graduates who made recommendations for changes. The revised version was mailed to 216 UBC graduates in December, 1992 with a return rate of 67 or 31% (Archibald, 1993, p.33).
THE PROPOSAL TO THE NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE

In January of 1993, University of British Columbia through the First Nations House of Learning submitted a proposal to the Native Education Centre (NEC) to participate in a research project on its graduates. The proposal outlined the rationale and methodology of the overall research project UBC was undertaking with its graduates and information that the project was being funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education Training and Technology.

The Native Education Centre would participate in adapting a research model that was already developed by The First Nations House of Learning research team. The proposal also included a report of the First Nations House of Learning and UBC research process covering the period July 1992 to October 1992; a revised research timeline; and a copy of the UBC First Nations Graduate Survey questionnaire. The proposal included an explanation that the NEC would be piloting the UBC research model using either or both the survey and focus group methodologies.

The FNHL also invited NEC to participate in a meeting with the UBC research team held February 11, 1993.

MEETING THE RESEARCH TEAM

Meeting with the UBC research team was an important process contributing to NEC's decision to participate in the research project. It was that meeting that I, a member of the NEC management team, had the opportunity to present to
the research team members a thumbnail sketch of NEC; the historical and present political context of First Nations post-secondary education in British Columbia, and the possible implications in the NEC choice to participate. The NEC also explored some critical questions with the research team.

The team reviewed details of the UBC research process; provided a summary report, literature review; and discussed issues related to the research methodologies. It devoted part of this one day meeting to also review some of the returned UBC survey questionnaires and discussed approaches to analysis. It also explored ways of contacting UBC graduates who hadn't returned their questionnaires and planned for the focus group component of the research process.

MAKING THE DECISION

The NEC was given least two weeks to explore and discuss related issues and inform UBC of its decision. I reviewed my thesis proposal to do research of NEC graduates from the college level (Skills Training) programs. I was interested in investigating the reasons NEC graduates gave for the successful completion of their programs.

Before deciding to participate the NEC the following questions:

i) What would the political implications be of participating or not participating in the research project;
ii) To whom would the research data belong;
iii) How adaptable are the questionnaire and the focus group methods;
iv) Would NEC be able to respond within the UBC timeline;

v) Does NEC have the time and human resources to get the job done; and

vi) what aspect of the research process is adaptable to the research question that I was interested in pursuing as a thesis topic?

I had already submitted a proposal to the Urban Native Indian Education Society's (UNIES) Board of Directors to conduct follow-up research on some of the graduates of NEC. I consulted with the administrator of the NEC on whether to explore the adaptability of the survey and focus group methodologies.

Once NEC decided to participate in the research project, it explored which graduates to survey and decided on which questions to ask. The FNHL proposal to NEC included two of the three questions which were: to identify factors leading to successful graduation and to determine the relationship between their (NEC) education and employment since leaving NEC. NEC decided to add another dimension to question two which was to also determine the relationship between their NEC education and the graduates' further education.

The third question NEC was interested in was why the students chose to attend NEC. The target group to survey was the Skills Training graduates from 1989 to 1992 inclusive. When NEC decided to participate in the research project it verbally confirmed with FNHL its intentions and wrote a letter of intent to the FNHL at UBC.
ADAPTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The original content of the questionnaire would meet the overall objectives that NEC decided to pursue but NEC added two other aspects. NEC wanted to find out about previous school experiences of NEC graduates and to investigate the relationship between the NEC education experience and further education. I read the methodology section of the literature review prepared by the research team and consulted with NEC before revising the questionnaire.

The NEC decided that the language and format of the questionnaire be maintained. Minimal changes were made and the whole series of questions was adapted and retyped.

HIRING A NEC GRADUATE

The adapted NEC graduate survey questionnaire was ready for mail out in early June, 1993. To facilitate this process, the NEC, in consultation with the UBC research team chair, decided to hire a NEC graduate. This decision was based on the expectation that the graduate would be able to gain leads from maintained association with classmates and other learners who graduated from NEC.

The NEC graduate received lists of Skills Training Program graduates of the four academic years (1988-1989; 1989-1990; 1990-1991; 1991-992) from NEC and she began making phone calls to the most recent graduates and worked backwards to the earlier graduates to confirm mailing addresses.
The NEC (during a three week period) mailed survey questionnaires to 171 graduates, and followed up with phone calls to confirm the surveys had been received. At the time of the UBC questionnaire analysis, 33 (19%) of the graduates had returned their questionnaires.

The thirty-three surveys were submitted to the UBC research team for data tabulation and interpretation. Results of these returns were included in the final report to the Ministry.

In late July, the NEC mailed a letter of reminder to the graduates who hadn't returned their surveys. The NEC received six additional questionnaire returns which is an eighteen percent increase of the original thirty three questionnaires.

THE SURVEY METHOD

RESPONDENTS

Respondents were the thirty three graduates who responded in time to be included in the report to the Ministry plus the additional six who responded after the report was finished.

MATERIALS

A copy of the questionnaire to which graduates responded is presented in Appendix A.

ANALYSIS

As can be seen from the questionnaire in Appendix A, respondents answered both limited-format items and open-ended
questions. The open-ended questions were examined for thematic content and a coding scheme devised so as to reflect responses (Holsti, 1989). The coding scheme was then applied, and respondent's answers to open-ended questions were included in the data file along with the limited-response items.

These data were then subjected to a breakdown of frequency of responses to each option of each question. The complete set of breakdowns for all items in the data file are given in Appendix B. Also, results of particular interest are presented here in the text in tables.

Originally I had planned to cross-tabulate results by sex, native ancestry, home location, etc. However, because of the small N's associated with the cross tabulations (e.g. only six males in the respondent sample), the contingency tables of interest contained expected of frequency counts of fewer than five, making the \( \chi^2 \) test statistic invalid (Everitt, 1986). Hence, in this thesis I only report and interpret the breakdowns of questionnaire responses for single items.

THE FOCUS GROUP

The focus group is a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest" in an environment that is comfortable and nonthreatening (Archibald et al 1992:72).

Krueger (1988) recommends that the group sessions be conducted by a skilled interviewer and with seven to ten people.
Focus groups have several characteristics but for the purpose of this study I cite the following:

Focus groups can give qualitative data that provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of its members which is achieved through open-ended questions. The dynamic of a focus group discussion may provide opportunities for the participants to be influenced by each other.

The questions of focus groups are carefully planned ahead of time. The focus group may be conducted before, during or after or independently of quantitative methods to prepare for, expand on or confirm quantitative findings.

Kruger (1988) presents advantages and disadvantages to focus groups. The advantages are that they are socially oriented and flexible with high face validity and quick low cost results (p.47). Kruger also describes the importance of quality questions to produce quality answers and emphasizes the skill of an interviewer as being warm, outgoing, friendly and supportive and skilled in group process. In addition, Kruger gives detailed information on the steps of conducting focus groups and suggestions on analysis.

THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

There were eleven participants; five in one group and six in the other. They represented each of the four years (1989-1992) and all six Skills Training Programs.
MATERIALS

The graduates had the opportunity to think about and answer the following questions. The questions relate to their experience before, during, and after attending the NEC.

1) What led you to choose the NEC versus other educational institutions?

2) As a First Nations person, what at the NEC did you find most/least helpful?

3) In what way is your experience at NEC relevant to what you are doing now, either educationally, career or community wise?

THE APPROACH

The NEC graduate contacted and confirmed attendance of participants at two focus group sessions held in late June 1993. She contacted those who had returned their consent forms and confirmed attendance at one of the focus group sessions. I sent a letter to confirm the time and place of the session; to provide the graduates with the questions and informed them that the session would be tape recorded but that anonymity would be maintained.

The focus groups were led by myself with one or two UBC research team members to assist in recording and further questioning.

The recordings from both focus group sessions were transcribed and the transcripts submitted to the UBC research team. One of the UBC team worked with me to categorize, interpret and report the findings to the Ministry.
THE ANALYSIS

The specific answers to each question were divided by recurring themes. The themes to each question were placed in the order that they first occurred in one focus group. The other focus group findings where merged into the thematic order of the first.

The contexts leading up to the answers were recorded by themes and reoccurring themes for each of the focus groups were noted. The contexts for each of the questions are recorded in the principal findings chapter.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study examined the reasons successful students gave for graduation but did not examine the reasons other students gave for failure. The examination of one group without a comparison does not prove, except for the graduates own words the factors of success. It bears mentioning however, that the ratio of failure compared to success is very low.

The number of respondents (N=39) is a small sample of the graduates of the Skills Training Programs. During the years 1989 to 1992, 283 students graduated from these programs at NEC and 171 received surveys.

There is nevertheless, an amazing consistency in the way that the thirty-nine graduates and the eleven focus group participants emphasized the importance of a place of learning such as the Native Education Centre.
CHAPTER IV
PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The survey questionnaire sample (N=39) was drawn from the Skills Training Programs graduates of the years 1989 to 1992. Eighty-five percent of the respondents were female (n=33) and fifteen percent were male (n=6). Their ages ranged from 25 to 54 years, with an average age of 37 years for all graduates (See Table 1, Appendix B). Twenty-nine percent of the graduates were under 30 years old; thirty-seven percent were between 30 and 41 years old; and thirty-four percent of the them were older than 41 years. (See Table 2, Appendix B).

Out of the 39 graduates who responded, 33 indicated the year they graduated from their program. Twelve percent (n=4) graduated in 1989; thirty percent (n=10) graduated in 1990; eighteen percent (n=6) graduated in 1991; and thirty-nine percent (n=13) graduated in 1992. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Year of Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-eight (n=38) respondents indicated the number of programs they completed at the Native Education Centre.
Sixty-three percent (n=24) complete one program; twenty-four percent (n=9) completed two programs; eight percent (n=3) complete three programs; and five percent (n=2) completed four programs. (See Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-eight (n=38) respondents indicated their level of education when first entering the Native Education Centre. Twenty-nine percent (n=11) graduated from secondary school; thirty-seven percent (n=14) had Adult Basic Education (ABE) and/or General Education diploma (GED); and thirty-four percent (n=13) entered as mature students. (See Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. S. Grad.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABE (GED)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Entry</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THEIR ACADEMIC PREPARATION

One question asked the respondents to rate their academic preparation in several areas such as reading, study skills,
essay writing skills, examination writing skills, second
language skills, mathematics, sciences, English, and
humanities.

Seventy-two percent (n=26) rated their reading skills as
good; twenty-eight percent (n=10) rated their preparation as
fair; and no one rated their reading skills as poor.

Thirty-nine percent (n=14) rated their study skills as
good; forty-four percent (n=16) rated their skills as fair; and
seventeen percent (n=6) rated their skills as poor. Forty
percent (n=15) rated their examination writing skills as good;
fourty-nine percent (n=18) rated their skills as fair; and
eleven percent (n=4) rated their skills as poor.

Thirty-eight percent (n=14) rated their essay writing
skills as good; forty-three percent (n=16) rated their skills
as fair; and nineteen percent (n=7) rated their skills as
poor.

Fifty-eight percent (n=22) rated their English skills as
good; thirty-four percent (n=13) rated their skills as fair; and
eight percent (n=3) rated their skills as poor.

Seventy-one percent (n=25) rated their skills in the
humanities as good and twenty-nine percent (n=10) rated their
skills as fair.

Twenty-seven percent (n=10) rated their mathematical
skills as good; forty-nine percent (n=18) rated their skills
as fair; and twenty-four percent (n=9) rated their skills as
poor.
Twenty-eight percent (n=10) rated their skills in the sciences as good; fifty-three percent (n=19) rated their skills as fair; and nineteen percent (n=7) rated their skills poor.

Finally, twenty-one percent (n=7) rated their second language skills as good; nine percent (n=3) rated their skills as fair; and seventy percent (n=24) rated their skills as poor. (See Table 6).

Table 6: Academic Preparation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Good (n)</th>
<th>Fair (n)</th>
<th>Poor (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam. Writing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Writing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Skills</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Language</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THEIR COMMENTS ABOUT FIRST NATIONS IDENTITY

The graduates were asked to indicate their First Nations heritage; whether they identified with a First Nations band, village, lineage, or group; and whether they understood or spoke a First Nations language.
Sixty-seven percent (n=26) of the respondents were of First Nations ancestry of British Columbia while thirty-three percent (n=13) of First Nations ancestry that originated outside of British Columbia. (See Table 7, Appendix B). Seventy-four percent (n=28) said they identified most closely with a First Nations group while twenty-six percent (n=10) responded that they did not identify closely with a particular First Nations group. (See Table 8, Appendix B).

They were asked to also share which group they identified most closely with. Seventy percent (n=21) identified most closely with their First Nations heritage or lineage while thirty percent (n=9) identified with First Nations different than their heritage or lineage. See Table 9, Appendix B). Sixty-two percent (n=24) said yes to the question that asked whether they understood or spoke a First Nations language while thirty-eight percent (n=15) answered no to the question. See Table 10, Appendix B). Seventy-five percent (n=18) of those above indicated that they understood and spoke a First Nations language while twenty-five percent (n=6) said they only understood the language. (See Table 11, Appendix B).

**INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT ON THEIR FIRST NATIONS IDENTITY**

To a series of the questions, the respondents recalled how NEC influenced them in general (both personally and as a member of their community); how NEC helped and/or discouraged them; whether NEC as an institution had an impact on their
First Nations identity and how; and in what way their First Nations culture influenced their NEC experience.

One hundred percent (n=39) indicated that they all had been all influenced personally in some way usually related to First Nations identity and or culture. Seventy-four percent (n=29) said that their experience at NEC positively influenced their self-esteem, confidence, pride and/or cultural awareness.

Out of the 39 respondents, seventy-six percent (n=29) confirmed that their NEC experience had influenced them as a member of their communities. Forty-eight percent (n=14) reported a sense of belonging and/or increased participation in their communities; seventeen percent (n=5) merely answered yes to the question; ten percent (n=3) reported their increased appreciation of First Nations culture; ten percent (n=3) reported their increased awareness of the importance of respect in and toward the First Nations community; and fourteen percent (n=4) reported that they increased their knowledge in issues such as rights and self-government. (See Table 12, Appendix B).

In recalling helpfulness of NEC of the 39 respondents seventy-two percent (n=28) confirmed that NEC had influenced their First Nations culture/identity, and pride, and supported them during hard times, in employment situations and/or through program content. Twenty-one percent (n=6) merely said yes to NEC's helpfulness while the other seventy-five percent
(n=21) gave a combination of two to five of the above areas with the exception of four percent (n=1) who indicated only one of the above areas.

Of the 39 respondents eight reported that NEC had discouraged them in some way. Fifty percent of these (n=4) attributed their discouragement to staff relationships; thirteen percent (n=1) were discouraged by a student relationship; and the other thirty-seven percent (n=3) were discouraged by either the lack of information, program content or their practicum experience.

Of the 39 respondents thirty-two answered the question on whether NEC as an institution had an impact on their First Nations identity and how. Ninety-four percent (n=30) indicated that the NEC had an impact on their First Nations identity. Thirteen percent (n=4) related the impact to group belonging; thirty-one percent (n=10) related the impact to personal growth; twenty-five percent (n=8) related it to both group belonging and personal growth; and twenty-five percent (n=8) related the impact to increased awareness in First Nations issues, culture and/or the acquisition of skills. Six percent (n=2) said that they were already culturally oriented. (See Table 13, Appendix B).

Finally, of the 39 respondents sixty-nine percent (n=27) reported that their First Nations culture influenced their NEC experience. Fifty-nine percent (n=16) reported that it
strengthened their self/pride and or knowledge of First Nations and the other forty-one percent \((n=11)\) that it increased their acceptance in their communities. (See Table 14, Appendix B).

THEIR COMMENTS ON INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The respondents were asked to reveal how they first learned about the NEC. Sixty-eight percent \((n=25)\) heard about the institution through a personal contact; five percent \((n=2)\) learned through an advertisement; twenty-two percent \((n=8)\) learned through a referral agency; and five percent \((n=2)\) said they could not remember. (See Table 15, Appendix B). When answering what made them decide to attend the NEC forty-nine percent \((n=18)\) attributed their choice to the positive comments they heard about NEC; forty percent \((n=15)\) attributed their choices to program characteristics at the NEC; three percent \((n=1)\) attributed their choice to both of the previous reasons; while eight percent \((n=3)\) chose to attend the NEC due to unfavourable employment and economics. (See Table 16, Appendix B).

The respondents were asked to recall their admissions process. Eighty-one percent \((n=30)\) recalled it in positive terms; fourteen percent \((n=5)\) recalled it as either neutral or negative; and five percent \((n=2)\) recalled their experience as both positive and negative. (See Table 17, Appendix B).
The respondents were asked to recall their first few months at the NEC. Forty-six percent (n=17) recalled their first few months in positive terms; thirty-five percent (n=13) in neutral or negative terms; while nineteen percent (n=7) recalled their first few months as both positive and negative. (See Table 18, Appendix B).

**INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT ON CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

A series of questions asked the respondents to report how their previous work experience related to their coursework; to highlight their work experience and education since leaving the NEC; to evaluate how well the NEC prepared them in their careers and education; and finally to assess how well the NEC met their expectations.

Of the 39 respondents thirty-four answered whether or not they had worked in a field related to their coursework. Fifty-three percent (n=18) reported that they had and forty-seven percent (n=16) reported that they had not worked in the field of their coursework at NEC. (See Table 19, Appendix B).

Thirty-two highlighted their work experience since they graduated from NEC. Eighty-four percent (n=27) reported working and sixteen percent (n=5) reported not working. (See Table 20, Appendix B). Of the twenty-seven (n=27) who reported working, fifteen percent (n=4) merely reported work experience; thirty-seven percent (n=10) reported work experience in their field of education and in the First
Nations community; fifteen percent (n=4) reported working in their field of education but in the non-Native community; while the remaining thirty-three percent (n=9) indicated that they were working in their field of education. (See Table 21, Appendix B).

Eighty-five percent (n=23) of those who reported that they were working, were doing so in their field of education taken at the Native Education Centre.

Twenty-five highlighted their education since their graduation at the NEC. Ninety-two percent (n=23) reported that they had furthered their education since graduation and eight percent (n=2) reported that they had not. (See Table 22, Appendix B). Seventy-eight percent (n=18) reported that they had furthered education in the same field of education received at the NEC. The remaining twenty-two percent (n=5) had furthered their education but did not indicate whether it was in the same field as their NEC educational experience. (See Table 23, Appendix B).

Thirty assessed how well NEC had prepared them for their careers. Sixty-three percent (n=19) responded 'very well'; thirty-three percent (n=9) responded 'well'; three percent (n=1) responded 'not well'; and the remaining three percent (n=1) responded 'okay'. (See Table 24, Appendix B).

Twenty-seven percent assessed how well NEC had prepared them for their education. Forty-five percent (n=12) responded
'very well'; thirty-three percent (n=9) responded 'well'; fifteen percent (n=4) responded 'okay'; and seven percent (n=2) responded 'not well'. (See Table 25, Appendix B). Finally, to the general question on how well the NEC had met their expectations, thirty-three (n=33) responded. Seventy-three percent (n=24) responded 'very well'; eighteen percent (n=6) responded 'well'; seven percent (n=2) responded 'not well'; and fifteen percent (n=4) responded both 'well' and 'not well'. (See Table 26, Appendix B). 

THEIR MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBSTACLES 

Thirty-two identified their major responsibilities while attending the NEC. Forty-one percent (n=13) indicated family and/or children as their major responsibilities; fifteen percent (n=5) indicated financial responsibilities; thirteen percent (n=4) indicated personal responsibilities; twenty-four percent (n=8) indicated health responsibilities; and six percent (n=2) indicated commitment to self and studies as major responsibilities. (See Table 27, Appendix B). 

Thirty-three identified the major obstacles they faced at the NEC. Sixty-seven percent (n=22) related the obstacles to relationships in the family and/or community relationships, at the NEC, or both the above. Nine percent (n=3) reported their obstacle as financial; twelve percent (n=4) reported personal challenges; while another twelve percent (n=4) related them to institutional and family circumstances. (See Table 28, Appendix B).
Graduates generally reported funding levels while at NEC as inadequate. (See Tables 29 - 31, Appendix B).

MAJOR SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Thirty-seven of the graduates completed the phrase that asked them to identify their most helpful source of support. Eighty-one percent (n=30) identified program coordinators and/or instructors as most supportive; thirty-two percent (n=12) identified administrative staff as most supportive; and forty-six percent (n=18) identified students as most helpful.

Fifty-one percent (n=19) of the respondents reported receiving help from more than one of the above sources. Twenty-two percent (n=8) identified more than two sources of support at the NEC.

But when asked to identify what really helped them to successfully get through their programs at NEC sixty-five percent (n=24) of the respondents checked family; thirty-two percent (n=12) checked general NEC student services; eighty-one (n=30) checked friends; fourteen percent (n=5) checked First Nations student services at NEC and twenty-two percent (n=8) checked community services outside of NEC.

Sixty-five percent (n=24) checked more than one source of support; thirty percent (n=11) checked more than two sources of support; and sixteen percent (n=6) checked more than three sources of support.
FOCUS GROUP PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Although the author of the thesis merged and authored the NEC focus group findings in the final report to the Ministry using a central quote and quotes with some variation to each question; a limitation cited in the final report was the lack of contextual analysis similar to that done with the UBC data.

To identify the context of the data, the researcher revisited the focus groups data separately from one another.

The graduates had been sent the following questions which relate to their school experiences before and while attending the NEC as well as their educational and work experience since leaving NEC.

1) What led you to choose the Native Education Centre versus other educational institutions?

2) As a First Nations person, what at the Native Education Centre did you find most/least helpful?

3) In what way is your experience at Native Education Centre relevant to what you are doing now, either educationally, career or community wise?

THE CONTEXT TO QUESTION 1

The contexts that the respondents from one group provided for choosing to attend the NEC included previous negative school, career, or life experiences. The examples they gave were being in reform school, in public school, in residential school as well as being afraid of returning to school and being dissatisfied with previous career choices and employment.
Relevance Of Non-First Nations Institutions

A couple of the respondents emphasized that other schools/institutions were problematic:

...When I was going to (residential school), they pushed this English into my face, whether I liked it or not. I remember the first day I started in grade 1, I had problems. They didn't like me.

While another commented on the negative effects of being in residential school:

...because for years when I was in residential school you know, I mean, we were brainwashed into thinking our history was nothing to be proud of... .

And at least one feels ambivalence about attending a non-native institution:

...I felt if I went to a non-Native institution I would be pretty isolated... .

The contexts that the respondents from the other group provided for choosing to attend the NEC, were previously related negative and positive cultural issues. The negative comments included a respondent only knowing part of her mother's culture and another respondent feeling that other institutions did not represent First Nations people, historically or politically.

Cultural Alienation/Deprivation

Many of the respondents related serious concerns about not having the opportunity to grow up in their culture. Such deprivation caused negative feelings toward oneself:
I didn't grow up with my Native background and I was at a point (at) my life where I really needed to know who I was and where I came from... because I was changing my life and I wanted a better life... because I didn't really have a pride in who I was, not just being Native, but just in who I was...;

And one relates it to feeling restless careerwise:

...and at this stage, I hadn't really much to do with my culture at all, and I think...there was probably a great gap in my life..I wasn't aware of it except that I seemed to be awfully restless...careerwise.

While another to the importance of learning about oneself:

...I started to ask myself a few questions about myself, who I was...because I didn't...I wasn't raised in the Native way or Native tradition and I didn't know very much about myself in that aspect.

One talks about growing up away from 'home':

...because I was (raised) in a non-Native community and I knew nothing except for mother's hobbies, or part of 'her' culture...she spoke Native at home and stuff like that, but I never grew up in the environment.

The positive comments the respondents made were hearing positive 'things' about NEC from friends and family; indicating the importance of learning about own and other First Nations cultures and sharing that one's children were also going to NEC at the time of the focus group interview.

**Goals Appropriate To First Nations Context/Community**

There is emphasis on the importance of how education would impact self and others in the wider community:

...so that it would benefit me and the world out there...
One expresses commitment toward First Nations children:

...I hadn't really thought of what I wanted to do then, our children...who is out there for our children?...you don't hear of too many daycares on Native (reserves)...so, I took my ECE (early childhood education)...;

and another expresses commitment to the future and to the next generation:

I wanted to be prepared for that (future) and also have the educational background of the history of the people that were ahead of us; that brought us to this point in our development and we are the stepping stones for the next generation.

**THE REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO ATTEND THE NEC.**

The salient themes from both focus groups to question one are: the desire to learn about First Nations heritage and to be with First Nations people; the milieu at NEC; accessibility of NEC; and the relevance of NEC to personal, academic, career choices.

**Desire To Learn About First Nations Heritage And To Be With First Nations People:**

Some graduates clearly make a connection between learning about First Nation heritage and being with First Nations people; learning about heritage as a benefit; taking the responsibility of learning and passing on that learning to others.

...and I wanted to be around Native people and people I could relate to and find my roots.

And:

So I thought I should get myself educated in our Native heritage and be able to pass it on.
While others emphasize the importance of being with Native people:

...and I wanted to go to school with Native people... .
...and it was all Native people.
...to try and say yes, I belong here, I deserve to be here.

Milieu At NEC:.

Some expressed the importance of being comfortable and feeling welcome; feeling at home; and being able to enjoy one's self.

Some express the importance of feeling comfortable and welcome:

...when I first came here, even just coming here to apply, I felt immediately welcomed and that was the comfort in it... ;

And:

...there's one thing Native people find...there's a lot of comfort with each other;

the importance of being accepted:

...and then I...you know...I knew I didn't have to prove myself...

and to enjoy oneself:

...and they all praised the school...how much fun it was to be there... .

And feeling at home:

...when I came here I felt like I was coming home...

Some felt comfortable in a 'friendly' atmosphere:

...the reason I started here was everybody was friendly...the first time I thought 'Oh no, shouldn't go', but everybody...was so friendly
...that I thought, I'll feel comfortable...

I was very impressed...(with) the atmosphere of the school...

...When I came here I felt like I was coming home....

While others expressed the importance of being accepted and being able to anticipate making friends - one especially when older:

...You don't know whether you'll be able to make friends, you know how it is when you get older.

Accessibility of NEC.:

One described the efficient admissions process compared to a community college where the waiting list was six month long. Another respondent described the personal interview with a senior staff member:

...I found out it really was quite easy to get into this school...if I wanted to go to (other community college), I'd have to put my name on a six month waiting list... .

Another describes the efficient admissions process:

It was like, I think I want to go to school and here I am, I'm here, I'm in! Ya know, I didn't na, maybe next year...;

while one recalls the personal interview with a senior staff member:

...(I had) an appointment with (staff name) so I came to see (name) and talked to him and he accepted me.

Relevance:

The topic of relevance was related to aspects of personal, academic and career choices.
They relate their choices to return to school with making major personal life changes:

I quit school when I was 16...and I had been going to various different schools off and on, trying to re-establish myself into a learning mode but it wasn't working....;

and:

...I'm a recovering alcoholic and after I'd been sober for a couple of years I didn't like where the alcohol had led me...I decided I wanted to go back to school.

Another relates choosing NEC to his responsibility to rearing his son:

my son came into my life at that time...that changed my whole life...I was thinking I've got to find a job...I thought about going back to school, get my grade 12... I knew about the N.E.C.

Others chose to attend NEC because programs related directly to careers they were interested in:

...I took a work experience and found I liked working in an office atmosphere...they said the NEC has secretarial training now...so I ran around...and they accepted me;

I sort of looked around at some of the programs.... and Tourism seemed kind of fine;

I came here to get all the information (to)... benefit me...career-wise...;

and:

I just got tired of working manual labor, different odd jobs and I always like criminal justice system so I came down and I ran across a pamphlet.... .

One refers to the transferability of the program:

...it was a university transfer (program)...that's what I was looking for... .
Another recognizes the employable skills gained:

You've got employable skills... get out there and get a job!

Several chose to attend NEC because programs related directly to careers they were interested in:

I came across a book from the NEC that had all that programs and everything and the Criminal Justice one really caught my eye... it was in the field of what I was doing at the halfway house.

... it was a university transfer (program)... that's what I was looking for...

Finally, one commented on the employable skills developed in relationship to gaining employment.

After answering the first question the respondents added additional comments that they wanted to share. During this second time around, they confirmed each others' experience by relating their similar experiences in similar situations. In most cases, the respondents did not make the association directly except as follows:

... I can really relate to what (name) has said about the comfort. All those years that I spent in other institutions, like mainstream education institutions, I mostly did find it sort of a cold, sort of a sterile environment, but I .... thought that was the norm. I didn't realize that there was anything different until I came here (referring to NEC)... it was like coming home.

QUESTION #2: WHAT AT THE NEC DID YOU FIND MOST/LEAST HELPFUL

THE CONTEXT TO QUESTION 2

The contexts of from both focus groups in responding to what they found most/least helpful at NEC were: heavy
workload and feeling like quitting; prejudice in grade and high school; settling 'old' issues; and wanting to stay connected to the NEC even after leaving. The respondents most often emphasized incidents of prejudice and racism.

Experience With Prejudice And Racism

Some of the respondents express painful experiences with racism during elementary school:

...I really became aware that Native people were being really discriminated against...;

...before, I had a hard time being a minority in grade school in my environment and in my community;

And:

...and a lot of things went on during...grade school, like a lot of prejudice against me, and I didn't understand it.

Others experience similar concerns in high school and/or college:

...and a lot of things went on during high school... like a lot of prejudice against me";

the shameful feelings and its effect academically:

in high school...there weren't very many Natives...we were always picked on, called on, and I became very ashamed of being Native...the other two learned to fit in with the Caucasians...did certain things that they were accepted...they figured, oh well, she can't handle it anyway...so I gave up:

and the undue stress in proving oneself:

...in the high schools and even in college...was the feeling of wanting or the need to prove myself to be there...with this constant fight, the stress would overload.
Finally, one respondent feels caught between 'both' worlds:

...all the way through my childhood, I was not welcome in either my home reserve or in Vancouver in my school. I'd hang around with my Native friends and I'd be called derogatory names, you know, chug and squaw and stuff, and then I'd go home for the summer and be called honkey, white trash and whatever.

**WHAT THE GRADUATES FOUND MOST HELPFUL AT NEC**

The salient themes from both focus groups to question two are: learning about First Nations cultures/issues; personal empowerment/First Nations identity; helpfulness of instructors staff and students; possibility of multiple programs and program and course quality and influence of friends and family.

**Learning About First Nations Cultures/Issues:**

One indicates that learning about heritage as most helpful:

...that (learning about heritage) is the most helpful thing that I've learned at this Centre;

and another the strong desire to learn about Native people:

...and I thirsted for that. I needed to know more about the Native people, where we stand in today's society and where we might be going in our future.

**Personal Empowerment/Self-esteem/Development of First Nations Identity**

One relates how confidence increases with learning about self:

I benefited by learning about myself and who I am. I can stand up and I know what I am talking about...;
and others are empowered by the learning process:

You realize your potential and you go, 'Oh my god, I can do anything';

the opportunity to discover new skills:

I really liked the opportunity to start new things... it was really good for the self-esteem and to be able to practice skills I wasn't aware that I had...I could help others enjoy things in a very positive way...;

and one describes how her educational experience increases her confidence:

...now, (my experience at the NEC) it's turned me into a good argumentative person!...taught me to be more proud of who I am...like a more whole person...;

and how being at NEC is supportive to self-expression:

...a lot of people, the way I see it, that come here are searching for direction of some kind and being able to express themselves in whichever way they can is good on a positive note... .

Another speaks honestly about struggles associated with classroom learning and the effort required to learn:

...I had to learn to take my ego and set it aside and be quiet...I had to learn to be quiet...I guess I was a detriment sometimes to the learning process in that group...and it still is difficult...;

One relates the difficulty she has with a course because of the healing process she was in:

I just barely passed (course) because I had so much healing to deal with, but the other subjects I had taken, I had not problems with... .

while another strives for academic excellence:

Whenever I got frustrated or tired or didn't think could write another page...I thought of that plaque (award) and I thought how badly I wanted it...And I got it!...it is the incentive to actually go out and do it and be proud of working for it and getting it;
One recognizes the pride in accomplishment:

(cultural courses) would increase your confidence in your abilities too. It's known to give a person pride in creating something...;

and desiring to be a part of the Native community:

...I really needed to find out where I fit and I know where I wanted to be, I wanted to be part of the Native community.

Helpfulness Of Instructors/Staff

There are several comments about instructors who encourage and give positive reinforcement:

...it was the instructors...the instructor told me I had good potential...she said if you really want to pass, you got to come in and do work on your own...so she gave me a chance and I took the option to do it..., they understand...I had emotional support as well as the understanding;

They show caring and advise learners to be challenging:

...some of the teachers were helpful...they were so caring and took a key interest in our lives and in our thoughts...encouraged us to challenge them, not in a confrontational way but to challenge their theories and beliefs;

instill pride and promote self-acceptance:

...they talk to you to be proud of who you are and not to hide the fact or try to be somebody else... it just more or less helped me;

insist on high standards:

...some of our teachers were brutal...everyone would be complaining and really upset...he said, 'You've got to show improvement in that area, you aren't going nowhere with that type of writing skill'. ...After awhile I learned to appreciate that;

and encourage learners to ask questions:
...our teachers were very helpful...we were told that no question is a stupid question...we were openly encouraged to ask anything...that was very helpful;

...I found all my teachers here extremely encouraging and helpful...even if you asked the same question three times...they would keep answering as long as you needed help.

Some commented on the approachability of the instructors:

...and the instructors as well. And we could approach them at any time no matter how trivial the question may seem, they were always there to help and usually these were the pieces of the jigsaw that gave you the whole picture in the final analysis;

and their helpfulness:

...I got that little push and you get that urge to go on;

If you had any problem at all, myself I had a bit of a language problem (and) they provided help for you here. They got somebody in special. (And) there's no other place that you can get that...;

Ya, they pushed me, cause I was about ready to dropout, especially the first time - and we talked and talked and talked. Then I said, 'Okay, I'll give it a try'. So I gave it a try and I had to talk to them again";

...and the teachers, everyone pats you on the back saying, 'You can do anything you want to do'.

The most helpful for me was...there were two teachers who I really appreciate;

...how great the teachers were... .

Others praise counsellor support:

If you need counsellors they were a lot of help to me for solving my difficulties...and they were so helpful when I needed help. They were there and when you needed them, they said, 'Come on in, talk to us';
and

... (a staff member) had a whole bunch of doors for me to try and ... ended up helping me get funding from UIC for the year ...;

while others note 'staff' helpfulness:

Everybody was just so helpful;

approachability:

Other staff in the school were good, used to be able to go talk to them, anybody;

and dedication:

... the staff and everybody was just great.

The staff were pretty good, the instructors especially that (program coordinator), she was really good. I heard the others were just as good too.

**Milieu And Atmosphere**

Others comment on the positive and helpful environment:

I'm not too sure whether I would have kept on if I wasn't in this environment;

The most helpful, just being at the Native school really helped a lot;

Just the atmosphere I think for me was good for kind of a move from a small town into the city, it was kind of a culture shock. Meeting everybody here, it's like a family. So that's the best part;

I found most helpful, is everything that's located right here in the building. Everything is so available: the library, the counsellors;

and

another thing I found helpful was the environment, just being in the building... it always a good feeling.
It's like a big family.

Others comment on student unity:

...and the unity of the students...I really enjoyed that experience of the students coming together and being really close...;

The most helpful thing I found here I guess is the unity of all the students and the instructors as well.

Two contrast being at NEC to other learning (college) institutions:

(in contrast to the NEC)...I found it hard...going to (community college), 'cause of the unity of the students here...you don't know anybody, they're not the same. You don't get the same unity.

...in other institutions...I mostly did find it sort of cold sort of a sterile environment...I didn't realize that there was anything different until I came here... it was like coming home.

**Possibility Of Multiple Programs**

At least three of the graduates were enrolled in Native Adult Basic Education (NABE) before they enrolled in the one of Skills Training Programs:

...she took her GED, Micro-computer and similar things I took...;

...I only made it to Grade 8...it's time I started. I... I started in '89 and then I started here in ECE (early childhood education)...;

and

I left and I came back again last year and took my ECE. I've been wanting to do this for years....

While one graduate expresses the desire to take 'another' program;
...I wanted to stay and get into another program...;

one comments on finishing two office skills programs:

I got my Secretarial Office Training and my micro-computer.

The above 2 programs were designed as Part 1 and Part 2 but are now one program - 'Office Administration Training'.

Courses And Program Quality

The following quotation praises the program organization and instructor commitment:

The course itself was really organized and she (program coordinator) really kept the students (in) with it;

the involvement of qualified instructors in the field:

The course here was really great, we got a lot of instructors from outside the course as well as in;

...one thing I found most helpful was the small classes ...we had a lot of individual attention;

the advantage of outside speakers:

another helpful thing was the outside speakers, not necessarily instructors..even from mainstream society.. we had all these neat professional people come in who were really interested in us;

and the added opportunity of practical 'hands on' learning:

And we went on practicum, we went on field trips and we did it all made drums. It was all beneficial to the course;

...in office work and computers..they have practicums where you can go out and get work experience... .

One quotation praises the benefit of many courses:

My education with the school, has taught me a lot. We had a variety of courses...;
and

The course here was really great...

the following expresses receiving the opportunity to begin and continue 'learning':

...the day I stepped in, I started learning. I went from my grade (8), got my GED, and I carried on to my ECE, and from that point on I've been just going forward.

The next comment shows the pride experienced in learning and the motivation gained from course opportunities:

They basically showed you how to run a video camera then they took you into the studio where you learned editing...and what we'd do is have little mock newscast and interviews. Then we started getting kind of political and we started going, 'Let's have a march and video tape it'!

Yet others are disappointed that cultural classes are not a part of the Skills Training Programs curricula:

...what I would like to see...when I came here I was really disappointed that I couldn't take any of their cultural courses...I had this awesome opportunity to come to this school and I couldn't take even one of the cultural courses, I was really heartbroken...that would have helped with some of the healing, with that attitude;

and feel 'left' out:

...we are having lecture after lecture downstairs while (other) students are playing, you know, making drums and playing their drums and...it could have happened in the second semester....

One speaks for self and others wanting cultural classes:

I know for a fact we really wanted to get in on some of the culture;

whereas another relates taking cultural classes as being a part of NEC:
they'd feel more part of NEC if they did get to do something (a cultural course).

**Influence Of Friends/Family**

Many commented on the support they also received from friends:

..it was the teachers and my friends..we gave each other support and it was encouraging that we all give each other that kind of support;

how they formed study groups:

(we) kinda reached out to others right from the start.. once we got to know each other, we usually formed our own study groups..

we had to help each other..we did form study groups and we supported one another and if someone didn't show up, we called..;

and helped one another:

I found my classmates extremely helpful..you don't wait until you fall into a certain way, we were automatically in that circle just by being here..;

Because you get all this support from the students.

while another felt fitting in was quite natural:

You just blend naturally, it's not like a group apart where you have to be a certain way..everyone accepts everyone the way they are...

Others met relatives/friends from other times:

(I found that I)..knew people that (I) hadn't seen for awhile..when (I started talking) to somebody in terms you are related to them? I came across a few students that, 'my god, you're my mother's cousin, and you know, stuff like that..';

and

Coming here... you have friends from different places and I ran across a lot of people whom I met over the years. Just kind of never kept in touch...it was nice.
THE CONTEXT TO QUESTION 3

The contexts that the respondents from one group provided for the way in which their experience at the NEC was relevant to what they were doing in education, employment or in the community, included past negative school experiences; future employment possibilities in relationship to identity issues; and school/work experiences at the N.E.C.

The context the respondents from the other group provided were explanations of how education at NEC reinforced their commitment to their roles in their own businesses and/or contributions to making a difference in the community.

WHAT THE GRADUATES FOUND RELEVANT

The graduates responded positively to all of the three aspects of the question.

Directly Employment Related

Of the eleven focus group participants seven were employed; two were continuing their education; one was actively seeking employment; and one was developing her own business.

Some cite their employment experience:

Work has really worked out well because (of) what I gained from different courses - the (program), first-aid, (course). Those things worked for me really well I've been working ever since; two steady jobs, basically, and other part-time jobs. I've always been working since I've been in school;

I'm working now, but all the courses that I took got me to this point of employment. And I'm using everything I got out of my job training, so, that's really helpful, and the job, that I'm in, I'm learning a lot about community services;
With the practicum placements, the majority of the class, I myself, they were really good. They gave the students the experience they were interested in... whatever their interests were. It was a really good part of the program. A lot of students did get jobs from them. I've had a job since then and I'm still working;

and:

...now I see people from (my home town) and I tell them (I finished school at) the NEC...they're like, Wow are you ever lucky....they asked me what I'm doing now and I'm like, 'Oh, I'm working for them now'...they just can't believe it.

Others relate their NEC experience to future career goals:

Just the experience of being here has given me a clearer vision of exactly what I want to do - it's narrowed down to where I have a target in my mind which is always my dream...it has given me the direction of where I'm going;

And now I want to run my own daycare on my reserve ...(now I have my E.C.E.)...I'm working together with my Chief and a social worker to get everything together for me...;

and the one who is actively seeking employment:

I have two positions that I am waiting for, (field) at (place) and the Band, whichever comes first, I'm going to take it;

and the other who is developing her own business:

...but because I took the Native course I really enjoyed what was offered, I would like to position myself in Native Tourism industry. It has taught me quite a bit in regards to all my interests, career-wise and my creativity.
Community Related (First Nations culture/pride/values issues)

One graduate relates learning about her culture to pride and belonging:

And coming to this school made me feel proud of my culture and also let me enjoy and be part of the community; like open the door for me to be accepted in the Native community;

...and I learned my heritage.

Some emphasis is put on learning about Native rights especially pertaining to the concept of community development:

...the program...gave me overall view of what's available out there in the community, or what I could do for the community. So my experience here covers all three areas, strongest in career and community, but, educationally, it gave me a broader view of what I could learn and what I can pass on to others. My main focus right now, is to encourage all First Nations people to get themselves educated because we're going into self-government and so we need educated people that can deal with the community at large, as well as within the First Nations community;

and one reported increasing community sense and bonding more closely with family:

...coming here..has brought in my community sense... I've asked questions, you know it's strengthened my bond with my family ..it will grow stronger and stronger as I fulfill my needs in the spiritual sense...

Another becomes aware of discriminating policies:

..it was like a whole new world opening to me.. I became aware of the Indian Act, I became aware of some of the suspicions I'd had in my lifetime... that, yes, Native people were severely discriminated against...;

...I learned a lot about politics and Native rights and this school's taught me a lot in regards to rights-a lot of Native issues.
while another observes:

I think a lot of the students here...want to give something back to the community, to the people...what sets Indian people apart is if you ask most of them what they want to do it is something in some way serving their own people...

One becomes sensitive to community needs:

being at NEC made me aware of all the needs there are in the aboriginal community...to achieve self-government;

to involvement in community change:

I wanted to encourage other people to become involved, because now we have to do for ourselves what was previously done for us. That's where I stand on the educational part of it for now.

And others become sensitive to community needs:

being at NEC made me aware of all the needs there are in the aboriginal community...to achieve self-government;

I don't feel too alone. And, because of this program, I try to talk to younger people, be a role model; just do my best and hopefully they'll help other people;

So its really brought me into the community and then I'm sharing with the community things that I am learning from the Centre itself;

and actually become involved:

Oh basically, because of coming here, it kinda got me into the Native community. I got to know a lot of Native people in the city, like a family. It's good that way;

in volunteer work:

I wanted to mention something about community as well...I've been a volunteer with the radio program and I've had a couple of radio shows. All of this is coming out of what I've gotten out of the NEC. I had a radio program on Native Education...;
I want it to be a continuing series. I want to do a program on the residential school. I've also had a show on affordable housing and I have another show scheduled for (date) and I going to be interviewing some of the instructors of and facilitators of the (NEC program) and (NEC program).

**Academic Achievement:**

Two graduates continue education in the field started at NEC:

...I'm continuing my education...into my third year at (college)...I could have gotten a job but I knew if I had taken on a job with good paying money I wouldn't go back to school...so they're still in the back of my mind;

All I needed was my first year (received at NEC) and then with the second (at other college) I just carried on.

Coming here was really good for going onto college and most of the courses were transferable to (local college);

and:

I'm still going to school today, and I'll be finished next summer.

The graduates who are employed have future academic goals:

...(it) gave me a wonderful foundation to go further...I'm going to take more schooling and using the knowledge I have with the computers and the beginning accounting I would have enough to start my own business...;

I've got my (field) diploma and right now I'm at a crossroads where I might go for my BA in my (field) at (local university) or (other local university);

...I'm going to continue on towards getting a degree so I can be a part of the solutions towards educating First Nations people.
Another comments:

It wasn't boring so, educationally it's taught me quite a lot about the industry that I'm in right now that I'm striving for. I'm going into a retail outlet that I'm opening in about 2 months..;

and others pass on academic support to students/community:

I deal with students pretty well most of the day..some of them know that I was once a student..they see that if they stick with their studies..they do get somewhere;

and:

(where I did a practicum)..the NEC helped me get my ties there.. and..they're starting a scholarship..for students who have gone through the NEC..so it's helped me in that sense as well.

Whereas, the following show academic self-confidence:

And academically, it helped me out tremendously...I had a grade 8 education, I came here and acquired all my basic education...;

...now I consider myself to be somewhat academically sound...;

I'm really proud of how far I've come - from a grade 8 education....;

and another passes on pride in being Native:

..there are quite a few Native women there..and being that I found out a little bit more about the Native part of myself I'm more about to help them..in dealing with their Nativeness or telling them that they can be proud of who they are.

Finally, one individual finds the program so interesting that he/she doesn't want to leave:

And I found that it (program) was so interesting that when I did graduate, I didn't want to leave here...
I think I've benefited tremendously from walking in and being a scared person with a grade 8 education and coming up with all these ideas and ambitions.

The following expresses improved commitment to education:

...Then (I) realized, "Ya, that's what I want to do, is continue my education;

and one has children attending NEC:

...I have three children coming here..and they are doing very well right now for themselves...;

while another relates personal to career development:

...it put my goals straight..the position I'm in today I do..all the things I like to do..I've had to learn to become more assertive...

Some of the graduates added comments beyond career, education and community relevance.

General Ability/Self-esteem

The following shows the self-confidence that relates to the NEC experience:

...it's given me the confidence to know that I can, you know, that I can learn..when I was here I was amazed that I could do so well..there must have been needed healing from past experiences in school...I have the ability to attain knowledge;

...it's hard to explain, the change that happened to me over the year that I was..came here..I gained the confidence and I found, I'm clear in what I am and where I am going;

...when I first started the school here..I was very doubtful I could do it..now sometime I think (the teachers) wish I'd shut up!...I've gained a lot of experience and confidence here.

Others express personal pride:

...I did graduate..and now I'm working for the NEC and I'm really proud of that...;
in graduating:

I didn't graduate high school and I thought, 'oh yeah, just another school, probably won't...but then I learned to be proud of myself...;

I graduated from the (program) here last year in '92".

General Evaluative Comments

The following relates her success to feeling comfortable at NEC:

...They can't believe it...you're one of the ones who was always picked on and you still made it. I said, 'Yeah, that's cause NEC...you feel comfortable there;

and others make the following statements:

...(I learned) through my program...and support from other staff that it was okay to make mistakes..I'm still a little hard on myself..

Good education experience, everything's worked out perfectly...;

It's been a great experience, attending the school

...I really enjoyed my experience at the NEC..I'm glad I came;

So, other than that, everything about the Centre,

I find really positive....;

So, those things came from being right here in this environment, in the NEC;

and finally:

...if anybody wanted to ask me about this school, I think I'd recommend them here...it's a very friendly...the people and the teachers...;

...it was beneficial to me and that is what I was working for when I first started the program here... it would be a stepping stone for me... .
CONCLUSION

The survey questionnaire findings of this study indicate the respondents' age range, gender, and First Nations heritage. The survey results also show years the respondents graduated and the number of programs they completed at NEC, their level of education when entering NEC and their own evaluation of academic preparation. The survey and focus group results report the impact of NEC on the First Nations identity of the respondents and the helpful characteristics of NEC. Both survey and focus group results attest to the relevance of NEC educational experience to First Nations identity/culture and career and educational outcomes.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of a First Nations-specific institution in the successful completion rates and educational outcomes of First Nations adults enrolled in skills training programs over a four year period.

Survey questionnaires were mailed to one hundred seventy-one NEC graduates of six Skills Training programs: Early Childhood Education Program, Micro-Computer Training, Native Public Administration Program, Family and Community Counselling Program, Tourism Supervisory Development Program, and Criminal Justice Studies who successfully completed their programs at the NEC during the period 1989-1992. The graduates of the programs participated in research between one to three years after program completion. Thirty-nine of the graduates returned their surveys and several agreed to participate in a focus group discussion. Two focus group discussions were conducted during the month of June 1993 with five participants in the first group and six in the second.

The graduates answered both limited format items and open-ended questions; reported demographic information: and recollected their educational experiences at the NEC in relationship to First Nations identity, culture and educational and career outcomes.
The focus group discussion sessions were conducted with one to two members of the FNHL, UBC research team to assist in questioning and tape recording. I used predetermined open-ended questions which were mailed to the respondents who consented to participate in one of the combined interviews. The focus group results were transcribed into forty-seven pages of single-spaced type written data. The data was reported in themes with a description of the context to each of the questions.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the survey and focus group data that the NEC played a major role in the positive cultural identity, educational and career outcomes of the adult learners. I present the plausible argument that public colleges and institutions do not have the same level of commitment, development and capacity to address the education needs and goals of the First Nations population and that First Nations post-secondary institutions such as NEC are committed to culturally relevant and quality programs for its adult learners.

The survey data verifies that NEC had a significant impact on the First Nations identity of the graduates by reinforcing their own heritage, and cultural beliefs through the school context and culturally relevant issues. The graduates attribute the aforementioned approach to
strengthening them in their sense of self, pride and self-confidence. Seventy-five percent of the graduates who responded confirmed that their NEC experience had positively influenced them as a member of their communities.

The study also examined institutional characteristics that attracted and contributed to the positive experience of the adult learners. Almost half of the graduates who responded attributed their choice to attend the NEC to positive comments they heard about the Centre. Another forty percent attributed their choices to program characteristics at the Centre.

In responding to the questions on the admissions process and the first few months at the Centre, the graduates recalled their admissions process in positive terms. The first few months at the NEC were remembered in positive terms and a mixture of neutral/negative terms. At least two thirds of the graduates who responded reported the first few months in positive terms.

Major responsibilities identified by the graduates while attending the NEC were family and/or children, financial, personal, and health. The major obstacles the graduates identified were related to relationships in family and/or community, at the NEC or both of the above. Other obstacles were financial, personal challenges or circumstances at the institution and with the family.
In responding to the question that asked the graduates to identify where most of the help they received came from an overwhelming majority indicated the coordinators and instructors as most supportive followed by administration, staff and students at the Centre.

The graduates, however, indicated family, NEC student services, and community services really helped them to successfully complete their programs. Over half (65%) of the graduates who responded indicated more than one source of support and the remaining graduates noted up to more than three sources of support.

To assess the institutional impact on the career and educational outcomes the graduates were asked a series of questions. The results of the data indicate that a significant number of the graduates were working in their field of education and in the First Nations community.

The vast majority (93%) assessed that NEC had prepared them from 'okay' to 'very well' for their careers while the rest said not well (7%). Over seventy percent were satisfied that NEC had met their expectations very well.

The focus group data when transcribed resulted in forty-seven single-spaced type written pages - a rich source of comments that added texture to the findings of the study. The qualitative results from three questions that asked a) why the graduates chose NEC and not another post secondary
institution:  b) what they found most/least helpful while attending NEC;  c) to what the graduate found relevant regarding career, education, and community provided recurring themes that were evident in the survey findings.

The positive context for graduates choosing the NEC to pursue their education provided a contrast to the negative previous school/career experiences of the graduates. Many of the graduates related cultural alienation/deprivation as contexts to choosing to attend NEC. They were clear about how urgent it was for them to involve themselves in educational experiences that acknowledged and reinforced their identity as First Nations.

The most striking reasons the graduates gave for choosing the NEC were the desire to learn about First Nations culture heritage, the milieu at the Centre, its accessibility and relevance to personal, academic and career choices.

In relating most/least helpful factors while attending NEC the graduates provided unsolicited topics that included; heavy work load at NEC, prejudice experienced in grade/high school; settling 'old' issues; and wanting to maintain contact with NEC even after graduation. Prejudice is discussed in terms of policy, feeling like a minority in school and being picked on by other children.

The helpful aspects of NEC school experience provide a contrast to previous negative school experiences of the
graduates. One of the major helpful aspects of NEC experience is related to personal empowerment through the development of First Nations identity, and academic achievement and employable skills. The most significant helpful aspects of NEC were the instructors and staff. The graduates characterized them as encouraging, supporting, instilling pride, promoting self-acceptance, insisting on high standards, being approachable and being helpful.

The counsellors and administrative staff are also characterized as reliable, helpful, approachable and dedicated. The milieu and atmosphere in question two are recurring themes. These themes are referred to in terms of its environment, being a first nations school, feeling like family, (just) being in the building, and student unity. A few of the graduates compare going into colleges as lacking warmth and student unity.

Other helpful aspects of the NEC educational experience that the graduates relate are: possibility of the multiple programs; course and program quality and influence of friends and family. Graduates define program quality as being organized; having qualified and committed instructors; having small classes, receiving individual attention, hearing resource people and participating in hands on learning. Family, friends, and fellow students are included as having a significant and helpful influence on the positive outcome of the learners.
Like the survey data, the results in the focus group discussions verified the relevant career, community and academic relevance of the NEC education experience.

The graduates relate their employment status and further educational endeavors after graduation. They relate their commitment to community belonging and development. They have a commitment to 'give back' to the community and to facilitate steps towards self-government.

The graduates associated academic relevance to continuing their education to college/university transfer programs, while the employed share future academic goals. Others relate personal pride and self-confidence in learning and attaining graduation.

The results of this study helps to support the importance of a First Nation post-secondary institution in the movement towards positive education/career outcomes for First Nation adults and to present an argument that for some First Nations people an institution such as the NEC is critical. The results support the statement that "no one is more expert than First Nation communities themselves in what their situation requires" (Chrisjohn 1991:185).

The implication of a separate facility with programs specifically designed to prepare First Nations people in their 'own' social, educational, political and economic advancement as expressed by the graduates is critical and effective. The
atmosphere, warmth, friendliness and supportiveness have been comforting and encouraging to many of the graduates.

All of the programs include the necessary college courses for accreditation in their fields. What makes the educational experience unique is the delivery of the programs in a facility owned, administered and operated by a First Nations non-profit society elected by First Nation community members.

Although the institution is affiliated with a local community college for funding and accreditation, a significant level of autonomy is maintained in the adaptation, development and implementation of courses and programs which are unique in content and delivery.

The NEC is able to attract serious contenders in education from a diverse population of First Nations people although predominately from British Columbia are from other provinces in Canada.

The infrastructure of the NEC, the administration, administrative staff, the student support services which includes the registrar, library, family violence resource centre, counseling department and student placement coordinator and the full time program coordinator/instructors assigned to each of the skills training programs make up the dynamic delivery and support mechanism of this educational setting.
The other most striking attributes offered by the graduates were the relevance of the NEC experience to the First Nation culture/identity, the helpfulness and supportiveness of instructors, staff, and fellow students. The graduates assess NEC as meeting their educational and career outcomes. Many have secured employment in the First Nations community with which they have developed closer ties and commitment.

In addressing the question as to whether public institutions could incorporate dimensions found positive in the NEC setting, I have observed that several of the colleges and universities are attempting to do so more than in the past. While they might over a given length of time incorporate a more congenial atmosphere for First Nations People, they have a long way to go in developing and delivering programs that have their focus the preparation of First Nations to be equally competitive in the 'wider' community as well as their own. It is doubtful that the same level of commitment and quality of educational opportunity can be served better than by institutions governed and operated by First Nations themselves.

In a dynamic mechanism in a separate facility designed as a North West coast longhouse NEC is a service of strength and support for the learners/graduates of the programs and to many it is a 'home' away from home.
The Urban Native Indian Education Society Board of Directors are committed to the ongoing development of the Native Education Centre offering programs which are at the diploma and degree levels. In addition, they have developed policy and procedures regarding research in their institution.

The survey questionnaire and focus group methodologies are useful research tools. As an educational institution, follow-up of graduates and other learners is crucial to understanding and assessing the effectiveness of program content and delivery. A shorter version of the survey administered as an exit survey to graduates warrants some thought. The Board of Directors has asked NEC to develop and present ways which the study results of this research might be useful in the community.
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Canada. (1927). House of Commons. Special Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Claims of Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of Joint Meeting with like Committee of Senate.* Ottawa: F.A. Acland, Printer to the King.


______ (1986). Letter to Dr. Grant Fisher, Deputy Minister, August 12.


Indian Act. (19780. Ottawa: Queen's Printer.


APPENDIX A

When you have completed the questionnaire, please place it in the enclosed envelope and mail it back to us. You will notice the envelope is coded. The code identifies you only so that we know who has responded. It does not identify your questionnaire. Your questionnaire will be removed from the envelope without noting your identity, in this way not only confidentiality, but complete anonymity, will be maintained.

FIRST WE’D LIKE TO KNOW A BIT ABOUT YOU!

1. Are you: Female? ____ Male? ____
2. Year of birth: ______
3. What is your First Nations ancestry? ____________________________
4. Do you identify most closely with a particular First Nations people, village, lineage, band or other First Nations group? ________
   If so, which one? __________________________________________
5. Do you speak or understand any First Nations language? __________
   If so, which one(s)? 1. _______ 2. _______
   _______ Speak  _______ Speak
   _______ Understand _______ Understand
6. Your graduation history: Please fill in one line of the table for each certificate, diploma or degree program you have completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Concentration or Major</th>
<th>Certificate Diploma or Degree</th>
<th>Type of Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>19___ to 19___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>19___ to 19___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>19___ to 19___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>19___ to 19___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>19___ to 19___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.E.C. Graduation Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
THANK YOU FOR FILLING IN THE ABOVE ITEMS. NOW WE'D LIKE TO KNOW SOME THINGS ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION BEFORE ATTENDING N.E.C.

7. What was your academic experience prior to entering N.E.C. (please check or specify).

_____ Secondary School Graduation  _____ Mature Applicant
_____ Adult Basic Education/General Education Program  _____ Other

8. Please comment on how you felt about your school experience (for example, information or assistance you received or failed to receive; any difficulties, etc.).


9. As you look back, how would you rate your academic achievements? Please check on for each area listed:

Math  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
Sciences  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
English  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
Humanities  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
Fine Arts  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
Music  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor
Physical Education  □ Good  □ Fair  □ Poor

Comments: ____________________________________________________________

10. The questions in this section begin with a phrase. Please complete the phrase with the response that seems appropriate to you. Use the back of the page if you need more space.

a) The most support I receive in my educational experience came from

__________________________________________

N.E.C. Graduate Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
b) The things that really helped my while at school were:

- Family
- Teachers
- Counsellors
- Friends in School
- Friends out of School
- Community Services out of School

c) The major problems and/or obstacles I faced at school were:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________


d) Besides my academic work, the major responsibilities I had while attending school were:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________


e) My First Nations culture influenced my pre-N.E.C. school experience by

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

11. Would you comment on how the school helped and/or discouraged you (for instance the administration, the faculty, the rules).

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU FOR FILLING IN THE ABOVE ITEMS. NOW WE’D LIKE TO KNOW SOME THINGS ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND EXPERIENCES WHILE ENTERING AND ATTENDING THE N.E.C.

12. How did you hear about N.E.C. and its programs?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

13. What made you decide to come to N.E.C.?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

N.E.C. Graduate Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
14. Please comment on how you felt about your application, admission and registration (for example, information or assistance you received or failed to receive; any difficulties, etc.).


15. Did you have any previous work experience in the area of your certificate or diploma program? Is so, what was the nature of that work experience?


16. While I attended N.E.C. my funding was usually: (Please check on box)

   - □ adequate
   - □ barely enough
   - □ at subsistence level
   - □ below starvation level

17. My funding came from (Please fill in each line of the table below, and if you check "yes" to any funding source please check "adequate" or inadequate).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAND/INAC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Loan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment of funding: ______________________________________________________


N.E.C. Graduate Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
18. As you look back, how would you rate your academic preparation for N.E.C.? Please check one for each area listed.

- Reading Skills: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Study Skills: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Exam Writing Skills: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Essay Writing Skills: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Second Language Skills: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Knowledge in Math: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Knowledge in Sciences: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Knowledge in English: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor
- Knowledge in Humanities: □ Good □ Fair □ Poor

Comments: ______________________________

19. Most of the questions in this section begin with a phrase. Please complete the phrase with a response that seems appropriate to you. Use the back of the page if you need more space.

a) My first few months at N.E.C. were ______________________________

b) The most support I received at N.E.C. came from __________________

c) The things that really helped my get through N.E.C. successfully were:
   □ Family □ Friends
   □ General N.E.C. student services □ First Nations Student Services at N.E.C.
   □ Employment opportunities at N.E.C. □ Community services (Outside N.E.C.)
d) The major problems and/or obstacles I faced at N.E.C. were:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

e) Besides my academic work, the major responsibilities I had while attending N.E.C. were:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

f) My First Nations culture influenced my N.E.C. experience by

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

20. Would you comment on how N.E.C. as an institution helped and/or discouraged you (for instance, the administration, the faculty, the rules).

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

THANKS AGAIN FOR HELPING US. NOW COULD YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND FURTHER EDUCATION AFTER N.E.C.?

21. Please share some of the highlights of your (a) work experience and/or (b) education since your last graduation from N.E.C.

a) Work: __________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

N.E.C. Graduate Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
22. As you look back, how well did your N.E.C. program prepare you for your career/education? Please be as specific as you can.
   a) Career:___________________________________________________
   b) Education:___________________________________________________

23. How well did N.E.C. meet your expectations?

24. How has your experience at N.E.C. influenced you in general (both personally and as a member of your community)?

25. Did N.E.C. as an institution have any impact on your First Nations identity? If so, what?

N.E.C. Graduate Survey
NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE
THANKS ONCE MORE. AND NOW, A GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE.

What would you like to see for First Nations people at N.E.C. Please use the rest of this sheet to respond to Questions 26 & 27.

26. What comments and/or suggestions would you like to give the Native Education Centre?

27. Once again, we'd like to make sure that you know how much we appreciate your input. Please feel free to add any other comments you may have. Were there questions we should have asked but didn't?
N.E.C. First Nations Graduate Research Project

Our research team would like to host a discussion session after the questionnaires are analysed. We are looking for volunteers who would agree to spend approximately three hours with other N.E.C. graduates. In the discussion session, participants will have an opportunity to express their opinions about the results, and will be able to voice additional comments about any of the questions and to make suggestions about the programs/activities of the Native Education Centre. The discussion sessions will be held at various locations in the province.

If you are interest in participating in a discussion session, please fill out the form below and return it to Grace Mirehouse at the Native Education Centre. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

________________________________________________________

NATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE GRADUATE DISCUSSION SESSION

Name: __________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________
Phone: ________________________________________________
APPENDIX B: TABLES

Table 1.—Gender of Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.—Age Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 30 and 41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 41 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.—Native Ancestry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From B.C.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside B.C.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.—Identify with First Nations people, group, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9.--Identify with ancestry/lineage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same as FN ancestry</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different than ancestry</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.--Speak/Understand FN language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.--First Nations Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand and Speak</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12.--NEC Influenced Graduate in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging/increased participation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simply said yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of FN culture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness of importance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased knowledge in FN rights</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and self-government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13.--NEC's impact on FN identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group belonging</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of FN issues,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture, skill acquisition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already culturally oriented</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14.--Graduates' FN culture influenced their NEC experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FN identity, strength,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance in community</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15.--How heard about NEC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact</td>
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<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral (agency)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16.—What made you decide to attend NEC?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere, welcome, support</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program characteristics</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, economics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17.—NEC admissions process experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18.—First few months at NEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral and negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 19.—Work experience related to coursework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>
Table 20.--Work experience since graduation

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21.--Work experience since graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In NEC field of education and in FN community</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In NEC field of education and in non-Native community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in NEC field of educ.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22.--Education experience since graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furthered education since</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had not furthered education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23.--Field of education since graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same field as NEC education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not indicate field</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24.—How well NEC prepared graduates for career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25.—How well NEC prepared graduates for education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26.—How well NEC met graduates expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well and not well</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27.--Major responsibilities while at NEC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family and/or children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to self and studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28.--Major obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships in family and/or community at NEC or both above</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal challenges</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional and family circumstances</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29.--Funding Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30.--Primary funding sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band (DIA)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Welfare</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31.--Adequacy of primary source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>