# Fostering the Educational Success of Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island

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October 2014

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## Acknowledgement

To start, gratitude must be extended toward the Creator. All accomplishments emanate from Your greatness. Your gift of the mind and its ability to spark ideas was used to ignite this research, and your never-ending gift of energy was used to fuel and finish this research. Indeed, all beginnings and endings are imbued with Your greatness.

A special bouquet of love and appreciation is extended to the Elders who gave of their wisdom and knowledge during both the planning stage of the research and as participants during the interview stage of the research. Your words, teachings, presence, and spirit influence the local Prince Edward Island community (and onwards) both now and for many future generations.

Much gratitude is also extended to all participants volunteered to be involved in the study. They selflessly, gave their time and shared a bit of their life in the hope that educational experiences of off-reserves Aboriginal peoples would improve. The words, thoughts, and experiences they shared are like mini treasures.

The work of Carolyn Taylor and letters of support from Darrell DesRoches and Alanna Taylor (Cox & Palmer) were seminar in the organization and implementation of the study. Thank you.

Brittany Jakubiec was the research assistant for this study. She spent countless hours conducting interviews, transcribing interviews, and analyzing data. Her specialized work was a core feature, which drove the completion of this project.

Finally, a thank you is extended to the *Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network, Atlantic Region* and the *Native Council, Prince Edward Island*. Without the financial and research supports of these two associations, this research would not have been a reality.

# Prelude

This document is divided into two sections. The first section is the Research Summary, where a condensed version of the study is presented. In other words, within the Research Summary, only the essential parts of the research are included. In particular, the Research Summary introduces the reader to the study, outlines the purpose and research questions, and stipulates the research methodology. As well, after reading the Research Summary, the reader will understand who participated in the study and have an understanding of the dominant findings of the study. In particular, the thematic findings in this section only provide a limited portrayal of the participants' voice and ideas related to the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. In reviewing the Research Summary, it is hoped that the readers will gain a general understanding of the background of this researcher and have a general understanding of the findings of the research.

The second part of this document is the Full Research Report, which embodies a detailed description of all aspects of the study. The introduction provides definitions for common terms used throughout the study. The features qualitative research are presented and an explanation of how this chosen methodology aligns with the study are depicted. Ethical considerations and ethical approvals for this study are also explained. In particular, this longer version also provides a rich, in-depth representation of the thematic findings, where much emphasis given to the voice, comments, and experiences of participants. Furthermore, the Full Research Report has a conclusion, which is meant to be a springboard for continued discussions and actions toward fostering even greater educational success for off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island.

# Research Summary

## Introduction to the Research

According to Statistics Canada (2010), 1,730 of the population of Prince Edward Island self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Moreover, though, according to Statistics Canada (2010), about seven out of 10 Aboriginal people on Prince Edward Island reside off-reserve. Although one known study has focused on the needs of Mi'kmaq learners in First Nations communities on Prince Edward Island (Walton et al., 2009), no known research has focused on the educational experiences of *off-reserve* Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. Thus, this research, which focuses on off-reserve Aboriginal learners in this province, is timely, critical, and highly significant, because it currently exists in isolation of any other known research on this topic.

## Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research is *to describe the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners in Prince Edward Island*. The research questions that further defined and supported the purpose were:

1. What aspects of the elementary to postsecondary educational system promote the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal students?
2. What aspects of the elementary to postsecondary educational system do off-reserve Aboriginal students find challenging?
3. What are the educational needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners in Prince Edward Island?

# Methodology: Qualitative Research

Sound Aboriginal research methodologies (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009, Wilson, 2008) focus on the lived experiences of the person and capture the views, perspectives, and narrative stories of people. In other words, a qualitative research methodology is commonly used for this people-focused way of collecting data. A fundamental assumption attached to qualitative research is that different people define and understand an experience in different ways. Qualitative researchers accept the notion that when many people live through a similar situation, each person's experience, recollection, and take-away from that particular experience are different. However, each individual experience is still as valid as the other. That is, no one type of experience is not better or worse—the experiences are just different. In line with these ideas, within qualitative research, no one, ultimate truth is found or expressed, because on ultimate truth does not exit. Data are not fixed, objective phenomena that can be quantifiably measured (Merriam, 2009). Instead, the focus of qualitative data to capture the iridescent, varied perceptions and experiences of individual people and the results represent a multi-dimensional depiction of reality.

We approached this qualitative research with the belief that each participant's views and life experiences were important, unique, and valuable. Through this research, we sought to capture the participants' subjective realities and presented their ideas through thematic explanations. In turn, within the Full Research Report, we include as many quotations as possible from individual participants. Providing the reader with participant comments that are directly extracted from the interview transcripts is a way to communicate, first-hand, the participants' views and experiences (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

## Interviews and Participants

Because interviewing is one of the most powerful ways to understand the perspective of others (Barbour & Schostak, 2011; Fontana & Frey, 2005), the sources of data for this qualitative study were semi-structured focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews. For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher created a set of pre-determined questions, which guided the interview and kept it on focus. Within the features of semi-structured interviewing techniques, the researchers were free to ask follow-up questions that emerged from participant answers (Merriam, 2009).

Bogdan and Bilken (2007) noted that qualitative researchers often develop deep understanding of the experiences of people by utilizing a small representative, purposeful sample. Herein, we used purpose sampling (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), where participants were purposefully selected, because they met a number of criteria. For this study, those criteria were based on two main features. First, participants needed to be an off-reserve Aboriginal person living in Prince Edward Island. Second, participants needed to be a Kindergarten to postsecondary student on Prince Edward Island, a parent/caregiver of such a student, *and/or* an Elder.

As explained above, all participants lived in Prince Edward Island at the time of the research, and participants represented three geographical counties (aka Zones), which make up Prince Edward Island. Consequently, the data were collected from Aboriginal off-reserve participants living in: (a) Zone 1: Prince County (western part of PEI), (b) Zone 2: Queens County (central part of PEI), and Zone 3: Kings County (eastern part of PEI).

A diverse volunteer population of off-reserve Aboriginal stakeholders in Prince Edward Island participated in this study, therein providing a rich data set. More specifically, there were

35 females and 20 males who were partook in the study. A total of 55 participants volunteered for 26 interviews, which consisted of eight focus group interviews and 18 individual interviews. Of these participants, eight participants gave extra time and provided individual information by participating in both a focus group and an individual interview. As well, three participants gave of extra time and information by participating in two focus group sessions. Although 55 individuals partook in this study, based on the above description of some participants being involved in more than one interview, another way to represent the data is that 67 stories, perspectives, and/or comments were collected during the 26 interview opportunities.

Specifically, with regard to focus group interviews, 49 volunteers were involved. On average, each of the eight focus groups consisted of six participants. Focus group participants represented Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal parents/caregivers[1], Aboriginal postsecondary learners, Aboriginal high school learners, and Aboriginal elementary learners. A more detailed representation of each focus group is as follows. One focus group consisted only of Elders. Two focus groups consisted solely of Aboriginal parents. One focus group consisted of Aboriginal parents and an Aboriginal postsecondary learner. One focus group consisted of Aboriginal parents and high school learners. One focus group consisted of only postsecondary learners. One focus group consisted of only Aboriginal high school learners. One focus group consisted of Kindergarten to Grade 8 elementary learners. In total, 29 female and 20 male participants were involved in focus group interviews, which took place from September to December 2013. The average focus group interview lasted about 75 minutes. A visual overview of focus group participants is reflected in *Table A*.

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[1] From this point forward, the term *parent* will be used, but the term is meant to represent any close caregiver/ relative of the Aboriginal learner (e.g., biological parent, adopted parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, and/or community member).

*Table A: Overview of Focus Group Interviews*

| FG | Representation | PEI Zone | Fem/Mal | Tot | Date | Location of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Elders | 1, 2, 3 | 7(F) 3(M) | 10 | Nov15, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 2 | Parents | 2 | 3(F) 1(M) | 4 | Oct 24, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 3 | Parents | 1, 3 | 3(F) 3(M) | 6 | Dec 11, 2013 | Private Residence |
| 4 | Parents (x10) & Postsecondary Learner (x1) | 1, 3 | 6(F) 5(M) | 11 | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| 5 | Parents (x2) & High School Learners (x2) | 2 | 2(F) 2(M) | 4 | Sept 24, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 6 | Postsecondary Learners | 2 | 3(F) | 3 | Oct 8, 2013 | University of PEI |
| 7 | High School Learners | 1, 3 | 2(F) 2(M) | 4 | Dec 11, 2013 | Private Residence |
| 8 | Elementary Learners, K–Gr 8 | 2 | 3(F) 4(M) | 7 | Oct 22, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| | Total Number of Focus Group Interviews: **8** | | | Total Number of Focus Group Participants: **49** | | |

Individual interviews took place from October 2013 to January 2014. Of these 18 individual interviews, participants represented Elders (x3), Aboriginal parents (x5), postsecondary learners (x8), and high school students (x2). Two of the participants were both parents and postsecondary learners. All individual interviews took place in Charlottetown or Cornwall (i.e., Zone 2 Queens); however, the place of residences for the participants represented Zones 1, 2, and 3 in Prince Edward Island. To promote participant anonymity, specific Zones were not indicated for individual participants. In total, 15 participants were female and three participants were male. The average length of time for each focus group interview was about 60 minutes. A visual overview of these individual interview details is reflected in *Table B*.

*Table B: Overview of Individual Interviews*

| Pseudonym | Representation | Fem/Mal | Date | Location of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Betty | Elder | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Heather | Elder | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Lisa | Elder | F | Dec 12, 2013 | Private Residence |
| Denise | Parent | F | Jan 13, 2014 | Native Council, PEI |
| Jeff | Parent | M | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Michelle | Parent | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Olivia | Parent | F | Nov 28, 2013 | PEI Postsecondary Institute |
| Theresa | Parent | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Christina | Postsecondary Learner | F | Nov 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| Gabby | Postsecondary Learner & Parent | F | Jan 9, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Jessica | Postsecondary Learner & Parent | F | Jan 7, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Kelley | Postsecondary Learner | F | Oct 18, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Phillip | Postsecondary Learner | M | Oct 16, 2013 | University of PEI |
| Rebecca | Postsecondary Learner | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Sarah | Postsecondary Learner | F | Dec 13, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Scott | Postsecondary Learner | M | Oct 29, 2013 | University of PEI |
| Angela | High School Learner | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Emily | High School Learner | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Total Number of Individual Interviews: **18** | | | | |

## Data Analysis and Theme Creation

Each of the 26 interviews was audiotaped and transcribed. The data analysis was completed in two phases. The first phrase of data analysis involved two researchers separately analyzing the data. Each researcher reviewed every transcript in isolation and extracted key ideas, phrases, and commonalities associated with each research question (Basit, 2003; Creswell, 2014). After the first four or five transcripts were reviewed, a list of bullet points emerged beneath each research question. At that time, the researchers reviewed the bullet points under each research question, looking for similarities. In other words, under each research question, further analysis of the points was done and sub-categories or themes were created. Then, under

each of these themes (i.e., categories), sub-themes (i.e., sub-categories) were identified. The researchers continued to analyze the remaining transcripts in a similar fashion—key points were extracted from the transcripts and added to emergent categories. Additional categories and sub-categories were added and/or adjusted as more data was added to the emergent themes and sub-themes. After analyzing all 26 transcripts (i.e., 8 focus groups interviews and 18 individual interviews), each research question had thematic answers and sub-themes.

The second round of data analysis involved the researchers re-analyzing their thematic results by sharing their analysis and working together to find consensus of their analysis. In other words, once each researcher completed her personal analysis of the transcripts, they convened and triangulated the two analyses (Christensen et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014; Schwandt, 2007) to create one final analyzed document. A summary of the final themes and sub-themes for each research question is displayed through *Table C*.

## Thematic Findings: A Synopsis

The purpose of the research was to answer the question: What are *the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on PEI*? Each of the three main parts of this purpose were answered.

First, the analysis of the participants' transcripts relayed a number of dominant theme related to the educational successes of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. These themes were: (a) having solid relationships with caring teachers; (b) experiencing a caring school environment; (c) experiencing the effective delivery and communication of curriculum; (d) experiencing hands-on activities; and (e) having and using internal and external supports.

When asking participants to describe the challenges that off-reserve Aboriginal learners faced on Prince Edward Island, several key issues surfaced. In particular, participants talked about: (a) not enough social time in school; (b) a need for better delivery of curricular content in school (c) student and parent feelings of failure, frustration, and pressure; (d) the difficulties faced when students transition to new schools; (e) stories associated with racism; and (f) difficulties maneuvering within and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures.

The thematic recommendations or needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island are presented through six main themes. These thematic points are: (a) provide learning experiences where students feel successful; (b) use multiple instructional methods; (c) thread more Aboriginal content and ways of knowing into mainstream education; (d) promote the Mi'kmaq language, culture, and spirituality; (e) a greater Elder presence in education; and (f) promote sports, extra-curricular activities, and other such events throughout the school community.

An overview of the findings of the study, the themes, and sub-themes is displayed in *Table C*. Please see the Full Research Report, for details particularly related to the sub-themes. As indicated above, within the Full Research Report participant voice is heard. Their stories and comments are the core essence of the Full Research Report.

*Table C: Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes*

| Educational Successes | Educational Challenges | Educational Needs |
|---|---|---|
| **Relationships with Teachers**<br>➢ Caring teachers<br>➢ Sociable, approachable teachers<br>➢ Humorous teachers<br><br>**Caring School Environment**<br>➢ Promote self-esteem via student leadership<br>➢ Positive reinforcement<br>➢ Welcoming school environment for parents<br><br>**Effective Delivery and Communication of Content**<br>➢ Variety of instructional methods<br>➢ Importance of tutors<br>➢ Fluid communication<br><br>**Provision and Choice of Hands-On Activities**<br>➢ Physical activities/ sports<br>➢ Fine arts and hands-on activities<br><br>**Internal and External Educational Supports**<br>➢ Support from Native Council, Prince Edward Island | **Social Time**<br>➢ Recess and lunch<br>➢ More time with friends equals less boredom<br><br>**Delivery of Content**<br>➢ Lack of support from teachers<br>➢ Not enough homework / homework issues<br><br>**Feelings of Failure, Frustration, and Pressure**<br>➢ Students experiencing failure<br>➢ Parents and stories of frustration<br>➢ Pressure to communicate Aboriginal knowledge<br><br>**Transition to New School**<br>➢ Intimidating transition to junior and high school<br>➢ Racism and academic issues linked to transitioning to new school<br><br>**Racism**<br>➢ Personal stories of racism<br>➢ Racism through books and parents<br>➢ Lower expectations from teachers<br><br>**Living Two Cultures**<br>➢ Withholding identity to deter racism<br>➢ Communicating identity and experiencing racism<br>➢ Reverse racism | **Feelings of Success**<br>➢ Internal and external motivators<br>➢ Good grades<br><br>**Multiple Instructional Methods**<br>➢ Multiple ways to learn<br>➢ Hands-on learning<br>➢ Real-life examples<br><br>**Aboriginal Presence and Content into Mainstream Education**<br>➢ Aboriginal teachers<br>➢ Aboriginal content<br>➢ University setting<br><br>**Mi'kmaq Language, Culture and Spirituality**<br>➢ Language<br>➢ Culture and identity<br>➢ Spirituality<br><br>**Elder Teachings**<br>➢ The youth need Elder teachings<br><br>**Sports, Extra-Curricular Activities, and Other**<br>➢ Sports<br>➢ Extra-curricular activities |

## Concluding Remarks: Principles of Education and Learning

In 2010, the British Columbia Ministry of Education's (2010) articulated a set of learning principals that fosters educational success for Aboriginal peoples. Although these elements do not encompass the essence of quality education and learning for *every* Aboriginal person, these principles are a general reflection of what quality education and learning is for many Aboriginal peoples. As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together to improve the education of Aboriginal learners, it is important to incorporate aspects of these principles into the discussions that ensue.

- The education and learning of one Aboriginal person supports the wellbeing of self, family, community, the land, the spirits, and one's ancestors.
- Quality education and learning is holistic, self-reflective, relational, and experiential.
- Quality education and learning recognizes the role Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Quality education and learning requires and exploration of one's identity.
- Quality education and learning is a process of generational roles and responsibilities.
- Quality education and learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Quality education and learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and can only be shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Interestingly, all of the above points were articulated or alluded to, in one way or another, by the participants involved in this study. In closing, a heartfelt thank you is extended to all participants involved in this study for giving their time and sharing their wisdom so that quality education and learning can become the experience of increasing numbers of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island.

# Full Research Report

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Across Canada, many public schools, governmental officials, and educational leaders are starting to infuse Aboriginal content, resources, and ways of knowing into curricula and classroom experiences (Claypool & Preston, 2014; Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2012). Even with these much-needed changes in motion, a key issue—the profile and needs of the off-reserve Aboriginal learner—has not been specifically addressed. While there is a growing body of literature focused on the urban Aboriginal environment within a more broadly defined Canadian context, information reflecting the educational realities of Aboriginal learners living off-reserve in Prince Edward Island is needed. In response, the underlying focus of this research is to address the lack of information pertaining to the educational successes, needs, and challenges of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island.

According to Statistics Canada (2010), 1,730 of the population of Prince Edward Island self-identifies as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Furthermore, according to Statistics Canada (2010), close to seven out of ten Aboriginal people on Prince Edward Island resides off-reserve. Although some research has focused on the needs of Mi'kmaq learners in First Nations communities in Prince Edward Island (e.g., Walton et al., 2009), no known research has focused on the educational experiences of off-reserve Aboriginal learners in Prince Edward Island. In turn, this research compliments Walton's et al.'s study, because it provides the missing link to

information about Aboriginal peoples on Prince Edward Island, namely off-reserve Aboriginal learners.

As indirectly depicted above, a major outcome of this project is to provide foundational data and community-relevant results, which are focused on off-reserve Aboriginal peoples on Prince Edward Island. Not only is such information important on Prince Edward Island, this research promotes the educational mandate in other provincial governments, territorial governments, and with the Canadian Council of Ministers, Canada's (2010). Statistics Canada (2008) acknowledged that Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing and youngest ethno-cultural group in Canada and represent an ever-growing number of students in school. Yet, this burgeoning Aboriginal population has substantially lower graduation rates than the non-Aboriginal populace.

The educational needs of Aboriginal students need to be a pan-Canadian focus, and presently among many provincial, territorial and nations associations across Canada, mandates exist to narrow the educational gap currently existing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (e.g., Canadian Council of Ministers, Canada, 2010; Government of Saskatchewan, 2009; Haldane, Lafond, & Krause, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). In addition to a number of social justice issues, one of the reason these mandates are in place is because the high school completion rate is approximately 52% for First Nations students, compared to 82% for non-Aboriginal students (Richards, 2008). These less than favorable Aboriginal graduation rates indicate that change is required.

To support the deliverance of high quality education for Aboriginal peoples both pan-Canada and within local jurisdictions, situational data is important. At time of this report, no

other published and accessible research existed with regard to educational issues of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island face. In turn, this study is extremely valuable, because it provides much-needed contextual information about the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve Aboriginal peoples on Prince Edward Island. In essence, this report is the voice off-reserve Aboriginal peoples on Prince Edward Island—a voice that needs to be heard.

## Terminology: Aboriginal Peoples

Before embarking on the details of this study, it is important to clarify a number of key terms used throughout this document. Namely, these terms are: Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Indigenous. With regard to the word, *Aboriginal*, Statistics Canada (2007) stipulated, "There is no single or 'correct' definition of Aboriginal populations. The choice of definition depends on the purpose for which the information is being used" (¶ 20). Bearing in mind that there exists a variety of definition for the word *Aboriginal*, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) (2012) defined the term as, "The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people—Indians, Métis and Inuit … three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs" (¶3).

The specific words *Indian*, *First Nation*, *Métis*, and *Inuit* also need clarification. In the 1970s, because of offensive connotations pertaining to the word Indian, Canadian leaders began to use the term First Nation in its place. "First Nations peoples refers to the Indian peoples in Canada, both Status and non-Status representation (AANDC, 2014, ¶10). Historically, Métis referred to the children of French fur traders and Cree First Nations people (who lived within the

Prairie Provinces) and the English/Scottish fur traders and Dene First Nations people (who lived within northern Canadian regions). Today, Métis are peoples who have both First Nation and European ancestry. "The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree" (AANDC, 2012, ¶21). Within Canada, Inuit people are Aboriginal peoples who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec, and Northern Labrador. The word, Inuit, means *people* in the Inuit language formally known as Inuktitut.

Within the past decade, a term increasing in usage is *Indigenous*. As the University of British Columbia (2009) explained, due to the growing prominence of international Indigenous rights movements, the word *Indigenous* has gained popularity and commonly refers to Aboriginal peoples within an international context. On this topic, the University of British Columbia also stated:

> Indigenous may be … the most inclusive term of all, since it identifies peoples in similar circumstances without respect to national boundaries … but it is, for some, a contentious term, since it defines groups primarily in relation to their colonizers. (¶16)

Similarly, Battiste (2013), a renowned Aboriginal scholar stated, "I try to use Indigenous when considering the people beyond Canadian borders and use Aboriginal or First Nations, Métis, or Inuit when referencing the nations in Canada of Indigenous peoples (pp. 13–14).

Employing the above information, within this report the term *Aboriginal* is used when referring to any or all of the following three groups of peoples: First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit. Both out of preference and due to the non-international focus of this report, the term Aboriginal

instead of Indigenous is used. As a final clarification point, a non-Aboriginal person is defined an individual who does "not report being First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), and also [does] not report Registered or Treaty Indian status or Membership in a First Nation or Indian band" (Statistics Canada, 2013, ¶1).

## Purpose and Research Question

As indicated above, because of the lack of information related to the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal students on Prince Edward Island, there was a need to conduct this study. In turn, the purpose of this research was *to describe the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners in Prince Edward Island.* The research questions that further defined and promoted the purpose were:

- What aspects of the elementary to postsecondary educational system promote the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal students?
- What aspects of the elementary to postsecondary educational system do off-reserve Aboriginal students find challenging?
- What are the educational needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners in Prince Edward Island?

# Chapter 2: Methodology and Research Details

In this chapter, key details related to the organizational structure of the study are presented. More specifically, in this section a description of qualitative research is provided. Ethical considerations of the study are presented. Details pertaining to the interviews and the participants are described via a written explanation and in tables. The last part of this section contains information about how the data were analyzed.

## Qualitative Research

In keeping with the person-focused nature imbued throughout most Aboriginal research methodologies (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009, Wilson, 2008), a qualitative design was the chosen methodological framework of the study. A fundamental assumption attached to a qualitative research methodology is that different people define and understand reality in different ways. Qualitative researchers accept the notion that, for any given situation, what one person experiences can be and is very different from what a second person experiences. One type of experience is not better or worse than the other—they are just different. In qualitative research, no ultimate truth can be found, because a one-sided truth does not exit. In other words, data are not fixed, objective phenomena that can be quantifiably measured (Merriam, 2009). Instead, qualitative data is about capturing the iridescent perceptions and lived experiences of individual people.

We approached this qualitative research with the belief that each participant's views and life experiences were important, unique, and valuable. Through this research, we sought to capture the participants' subjective realities and present their ideas through thematic

explanations. In turn, within the result section, we include as many quotations as possible from individual participants. In such a manner, the reader is provided with many verbatim participant comments, which were extracted directly from the interview transcripts. In doing so, this research communicates, first-hand, the participants' views and experiences (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

In a metaphorical sense, the qualitative representation of the participants' voice is akin to a beautiful patchwork quilt, where each individual piece of the patchwork (i.e., individual participant comments) supplies an essential feature need for the finished blanket (i.e., the overall results of this study). By valuing the views of each participant, a beautiful blanket of collective information emerged via this report.

## Ethical Considerations

Before the start of the study, a research proposal was be submitted to both the University of Prince Edward Island Research Ethics Board and Native Council of Prince Edward Island. Both associations granted ethical permission to conduct the research with off-reserve Aboriginal participants on Prince Edward Island. After these levels of ethics were approved, we distributed information letters (see Appendix A), consent forms (see Appendix B), assent forms (see Appendix C), and/or a copy of interview questions (See Appendix D and E) to potential participants during the Native Council of Prince Edward Island's Annual General Meeting and through email contacts sent via Native Council employees. All participation was voluntary, and most participants signed a consent form before participating in the study. In the case of Elder involvement, oral consent was used instead of asking an Elder to formally sign a consent form (Government of Canada, 2010). Within the reported findings, all participants remained

anonymous. To support anonymity, pseudonyms were used in place of the real participant names. As well, comments that could ultimately reveal the identity of participants were not used.

## Interviews and Participants

Because interviewing is one of the most powerful ways to understand the perspective of others (Fontana & Frey, 2005), the sources of data for this qualitative study were semi-structured focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews. For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher created a set of pre-determined questions, which guided the interviews and kept them on focus. Within the features of semi-structured interviewing techniques, the researchers were free to ask follow-up questions that emerged from participant answers (Merriam, 2009). As a result, the open format of semi-structured interviews allowed rich discussion to organically surface between the participants and the interviewees/researchers. Through this social process, the research findings were co-created via discussion (Mason, 2002).

Bogdan and Bilken (2007) noted that qualitative researchers often develop deep understanding of the experiences of people by utilizing a small representative, purposeful sample. Herein, we used purpose sampling (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), where specific participants were specifically selected, because they met a number of criteria. For this study, those criteria were based on two main features. First, participants needed to be an off-reserve Aboriginal person living in Prince Edward Island. Second, participants needed to be a Kindergarten to postsecondary student on Prince Edward Island, a parent/caregiver of such a student, *and/or* an Elder.

As explained above, all participants lived in Prince Edward Island at the time of the research, and participants represented three geographical counties (aka Zones), which make up Prince Edward Island. Consequently, the data were collected from Aboriginal off-reserve participants living in: (a) Zone 1: Prince County (western part of PEI), (b) Zone 2: Queens County (central part of PEI), and Zone 3: Kings County (eastern part of PEI).

A diverse set of volunteers representing off-reserve Aboriginal stakeholders in Prince Edward Island participated in this study, therein, creating a rich data set. More specifically, there were 35 females and 20 males who partook in the study. A total of 55 participants volunteered for 26 interviews, which consisted of eight focus group interviews and 18 individual interviews. Of these participants, eight participants gave extra time and supplied additional information to the study by participating in both a focus group and an individual interview. As well, three participants gave of extra time and information by participating in two focus group sessions. Although 55 individuals partook in this study, based on the point that some participants were involved in more than one interview, another way to represent the data is that 67 set of stories, were collected during the 26 interview opportunities.

Specifically, with regard to focus group interviews, 49 people volunteered. On average, each of the eight focus groups consisted of six participants. Focus group participants represented Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal parents/caregivers[2], Aboriginal postsecondary learners, Aboriginal high school learners, and Aboriginal elementary learners. A more detailed representation of each focus group is as follows. One focus group consisted only of Elders. Two focus groups

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[2] From this point forward, the term *parent* will be used, but the term is meant to represent any close caregiver/ relative of the Aboriginal learner (e.g., biological parent, adopted parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, and/or community member).

consisted solely of Aboriginal parents. One focus group consisted of Aboriginal parents and an Aboriginal postsecondary learner. One focus group consisted of Aboriginal parents and high school learners. One focus group consisted of only postsecondary learners. One focus group consisted of only Aboriginal high school learners. One focus group consisted of Kindergarten to Grade 8 elementary learners. In total, 29 female and 20 male participants were involved in focus group interviews, which took place from September to December 2013. The average focus group interview lasted about 75 minutes. A visual overview of focus group participants is reflected in *Table 1*.

*Table 1: Overview of Focus Group Interviews*

| FG | Representation | PEI Zone | Fem/Mal | Tot | Date | Location of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Elders | 1, 2, 3 | 7(F) 3(M) | 10 | Nov15, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 2 | Parents | 2 | 3(F) 1(M) | 4 | Oct 24, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 3 | Parents | 1, 3 | 3(F) 3(M) | 6 | Dec 11, 2013 | Private Residence |
| 4 | Parents (x10) & Postsecondary Learner (x1) | 1, 3 | 6(F) 5(M) | 11 | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| 5 | Parents (x2) & High School Learners (x2) | 2 | 2(F) 2(M) | 4 | Sept 24, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| 6 | Postsecondary Learners | 2 | 3(F) | 3 | Oct 8, 2013 | University of PEI |
| 7 | High School Learners | 1, 3 | 2(F) 2(M) | 4 | Dec 11, 2013 | Private Residence |
| 8 | Elementary Learners, K–Gr 8 | 2 | 3(F) 4(M) | 7 | Oct 22, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| | Total Number of Focus Group Interviews: **8** | | | Total Number of Focus Group Participants: **49** | | |

The individual interviews also represented a rich data set. Of these 18 individual interviews, participants represented Elders (x3), Aboriginal parents (x5), postsecondary learners (x8), and high school students (x2). Two of the participants were both parents and postsecondary learners. All individual interviews took place in Charlottetown or Cornwall (i.e., Zone 2 Queens); however, the place of residences for the participants represented Zones 1, 2, and 3 in Prince Edward Island. To promote participant anonymity, specific Zones were not indicated for individual participants. In total, 15 participants were female and three participants were

male. The average length of time for each focus group interview was about 60 minutes. Individual interviews took place from October 2013 to January 2014. A visual overview of these individual interview details is reflected in *Table 2*.

*Table 2: Overview of Individual Interviews*

| Pseudonym | Representation | Fem/Mal | Date | Location of Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Betty | Elder | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Heather | Elder | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Lisa | Elder | F | Dec 12, 2013 | Private Residence |
| Denise | Parent | F | Jan 13, 2014 | Native Council, PEI |
| Jeff | Parent | M | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Michelle | Parent | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Olivia | Parent | F | Nov 28, 2013 | PEI Postsecondary Institute |
| Theresa | Parent | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Christina | Postsecondary Learner | F | Nov 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI |
| Gabby | Postsecondary Learner & Parent | F | Jan 9, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Jessica | Postsecondary Learner & Parent | F | Jan 7, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Kelley | Postsecondary Learner | F | Oct 18, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Phillip | Postsecondary Learner | M | Oct 16, 2013 | University of PEI |
| Rebecca | Postsecondary Learner | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Sarah | Postsecondary Learner | F | Dec 13, 2014 | University of PEI |
| Scott | Postsecondary Learner | M | Oct 29, 2013 | University of PEI |
| Angela | High School Learner | F | Oct 27, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Emily | High School Learner | F | Oct 26, 2013 | Native Council, PEI AGM |
| Total Number of Individual Interviews: **18** | | | | |

## Data Analysis and Thematic Creation

Each of the 26 interviews was audiotaped and transcribed. The data analysis was completed in two phases. The first phrase involved two researchers separately analyzing the data. Each researcher reviewed every transcript in isolation and extracted key ideas, phrases, and commonalities associated with each research question (Basit, 2003; Creswell, 2014). After the first four or five transcripts were reviewed, a list of bullet points emerged beneath each research

question. At that time, the researchers reviewed the bullet points under each research question, looking for similarities. In other words, under each research question, further analysis of the categorical points (or themes) was done and sub-categories (or sub-themes) were identified. The researchers continued to analyze the remaining transcripts in a similar fashion—key points were extracted from the transcripts and added to emergent categories. Additional categories and sub-categories were added, adjusted, and/or created as more data were analyzed. After analyzing all 26 transcripts (i.e., 8 focus groups interviews and 18 individual interviews), each research question had thematic bullet points/answers with sub-themes beneath them.

The second round of data analysis involved the researchers re-analyzing their thematic results by sharing their personal analyses and working together to find one consensus for the two sets of analyzed data. In other words, once each researcher completed her personal analysis of the transcripts, they convened and triangulated the two analyses (Christensen et al., 2014; Creswell, 2014; Schwandt, 2007) to create one final analyzed document. A summary of the final themes and sub-themes for each research question is displayed through *Table 3* (p. 23).

# Chapter 3: Thematic Findings

The purpose of the research was to answer the question: What are *the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on PEI*? Each of the three parts of this purpose (i.e., success, challenge, and needs) is addressed in the following three sections of this chapter. (See *Table 3* below for an overview of the thematic findings.)

*Table 3: Overview of Themes and Sub-Themes*

| Educational Successes | Educational Challenges | Educational Needs |
|---|---|---|
| **Relationships with Teachers**<br>➢ Caring teachers<br>➢ Sociable, approachable teachers<br>➢ Humorous teachers<br>**Caring School Environment**<br>➢ Promote self-esteem via student leadership<br>➢ Positive reinforcement<br>➢ Welcoming school environment for parents<br>**Effective Delivery and Communication of Content**<br>➢ Variety of instructional methods<br>➢ Importance of tutors<br>➢ Fluid communication<br>**Provision and Choice of Hands-On Activities**<br>➢ Physical activities/ sports<br>➢ Fine arts and hands-on activities<br>**Internal and External Educational Supports**<br>➢ Support from Native Council, Prince Edward Island | **Social Time**<br>➢ Recess and lunch<br>➢ More time with friends equals less boredom<br>**Delivery of Content**<br>➢ Lack of support from teachers<br>➢ Not enough homework / homework issues<br>**Feelings of Failure, Frustration, & Pressure**<br>➢ Students experiencing failure<br>➢ Parents and stories of frustration<br>➢ Pressure to communicate Aboriginal knowledge<br>**Transition to New School**<br>➢ Intimidating transition to junior and high school<br>➢ Racism and academic issues linked to transitioning to new school<br>**Racism**<br>➢ Personal stories<br>➢ Racism through books and parents<br>➢ Lower expectations from teachers<br>**Living Two Cultures**<br>➢ Withholding identity to deter racism<br>➢ Communicating identity and experiencing racism<br>➢ Reverse racism | **Feelings of Success**<br>➢ Internal and external motivators<br>➢ Good grades<br>**Multiple Instructional Methods**<br>➢ Multiple ways to learn<br>➢ Hands-on learning<br>➢ Real-life examples<br>**Aboriginal Presence and Content into Mainstream Education**<br>➢ Aboriginal teachers<br>➢ Aboriginal content<br>➢ University setting<br>**Mi'kmaq Language, Culture and Spirituality**<br>➢ Language<br>➢ Culture and identity<br>➢ Spirituality<br>**Elder Teachings**<br>➢ The youth need Elder teachings<br>**Sports, Extra-Curricular Activities, and Other**<br>➢ Sports<br>➢ Extra-curricular activities |

## Educational Successes of Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island

Analysis of the participants' transcripts relayed a number of dominant theme related to the educational successes and positive experiences of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. These themes were: (a) having solid relationships with caring teachers; (b) experiencing a caring school environment; (c) experiencing the effective delivery and communication of curriculum; (d) experiencing hands-on activities; and (e) having and using internal and external supports. Each of these themes is detailed below.

### Relationships with Teachers

***Caring teachers***. When asking student participants, "What helped you success in school?" most participants talked about positive characteristics of their teachers. They often referred to a specific teacher who was kind, helpful, caring, and/or trustworthy. Student participants described that special teacher as "always there for you" (FG5, Part4); "always wants to see everyone succeed" (FG5, Part2), "a really kind person" (Kelly), "friendly" (Emily), "actually listened, and she cared" (Rebecca), and "very helpful" (FG5, Part3). Repeatedly, for many students, success in school was often founded on having caring teachers.

Many student participants explained how one teacher in particular affected their life and/or school experience. For example, Kelly, a postsecondary student, reflected on her Grade 11 biology teacher and said, "She [biology teacher] was the one who said to me, 'Your marks are amazing in Biology. Why don't you go become a nurse?' Truthfully, I had never thought of that. So I started university from there." Jeff talked about the difficulty he had during most of his elementary years. Then he spoke about a time when one teacher, in particular, transformed his tears of frustration into feeling of self-pride and success. Jeff explained:

> I got to Grade 6 when I had a fantastic teacher who sat me down after school, on her time, and just helped me catch up. That was a day I cried. I felt like I couldn't get it, and she got me over that part of the story. Then once the tears were done, I really figured it out, and she was there for me. It was a great day in elementary for me.

A high school student talked about the strength of her Grade 11 Chemistry teacher and said, "It might not have been my favorite course, but she was my favorite teacher. I enjoyed her teaching, because I feel like she really wanted me to succeed" (FG7, Part3). Another high school participant talked about how the influence of his caring teachers kept him in school. "In Grade 9, my year was not too bad, I had some awesome teachers, and they were great to me. They loved me. I didn't get suspended that year" (FG5, Part1). In short, these strong, caring teachers made many students want to come to school. These teachers made the students feel safe and accepted while at school. Simply stated, caring teachers helped the students be successful in school. One high school participant summed up this point when she said, "It was a good school experience. I had good teachers" (FG5, Part4).

In addition to students, parents explained how friendly teachers had a positive effect on their child's perception of going to school. In a focus group, one parent (FG2, Part2) explained that her young child loved her teacher, and, in turn, the parent had no trouble sending her child off to school in the morning. Indirectly, a similar point was made by Betty when she talked about her son and his Grade 3 school year. "He didn't care for her [his Grade 3 teacher]. I had a hard time getting him to go to school that year." Even the parents were positively affected when their child was taught by a caring teacher.

***Sociable, approachable teachers***. Many students spoke highly of teachers who took time to talk to them about non-curricular issues or, in general, just acknowledged them. Emily explained the daily routine of one of her teachers, she liked:

> As we walk into class he asks, "How are you? How was your weekend? What did you do?" So he asks us personal questions like, "Did you do anything fun? Did you go anywhere?" It's interesting because not a lot of teachers do that. They just say go and do your work, and that's about it. But he's different, because he's curious about what you're doing.

A high school participant explained that he felt good when a teacher greeted him every day and when the teacher said, "Good day, [name of student]. How are you doing, today?" (FG5, Part1). Another high school student, Angela, said, "My friends and I would go to his [the teacher's] classroom at lunch or breaks and we'd just talk to him. He's a really good teacher." Phillip, a postsecondary student described a good professor as someone who "knows your name, a little bit about you, and what your goals are." Scott talked about one professor, in particular, and said that because the class size was small, he could "relate to his professor" and was more prone to schedule visits with the professor when Scott had questions. Scott went on to say, "I like teachers who are down to earth, the kind of teachers who would take 10 minutes away from class to talk about the origin of a sandwich." These students indicated that successful in education was often dependent upon a strong, positive relationship built between a student and teacher.

***Humorous teachers***. Student also liked teachers who used humor. Kelly said, "My physics teacher, he was so funny and such a good teacher. He never made anything boring." Another student talked about one of her university professors. She said, "Thank god for the

professor. I loved his class … He was funny" (FG6, Part2). Emily said, "My current Advanced Pre-Calculus teacher is funny and makes the course really fun … Everyone is interested, because he makes those jokes, and he makes it easier to remember." During focus group interviews, two high school student said, "The reason why I like him is because every once in a while he'll bring in something fun … like unicycles and juggling and all that" (FG7, Part4) and "My math and science teacher … he was awesome. He laughed and told really bad jokes" (FG5, Part1). When asking a young elementary student why she liked school, she explained that her teacher was "helpful and funny" (FG8, Part3). It appeared that humor affected the students' spirits and emotions, making them less anxious and more comfortable to learn. This point surfaced regardless of the age or grade level of the student.

## Caring School Environment

***Promote self-esteem via student leadership.*** Many participants explained how student leadership opportunities lead to an increased in the student's self-esteem. Heather believed that the first step toward educational success is having students feel good about themselves. She said, "They need to know that they are valued." One way to have a student both feel good about him/herself and feel like a valued individual is through promoting student leadership. Theresa explained how a teacher promoted leadership in her young son:

> [Name of teacher] took the time to figure him out. She realized, "Oh, he's done of all his work. I'll send him to the library to sort books." Or, she found him little jobs throughout the school. She had talked to the librarian, and she talked to the Grade 1 teacher. I think he was in Grade 3, and he would go to Grade 1 and help the Grade 1s.

Student leadership was also promoted when a teacher asked a student to "wipe the board or pass out things. If he feels like he's helping, it kind of sets him up for the day" (FG2, Part3). Scott talked about a time in high school when he valued due the mentorship he provided to his peers. "I started to get into a leadership role, both in school and out of school. I was the mentor for the little group around me, and eventually that spread to other people, to the point where I would stay after class to help other people get their work done." While Emily was in high school, she was a peer mentor for a course. Her teacher, "trust[ed] me to go to the office and pick stuff up for her, or to even watch her class for her sometimes when she has to photocopy something" When Emily talked about this experience she smiled and her body language relayed a healthy self-pride. In these examples, the fostering student leadership appeared to have a positive influence. They valued themselves in school, because they were able to help others. This healthy self-esteem supported their success in school.

***Positive reinforcement***. Another aspect of school that supported student success was positive reinforcement, which took many forms. For one parent, positive reinforcement was a little note sent home with her child saying that her child did well in school that day. "The note really made her feel good and happy" (FG2, Part2). A father talked about the happiness that emanated from his young daughter because of stickers. He said, "They have a reward system. There are certain colors and you get *good*, *alright*, or whatever. She got the top one day, and she got her sticker. It says, [You're doing well]" (FG2, Part1). The father went on to say that these stickers were part of the reason his daughter loved school. Olivia also relayed a story about how her son's teacher gave him incentives. If her son stayed on-task for a set number of class, he got rewarded of free social time, free time to play cards, or free gym time. Olivia highlighted these rewards made her son really enjoy and get excited about school.

***Welcoming school environment for parents***. When asking parents to identify supports that helped their children succeed in school, many of them talked about how important it was to have a school environment that was not only caring and safe for the students, but welcoming for parents, too. One parent who was new to the school appreciated the assistance she received when registering her children in school. She said, "I called to register at the end of summer, and she was so helpful and really friendly. It took away my fears of them going to a new school" (FG2, Part2). Some of Jessica's fears about her son's learning needs dissipated, because the "school is so accommodating and understanding to his needs." Gabby believed that having a sociable school secretary was important and said, "When I walk into [name of school] and see the secretary, she always asks, "Hi, how are you?" She is so welcoming."

Lisa and a focus group participant (FG4, Part2) explained that one of the reasons why having a school environment that is welcoming for parents is so important is because some Aboriginal parents have negative personal memories about their own schooling. Lisa explained that some parents may be intimated by the idea of even stepping into a school. In turn, a school that has friendly staff who greet parents and staff and teachers available to answer parent questions is extremely important. When a parent is greeted and helped in such a manner, they feel more confident to support their child's school education.

**Effective Delivery and Communication of Content**

***Variety of instructional methods***. Another important issue that, in particular, students participants commented upon was that teachers need to explain the curriculum content in different ways, preferably using hands-on methods or real-life examples. A high school participant believed that, because of her present teacher's instructional style, the student was

learning more in Chemistry. She said, “This year in Grade 12, the teacher is making a difference. She’s very engaging. She’ll use better analogies and real life situations” (FG7, Part3). Another student reflected on her experiences in math and indicated, “In elementary, I wasn’t very good at math, and, when I came to [name of school] in Grade 7, the teacher who we had explained it better so I understood more” (FG7, Part2). Another student said that her teacher was “amazing,” because “If I didn’t understand something, he’d be there for me. He’d explain it in a way that I would understand” (FG5, Part4). Scott said that his professor explained assignments in a step-by-step fashion making sure that all students understood each step before continuing. Jessica spoke about her son who had a learning difference. This parent was appreciative of the fact that one teacher, in particular, took time to personally get to know her son and his learning style. By doing so, the teacher was able to present material in a way that worked for him. On this topic, Jessica said, “He has someone [the teacher] who acknowledges that he can’t quite understand something, and she can teach it to him in a way that he can.”

***Importance of tutors***. Both parents and students spoke about the importance of private tutors in their hone. One parent said, “My son did tutoring all summer, and this is the first year that he actually feels at the same level as all the other kids. So it’s a big success for him this year” (FB1, Part3). However, on the topic of private tutoring, one parent said, “There shouldn’t be a fee for tutoring. It should be free, and it should be the province or the federal government’s responsibility” (FG5, Part2). Moreover, “As far as the tutoring program goes . . . it would be nice if it was free, but more importantly, it would be nice if it was organized by the end of the school year so that it was set up and ready to go for the very first day of school” (FG5, Part3). Another parent indicated that it was difficult for her to find a tutor, “It’s not that I am not interested [in getting my daughter a tutor], it’s a matter of trying to find one” (FG5, Part3). One

high school student suggested that students could form their own peer group. She said, "I don't know it might be a dumb idea, but if there was a concentrated group of people trying to learn the same thing for an hour after school … it would still be helpful. (FG7, Part3). All of these participants talked about the important role that tutors played in their own or their child's educational experience and success in school.

***Fluid communication***. Another point that promoted the student's educational success was effective home-school communication. With regard to this point, one parent said, "I like it when you feel like you have really good communication with the teacher" (FG2, Part2). Parents wanted to know both the successes and the challenges that their child might be facing in school. For example, Theresa appreciated teachers who let her know what homework assignments her child finished and which ones were not finished. Olivia had day-to-day contact through a written journal with the teacher: "We have a daily communication log that we use to keep in contact. It seems like a lot of work, but it helps him [Olivia's son].)

In particular, parents liked the transparency and communication that teachers were promoting via teacher blogs, email addresses, teacher-parent journals, and school newsletters. However, some parents cautioned that sometimes a parent might not have Internet accessibility; therefore, Internet-dependent communications such as email, blogs, and e-school newsletter should not be the only means of teacher-school-parent communication. For example, one parent said, "I like [printed] newsletters … It's in their backpacks, and you when are taking stuff out you can see it. You might not always be online" (FG4, Part8). Another father participant liked the printed newsletters. He said, "With those newsletters, you can take them and put them on your fridge" (FG4, Part4). Similarly, another parent said, "I'd prefer the [printed] newsletter,

myself. Then you have a hard copy of it, and you can refer back to it. You might just delete an email as soon as it comes in, you know, or forget all about it" (FG4, Part5). However, this same participant provided an overarching suggestion: "Both would work, you know. Print the newsletter and email it to people … it's a bit of both worlds. (FG4, Part5). In sum, parents believed that when there was regular, available communication between the school and home, the parents were in a better, more-informed position to help their child with school work. Such fluid communication also enabled them to reinforce the teachers' school requirements.

## Provision and Choice of Hands-On Activities

***Physical activities/sports***. When asking participants, "What is the best thing about school?" Time and time again, students and parents talked about the importance of sports, gym, recess, and/or being outside. *Tables 4* and *5* below provide a diverse list of examples related to what individual participants said or talked about when they were asked to describe their favorite part about school and/or what helped them to become a better student.

*Table 4: Comments Pertaining to Sports*

| Participant | Comment |
|---|---|
| FG3, Part4 | One of my likes is sports in school. |
| FG3, Part3 | My little grandson is from [name of town]. He's doing pretty well. He's in bowling and different things. |
| FG3, Part3 | He enjoys that [running and track-and-field]. He won out here. Then he had to go to [name of town]. He didn't come in first, but he was still happy.. |
| FG7, Part3 | It's the best—sports. |
| FG7, Part2 | Another part that I like about school is the school sports. |
| FG8, Part4 | Outside, because I get to play soccer. |
| Rebecca | I was also really athletic and involved. I miss that . . . I did track and field, cross-country, soccer, basketball, hockey, volleyball, badminton—basically any sport that was going I was involved. |
| Christina | I was in figure skating and other sports, plus extracurricular stuff. |
| Olivia | But my children … I forced it on them pretty much [to be involved in sports], because I didn't have that experience and I want them to learn different skills and different sports and to be more open to opportunities than I was. |

*Table 5: Comments Pertaining to Gym, Recess, and Outside*

| Participant | Comment |
| --- | --- |
| Olivia | Recess. |
| FG8, Part5 | Outside. |
| FG8, Part6 | Outside when I went to the playground. |
| FG2, Part2 | My daughter, her favorite time is when they get to be outdoors, recess, or lunch. |
| FG6, Part1 | I loved going to school for the lunch break and recesses. |
| FG8, Part4 | Gym. |
| FG2, Part2 | Gym, he's having fun in gym class. |
| FG8, Part5 | I like going to gym . . . because we get to play soccer and dodge-ball. |
| FG8, Part6 | I like to go to gym.  I like to play with toys and ribbons, and play basketball, and run around. |
| Theresa | Gym, intermural, anything physical. |

As indicated in these comments, many students and parents viewed sports, gym, recess, and/or being outside as valuable experiences that helped students nurture a positive attitude about their school and become excited about aspects of school learning.

***Fine arts and hands-on activities***. Another popular response with regard to what students and parents said was one of their favorite features of school was being involved in creative or hands-on activities. For example, one participant said her nephew "liked drawing" (FG3, Part3). A Grade 8 student said that her favorite class in school was cooking (FG8, Part3). A high school student said, "I like to do art" (FG5, Part1). Rebecca fondly described the times during junior high when her class went on field trips. A high school student said that when she was in elementary school, she loved choir. A postsecondary student reminisced on her high school experience and relayed that being involved in the student council and the after-school drama club were highlights of her education. One parent and one student indicated that woodwork (FG3, Part3) and woodshop (FG8, Part2) was the most important part of the high school experience. In each one of these examples, there is an artistic or experiential component

associated with these positive school experiences. This point reinforces the type of learning that inspires children to come to school. Moreover, all these comments are about a type of learning that is hands-on, experiential, and/or founded on the fine arts.

**External Educational Supports**

***Support from Native Council of Prince Edward Island***. Many participants were thankful for the educational supports they received from the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. Sometimes, specific educational activities or classes were hosted through the Native Council. Other times, the Native Council supplied financial support for educational activities not specifically hosted through them. For example, Betty, and adult learner said, “I’d seen it [educational course] advertised. I approached them, and the Native Council sponsored me and paid for my tuition.” Michelle explained how the support of the Native Council helped her daughter:

> She [Michelle’s daughter] dropped out and when we moved here. Through the Native Council, she got into an upgrading program that covered things like life skills … we [Michelle and her daughter] are where we are today because of those programs.

Michelle went on to explain, “Native Council developed a program where they would hire Aboriginal youth in high school so that student would have summer employment, and they could continue their education.” Also, Christina, a postsecondary student, was thankful for the scholarships she received through the Native Council. Another participant explained that through the Native Council, Elder teachings are sponsored. He said, “This program … here at Native Council is excellent for that. They’re learning a lot of stuff from our Elders” (FG5 Part2). This participant indicated the importance of these teachings saying that such an education could

not be easily accessed anywhere else on the island. In sum, the social, financial, and spiritually support offered through the Native Council positively affected the educational opportunities, successes, and experiences of many off-reserve Aboriginal people on Prince Edward Island.

## Educational Challenges for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island

When asking participants to describe the challenges that off-reserve Aboriginal learners faced on Prince Edward Island, several key issues surfaced. In particular, participants talked about: (a) not enough social time in school; (b) a need for better delivery of curricular content in school (c) student and parent feelings of failure, frustration, and pressure; (d) the difficulties faced when students transition to new schools; (e) stories associated with racism; and (f) difficulties maneuvering within and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. Each of these themes is detailed below.

### Social Time

***Recess and lunch***. Many parents and students spoke about the importance for more time for their children to socialize with friends and more time for students to eat lunch. One participant expressed his idea that children, in general, “want to be active” (FG2, Part2). Parents believed that ample time for recess is an important part of the child’s overall healthy development in school. In one focus group, parents said, “Now, at her new school, they don’t get as long of a lunch break so she is not outdoors as long. She wasn’t very impressed with that” (FG2, Part1), “Yeah, lunch isn’t long enough” (FG2, Part3) and “Sometimes she hardly eats. Full sandwiches come home (FG2, Part4).

Even when asking high school students what could be improved with regard to their educational experience, they said, "What about longer lunches?" (FG7, Part3) and "At least an hour. That's just 15 more minutes" (FG7, Part3). In a somewhat related point, some high school participants even went so far as to provide suggestions on what types of food should be provided during a longer lunch hour. One student said, "[Bring in] healthier and more homemade food. [Have] less processed meats all the time, because it's not fun to eat (FG7, Part1). Another student said, "So for $5 if you got a chicken wrap or something, like grilled chicken or spaghetti, or something else, a wholesome salad. I think that would make you have more energy for the day" (FG7, Part3). These comments highlighted both the students' and parents' desire to provide students with more time to eat nourishing meals during school hours.

***More time with friends and less boredom***. In this research, students, in general, loved the time they spent with friends. One participant said, "Friends definitely brought me to school" (FG7, Part 3). Another student explained:

> I had three or four friends in high school who really helped me. They guided me and told me, "You should go to school. Go to class. You don't want to live the way you're living now. Your education is going to get you out of this hole … They would give me a call in the morning, at home, and say, "You need to go to school. I'll see you there" (FG5, Part1)

Angela talked about how fun it was to work with friends in groups in school. She said, "We did circles groups, where we would all talk, and we would write answer to questions." Although the above comments explained how friends are an important aspect of successful education, Scott

believed, "The education system is not designed for you to make friends; it's designed for you to get good grades and pass."

Another issue that some students spoke about was the notion that school was boring. One parent said that her son described school simply as "boring" (FG2, Part3). In relation, Sarah, a postsecondary student, also shared some boring aspect of education in university when she said:

> I've had some professors/instructors who would just read off the slides. I can really just take those off of Moodle and copy them. Those lectures are boring, because they're not adding more material; they're reading from the slide or the textbook. I can do that.

These comments directly and indirectly highlight that if education and learning activities were to place an increased focus on learning through a social community of motivated learners (i.e., groups of friends), these students might have an increasingly positive view of and experience with education.

**Delivery of Content**

***Lack of support from teachers.*** Two participants believed that class sizes were too big, and, for that reason, teachers were unable to effectively teach all students (FG4, Part5 & FG5, Part3). "I think there's a shortage of teachers here; the classes are overcrowded. They [the teachers] can't get through to the student, because there are so many of them. Give extra room in the schools, put more teachers in there" (FG1, Part6). Gabby explained that, in her daughter's classroom, the majority of students had special needs or learning differences. Although Gabby did not have an issue with having students grouped together, she did question if the teacher had

enough assistance so that all students, including her daughter, could be educated to their full potential. More specifically, Gabby said:

> I found out, when I went to the meet and greet, that [name of child's] class has 15 students in it and 11 have special needs—FASD, ADHD, other learning disabilities—11 out of 15 … I still don't know yet what that means for the other four in class as their needs need to be met, too.

One student expressed her simple belief that, "Teachers need to help students more. I don't see as many teachers trying to help. I know … there is only one of them, but …" (FG5, Part4). Jessica spoke of her high school days and explained that she did not feel supported by the teacher. She said she would go to class, but she did not understand the course content: "I would be like *blagh*. It was pointless for me to sit there in front of the teacher." On the topic of meeting the needs of students, another parent suggested that more tutors and educational assistants should be in the classroom. He said, "I believe tutors should be there. I know they're cutting down on teacher assistants and everything like that, wrong thing to be doing" (FG5, Part2). Similarly, another parent said, "EAs [Educational Assistants] are invaluable though, they really are" (FG5, Part3). In general, these students and parents were asking for more support and attention from the teachers and educational assistant. They directly and indirectly made the point that, in some cases, class sizes need to be smaller and/or more teachers and educational assistants need to be hired.

***Not enough homework and homework issues***. Some parents were concerned about the lack of homework. "I don't think school really prepares them for university … Well because [at name of school] they do no homework. For three years she went there with no homework"

(FG3, Part1). Another parent talked about his high school daughter and said, "She has some [homework], but not a whole lot" (FG3, Part2). Another parent said, "I just wanted her [the teacher] to give me something to do with her [the child] at home" (FG2, Part2). Theresa, a concerned parent, summed up the issue of homework when she said:

> I think something needs to come home. I don't care if it's reading two pages. I don't care if it's reading a book. I don't care if it's a sheet of math, but something needs to come home, because, in life, there is homework.

Another parent wanted to reinforce, at home, what was being taught at school. He explained that he felt somewhat helpless, because how he was taught when he was a child and how his daughter is currently being taught were different. He said, "If they could develop some sort of kit to send home to the parent so that we can teach at home, too, because what I was taught and what my kids are being taught are two different things" (FG2, Part1). In general, many parents voiced a similar concern that their children were not receiving enough homework.

In relation to the above point, a few parents were not as concerned about lack of homework. For example, one parents said, "Kids just don't like homework" (FG3, Part5). Another participant said, "He's not one to do homework, he hates it" (FG4, Part1). In reviewing participant views, many parents believed there was not enough homework, while a few indicated that homework was a challenge for their child.

**Feelings of Failure, Frustration, and Pressure**

***Students experiencing failure***. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe a time when he/she/your child felt unsuccessful at school." In asking this question, one

high school student answered, “All the time and everything until now, pretty much” (FG7, Part4). Another high school student said, “I tried really hard for one test, and I ended up failing it. So it just brought my spirits down, and I didn’t want to try too hard anymore” (FG7, Part 1). A third high school student talked about his French class. He said, “I gave up completely. I failed, a lot” (FG5, Part1). One parent relayed a story the teacher told her with regard to her son’s inability to write his name: “[The teacher] told me that he tried, and he just didn’t know how. He couldn’t do it. So, he got on the floor and cried and had his little breakdown (FG2, Part2). Heather said, “A lot of these kids feel like they’ve failed, and there’s no way out. There’s no hope at the end of the tunnel for them.” In all of these cases, the student appeared to be overwhelmed by these negative features, predominantly feelings of failure, that emerged from their educational experiences.

One parent, in particular, explained how her son was passed on in the early grades without having firmly grasped the curricular content. Then, when this child entered high school, he became so frustrated with the advanced content that he quit. The parent said:

> I find that in the school system with a lot of children, and it’s happened to my son, is they advance them, but they are not ready for it. For example, they aren’t ready to pass Grade 3, but they advance them anyway so that they stay with their friends. But the student can’t do the work. Then, by Grade 8 or 9 or 10, it’s like, “Eh, I can’t do the work. I am out of here.” (FG4, Part8)

Similar to the above point, one high school participant shared his story:

> I never really enjoyed school from the beginning. I remember I used to get really low marks, and they weren't going to pass me in elementary, but they just allowed me to pass. Then my marks just continued to drop. (FG7, Part4)

These comments highlight that feelings of inadequacy and failure do not support educational success. Feelings of negativity, low self-esteem, and failure cause students to give up on school completely.

***Parent and stories of frustration.*** One of the major challenges with regard student success was that sometimes parents, themselves, felt frustrated, helpless, and/or intimidated by the educational system. One parent shared his story of frustration when he was not allowed to pick up his own daughter from school. He said:

> The other day we were in the neighborhood, so we stopped by her school to pick her up. She was just getting in line to go on the bus . . . The Vice Principal, he said, "Don't you take her!" I said, "She's my kid!" Do you know what I mean? They said you've got to call the school first. (FG2, Part1)

Another parent explained that some of the teachers intimidated her. She said, "I have a hard time communicating with the teachers. I feel so intimidated, and I might get kind of tongue tied" (FG2, Part2).

Other stories relayed a deeper level of frustration related to the hierarchical power often present in the school culture. Theresa shared a story of her heartfelt emotions of frustration and anger when she tried to get help for her daughter at school. Theresa explained, "So, I called for a meeting with the guidance counselor, but, apparently, it was the wrong guidance counselor."

Theresa ended up scheduling another appointment with the guidance counselor and a youth worker, who turned up to their meeting late. Theresa explained:

> Then when he [the youth worker] got there, he asked me what I knew about my culture. I said, "To be honest I don't know a whole lot. I'm just learning with my kids. We're learning together." He [the youth work] told the guidance counselor to pass me what he [the youth worker] had. He said, "So we got this online. It was a Medicine Wheel down in North Dakota. I think you need to read this. There are some great teachings in there." … He said, "You can't fix your daughter until you fix yourself."

Theresa continued her story and said, "My last straw was when they had something printed off the internet—and it was a big booklet and told me, 'Take the word *teacher* and replace it with *parent*. Read this, and it should help.'" Theresa concluded that she so desperately wanted to get help for her daughter, but she felt like she got no assistance from the school system.

Another parent, Denise, talked about her daughter, explaining some of the social and education challenges her daughter faced at school. Denise went to the school to try to obtain support to help for her daughter. The school personnel told Denise, "We don't have the staff to deal with this. These issues are too much." The school personnel continued to tell Denise of the many problems Denise's daughter was dealing with, but they do not provide suggestions to help Denise and her daughter deal with the problems. Denise explained, "If you're going to sit there and tell me there's a problem, you best be coming up with a solution that we're going to agree to." Denise went on to describe the many spiritual and academic gifts that her daughter possessed. She said what the school needed was "somebody who wasn't going to give up on her [daughter]." Unfortunately, the school did not offer such help to Denise or her daughter.

Feelings of frustration and helplessness were also threaded throughout Olivia's story. She explained that she felt intimidated during parent-school interviews, where, on her own, she faced her son's homeroom teacher, resource room teacher, and the principal, as they talked about her son's educational challenges. She described what she felt like after the meeting:

> [I don't want] to have these meetings when they talk about him like, 'He did this, he did that.' So where's the positive? Is he always negative? Where is the positive in this child? Do you not see it? Is it just as negative? … I don't like leaving there crying and walking down my children's hall bawling my eyes out, because I feel like a bad parent.

Olivia thought that other Aboriginal mothers felt as frustrated and intimidated by the school system, just as she did. She said:

> They [Aboriginal parents] go to the school and most of them do not ask questions because of that intimidation. We need to start a committee. Do you know what I mean? I'd feel so comfortable going with someone. Do you know what I mean—to have that support, but where do you start? What do you do? How do you get the word out? Are you feeling the same way that I am feeling? A lot of Aboriginal people are not as educated as others, so they might not have the ability to talk comfortably with higher up people … If there was a group, especially around parent-teacher interview time, to have everyone get together as Aboriginal women or whoever, mothers, fathers, and just discuss any anxieties or let's do this together.

Like Olivia, another parent explained that she was frustrated by the negativity of educators. She said, "Don't tell me my daughter can't, because she can. Don't tell me, "This

won't work, and you best change your attitude" (FG5, Part3). She continued by saying, "I am tired of fighting the teachers, the school system, the attitude, and the stigma that has gone with her [my daughter] without people giving her the opportunity to even succeed" (FG5, Part3). This parent explained how, in her view, the teachers wore "blinders:"

> Fighting teachers who have those blinders on and "according to her file" … It's like, put the goddamn file down honey, because not all of the information that's in there or that you need to have in there, truly reflects her and her drive, goals, and ambitions. You can't rate those things. (FG5, Part3)

These Aboriginal parents selflessly shared their emotional stories and described their pain. One of the overarching features of these stories is that they felt frustrated by a school system that did not listen to them and were not open to their ideas and their parental wisdom. Furthermore, these parents felt like they did not have control over their children's educational situation, even though they were the parent—the child's key caregiver of education, love, and life.

***Pressure to communicate Aboriginal knowledge***. Within educational settings, many participants talked about the pressure they often endured when the teacher knew that they were Aboriginal. Rebecca, a postsecondary student explained, "It was really awkward sometimes, because I was usually the only Aboriginal person in my class. I felt like all eyes were on me when we talked about it [Aboriginal issues]." One high school student shared a similar experience. "Every time they talk about Natives, the teacher would look at me and ask me about it. I am sitting there thinking, 'Do you think I know this? I'm only 15'" (FG5, Part1). In the postsecondary student focus group, one participant said:

> If you're Aboriginal in a course and the professor/instructor finds out . . . remember, last June … She [the professor/instructor] said, "Okay, you two need to come up and talk about it." I thought, "Why us?! Why do we have to talk about it?" (FG6, Part1)

In these stories, it appeared that some teachers and professors/instructors assumed that because the student was Aboriginal, he/she knew everything there was to know that the Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing. As Phillip said, "I never considered myself to be an expert about [my culture]." He went on to say, "I'm just a person. I'm don't know everything, even if it is about my own culture. Who knows everything about their own culture?"

**Transition to New School**

***Intimidating transition to junior and high school.*** When students talked about their elementary years, many of them expressed they felt safe in a small school. Angela explained that she really liked her elementary school, because class sizes were small, and she knew everyone in her class. Christina explained that from Kindergarten to Grade 4, everyone in her classes were friends, and "there were no little cliques." Then when other participants spoke about their transition to a new junior or high school, they generally described the experience as "scary" (FG4, Part7), "intimidating" (Theresa), and "overwhelming' (FG4, Part7). Sarah talked about her transition to high school. She said, "It was a bigger school, and, at first, I had a hard time in Grade 9." In contrast to the security and social comfort in small schools, participants described what it was like in their new, bigger school. Rebecca, Emily, Sarah, and a focus group participant provided a description of this transitioning to a new school (see *Table 6* below):

*Table 6: Comments Pertaining to Transitioning to a New School*

| Participant | Comment |
|---|---|
| Rebecca | I was with the same people from Grades 2 to 9, every single class, and we became our own little family. We knew everything about each other, so going from that little school to a big school with people from all over … it was hard. |
| Emily | My elementary years were awesome; they were some of my best times. I came to school, because everyone was so friendly, and you knew everyone. But when we moved here, and I started middle school, it wasn't good at all. I hated it … the way people acted was as if "we already have our friends, and we don't want any more." |
| Sarah | So that transition was hard … I grew up with the same people in the same classroom for 10 years, so then to move into a new school with new and more people . . . With the new people, I felt that they knew each other from their elementary and middle school, and their parents knew each other. So they were together all the time, and I couldn't really get in as much as I could have with someone on reserve. It was clique. |
| FG5, Part2 | In junior high, I did not like school at all. I got picked on a lot for being Native, so that really made it hard. I sometimes wouldn't go to school … So what I did was I turned myself into a fighter and started fighting with people so that they would get off my back about being Native. It didn't work. |

***Racism and academic issues linked to transitioning to a new school***. Associated with the topic of transitioning to a new school is the topic of racism. Many participants talked about the racism that they faced, in particular, when they started at a new school. One student said, "I started experiencing some hardships with racism and just trying to fit in with everyone else here in Charlottetown. It was a pretty hard struggle for me during junior high" (FG5, Part2) and "In Grade 9, this guy told me to get back to the woods" (FG5, Part1). Other participants connected the topics of transiting to a new school other negative experiences such as lower marks, school boredom, and getting into trouble. One high school student explained:

> I was always a pretty smart kid in elementary. I always had 90s and 100s. Once I got to junior high it started going down to 80s and 70s, and then when I got to high school, I

> started losing interest in school. They went down to 60s, 50s, and some 40s. (FG5, Part1)

Another high school student said, "From elementary to junior high [it was good], but when I got to [name of high school] it seemed more like a job" (FG7, Part3). Angela also indicated, "I got myself into trouble" when she started at her new high school. Kelly lamented on her entrance into a new school and said, "Transitioning to Grade 10 at [name of school] was a really rough year for me." In all of these comments, an overarching feature was that students started experiencing racial and academic challenges around the same time they transitioned to a new school.

**Racism**

***Personal stories of racism***. Although the topic of racism was touched upon above, many participants described how they blatantly faced racism throughout their entire education and life. For example, one parent explained that when his child was in Grade 1, "[Child's name] had other kids saying to her, 'There's no Indians allowed on this bus!'" (FG4, Part1). Lisa, another parent, shared the stories of racism that her children endured while on the bus. Lisa said:

> A lot of the time, it was on the bus. "Don't sit with me, you're Indian. Go sit over there." . . . "Oh, you're just a stinking Indian" or different things. Then there would be some kids that would love them and say, "Well come and sit with me" but those [other] words could have affected a child for life.

Lisa also talked about the racism she, herself, endured when she was in school. She said:

> When we went to class, we were put in the back of the classroom and introduced as *those Indians* … When I knew the answer, I put my hand up, but I was never recognized. It was always somebody else who was called on.

Kelly talked about a time in a high school math class when one of her classmates said, "Everyone from [name of First Nations community] is crazy" and then this fellow student told Kelly that she "Should go back to her teepee." Emily explained that she was called a "red skin." Jeff relayed a childhood racist experience that he had in Grade 2. He said:

> I got teased one day by [name of student] and a group of the popular kids from Grade 2. They picked me off one day when they realized that I was Native and different. They said that my family danced around a fire naked, and [they] made me cry. I was so embarrassed. I went home, and I told my grandfather, "They said we danced around fires naked and that we are savages from the cartoons." I watched a lot of 50s, 60s, and 70s cartoons at the time. That's how Natives were portrayed—we were tribal people, and we danced around fires naked. That day in Grade 2, stuck in my head for a long time . . . They didn't realize how much that hurt me.

Many participants explained that while they were going to school or in school, they endured much racism from a variety of people throughout the school system. Of course, this negatively affected their educational experience in school.

***Racism through books and parents***. Other participants spoke of the racism that was within the content of books and that was relayed from some non-Aboriginal parents. When asking Angela if aspects of the Aboriginal culture was ever taught in high school. She indicated

that the only time she recalled learning anything about Aboriginal people was in Grade 10 Child Studies on the topic of crib death. She said:

> We were learning about what could go wrong and how to prevent it … the Aboriginal stuff came up, because it was more common for it to happen to Aboriginal babies. It made it sound like it was in the genes or something. The book said it was more common. It wasn't my teacher, it was the book saying it.

On a similar note, Gabby said, "For the most part if you read about a book on Aboriginal people, you are going to read about the different abuses, addictions and the bad side. That is most of what is written."

Kelly went on to explain that the parents of her non-Aboriginal friends did not allow their children to come to Kelly's house. Kelly could visit her friends' homes, but her friends were not allowed to come to her house. Sarah talked about the racism that she felt from most of her high school teachers and said:

> I think with the teachers, half of them only spoke to the non-Native students … The other teachers weren't engaging with the Aboriginal students as much as the White students. It felt like they liked them better, so why should I even try in your class, because you'll give me a lower mark.

These comments highlighted that racism was a grave challenge that students seemed to constantly face while they were being educated in school.

***Lower expectations from teachers***. Some participants presented another aspect of racism. They explained that some teachers had lower expectations of them as students, simply because

they were Aboriginal. One postsecondary student reflected on her high school days and said, "I felt like I was being pushed towards the general classes" (FG6, Part3). Similarly, another postsecondary student said, "I remember they had tried to put me in the general classes, and my mom had refused. She said, 'No, she doesn't need to be in general she can be in academic.'" (FG6, Part 1). In the same line of thought, Jessica indicated:

> I find that when you're in a high school, they are pushing you towards … I don't want to say trades, because they're not really pushing you toward trades, but when I was in high school there wasn't a big push from your teachers to go to university, either.

Sarah provided her story of how low expectations for Aboriginal students affected her during most of her high school years:

> I think some of the biggest challenges for students could be that people expect Aboriginal students to have low scores and low achievement, so they do. I know, for myself, in middle school and in my first year of high school, I didn't care because no one else cared. It was expected of me not to have high 80s or high 90s. So I went with what they expected—50s and 60s.

In a focus group, one postsecondary student explained how her professor/instructor publically talked about these lower expectations. She said:

> The professor/instructor, at the beginning of the course, made it a point to point out to everyone that I was the only Aboriginal student in class and that is very rare, because we don't have very good grades … I was just like, "Okay …" (FG6, Part1)

In particular, two participants summarized these stories of prejudice, discrimination, and racism by saying, “Racism is alive and well on PEI” (Michelle & FG5, Part3).

**Living Two Cultures**

When asking students about the challenges associated with education, one theme that surfaced was not being able to freely identify as being Aboriginal and not be bullied, teased, or made to feel inferior because of ethnicity. The following comments and stories depict many of the hardships participants endured. Although each particular comment may not be directly associated with an experience in the classroom or in an educational setting, undeniably, participants carried these stories with them into the classroom. In turn, these stories directly and indirectly negatively affected their educational experiences, or, as Jeff explained:

> Our family wasn’t the rich family on the block and my family came from the Native side of the island . . . I felt like my clothes held me back and my hair. The little things that added up at the end of the day affected my grades.

***Withholding identity to deter racism***. Many participants with fair skin explained that when they were children and young teenagers, they did not identify as Aboriginal. There were various reasons why they kept their identity confidential. Sometimes, based on the situation, there simply was no need to identify their cultural background. However, a number of participants explained that, if they revealed their Aboriginal heritage, they believed they would be teased or made to feel embarrassed. One focus group participant said that she did not self-identify as Aboriginal, and, in turn, “I wasn’t picked on. I wasn’t tortured like the rest of my friends” (FG4, Part7). Another participant said, “I didn’t say a word. I didn’t want people to make fun of me” (FG3, Part2). Another participant said that she did not want to identify as

Aboriginal, because she did not want to be "singled out." She said that her family was not well off, financially. "So you're already singled out, and you don't want to be singled out for too many things" (FG3, Part1). Theresa talked about why her daughter chose not to identify as Aboriginal. "Not that she was embarrassed by her culture; she just didn't want the racism to start. She was scared of the racism; she didn't want—she really didn't want them to know." Phillip, a postsecondary student was proud of his Aboriginal heritage, but he explained what it was like growing up:

> Growing up it was an embarrassment. To talk about being part Native or part anything like that was embarrassing. You didn't talk about it … It was something that the family knew, and there were only certain people in the family who would mention it maybe because they were a little braver or whatever. They might have been the rebel in the family, "Yeah, well you're great grandmother was this, right? But anybody else said, "No, that's not true. Don't worry about that. There's nothing like that in the family." It was an embarrassment. It was almost like a fault. It was like, "How could my great-grandfather, who fished off the Labrador coast and came in to dry his cod, hook up with an Aboriginal person from here? How could he?" It was so disappointing and embarrassing, and I hate to say the word, but in a lot of ways disgusting. The family kind of viewed it in a disgusting way. They never wanted to mention it.

Similar to Phillip, Michelle and Heather said that, when they were young, "I was ashamed of being an Aboriginal person" (Michelle) and "We knew we were Native, but it wasn't discussed" (Heather). These comments showed the difficulties that these off-reserve Aboriginal participants constantly endured during their school years.

***Communicating identity and experiencing racism***. Other participants described what happened when they did communicate their Aboriginal heritage. Michele described a time when she was dressed in regalia and met a non-Aboriginal person in an elevator.

> I was going up the elevator, and I had my things on. She [a non-Aboriginal person] said to me, "Well, you're not Native. Can we go in there with those Indians?" And I said, "Well I am Native." And she said, "No you're not." And I said, "I am." Again she said, "No you're not." So I asked why, and she said, "You've got blond hair. You don't look anything like it." I thought, "Oh lord."

Heather also shared a personal experience of the racist remarks she experienced when talking to a family acquaintance:

> He said, "Oh those bloody Natives. Give them a beer and a bingo card and away they go." I stood up and said, "Excuse me? Why would you insult me like that?" He said, "You're not Native." I said, "I am Native." So he said, "Well you don't look it." I don't get this, what do you mean I don't look it? So I said, "So I don't have the dark skin, and I don't play bingo, and I don't drink. Am I supposed to?" I was insulted and I just walked away.

Emily shared what some of her classmates and acquaintances said when she told them she was Aboriginal:

> They said, "Well you don't look it at all." I said, "Well I'm only 50% so I didn't get the skin and hair." They asked me where I came from and if I could speak the language … I

> said, "I am from [name of Aboriginal community], and they said, "Isn't that where all the dirty Indians live?"

These comments show that many non-Aboriginal peoples have negative, generalized, unfair stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal peoples are often instantly, unjustly labeled as less important, not valuable, or not capable. This type of racist thinking is a Canadian atrocity and a blatant example of social injustice. These examples show how it important it is to educate mainstream society about the greatness of Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing.

***Reverse racism***. Other participants provided comments about reverse racism they experienced. Christina, who had quite fair skin, talked about what it was like for her when she went to an Aboriginal conference.

> "I went to an Aboriginal thing [conference] with youth. They looked like typical First Nations people. It almost puts me in an awkward position, because I don't look the part. You go there, and they're wondering, "Who's that White kid? What's she doing here?"

Similar to Christina, Denise explained, "I endure reverse racism, because I don't look Indian enough. I have blue eyes, and because my skin is not dark enough." Jeff, who was extremely proud of his Aboriginal heritage, said, "I felt like I was alone in a world of White people." Jeff then continued and explained how he learned to successfully "walk two paths:"

> In a way, I am quite fortunate not to look Aboriginal, if that is a look. I look more White than I do anything else. Walking by me on the street, you wouldn't know that I am Aboriginal. It's a term my mom has used, and I like to use it, too—walking two paths. When I go into a classroom, I leave my Aboriginal behind, and I'm just a White person in

> the classroom, unless something specific comes up about Aboriginals. Otherwise, I am just another White person. As soon as I leave class, and I am back in my community, I am Aboriginal again. I walk two paths and try to keep them separate unless I need to combine them … It's sad to say but in this society I've trained myself to be able to do that.

Such stories of reverse racism also are unfair and unjust.

## Educational Needs for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island

In the above sections, the successes and challenges of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island were thematically presented. In this section, according to the views of participants, the educational needs of Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island are presented. In other words, within this section, participants are providing their ideas or recommendations for improving the education for off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. In doing so, some of the needs/recommendations may have been, either directly or indirectly, referred to within previous sections. For example, when we asked participants to identify some of the learning challenges for Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island, they spoke about the lack of teachers. Then when we asked participants to provide ideas about how to improve the education for off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island, many participants indicated that the amount of teachers and tutors need to increase. In other words, some of themes presented above, also emerge in this section.

Bearing in mind the above point, herein, the thematic recommendations for addressing the educational needs of off-reserve Aboriginal learners are presented. These thematic

recommendations are presented through the following sub-sections: (a) provide learning experiences where students feel successful; (b) use multiple instructional methods; (c) thread more Aboriginal content and ways of knowing into mainstream education; (d) promote the Mi'kmaq language, culture, and spirituality; (e) a greater Elder presence in education; and (f) promote sports, extra-curricular activities, and other such events throughout the school community. Each of these themes is explained below.

## Feelings of Success

***Internal and external motivators***. Many participants spoke about the need to make the educational experience more positive for their child by using internal and external motivators. For example, Lisa thought that teachers should regularly celebrate student success. She suggested that teachers could get the students to collectively work toward a "movie pass" or "bowling event." Another parent said, "I think there could be a bit more of a reward system. Maybe, not necessarily giving them things, but more about making them feel good about what they're doing in school" (FG2, Part2). This same participant talked about the idea of a "good news note" being sent home from her child's elementary teacher. Another parent talked about the importance of a similar type of positive reinforce by the teachers regularly having a "pep talk" with his high school child. He said, "As long as he [his son] got that little positive boost, he'll keep going" (FG5, Part2). A high school student explained how positive motivation affected her when she said:

> He [the teacher] never once said, "No you can't do it." He always told me that I could do it. It was good to be able to hear that—that you are able to do something … it keeps you going. (FG5, Part4)

These comments focused on the need to and power of celebrating student success. Including more intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivational activities help increase educational success experienced by Aboriginal students.

***Good grades***. Another thing that motivated students to learn was good grades. One junior student identified what enticed her to go to school and made her happy. She said, “When I found out that I am passing all of my classes” (FG8, Part3). An elementary student said, “I was happiest when I got full marks on my spelling test” (FG7, Part7). A high school student explained how a high mark made him happy, and increased his self-confidence and motivation to learn:

> Actually, the only happy moment that I can really remember is this year whenever I started trying my hardest in school, and I got a 90 on a test. I was actually really happy. I was just overwhelmed. I didn’t know that I could do it. I never had the go to attitude of I could do it, you know, but then I started talking to the guidance counselor, and he told me to get motivated and to do of that. Just like the Nike company said. (FG7, Part4)

A high school student, often frustrated with school, also said, “Actually, my favorite class in school is Math. I’m getting good grades. I can get the questions right off the bat,” and “I took a course for small engine repairs and it was one of my favorite classes last year. That class was the highest mark I got in school pretty much” (FG7, Part4). Another high school student (FG7, Part2) spoke about how much she enjoyed learning when it was fun. She explained that her teacher had “these competitions for math, when he would have flash cards and we’d have different teams. He would always do girls against guys, and so we really liked it. (FG7, Part2).

Lisa explained how, as a parent, "fun" was used in her family to help her children learn. Lisa said:

> My husband taught my children math by playing cards with them. He'd say, "Okay, what's 7 times 6?" and they'd do it. We played games with our kids to teach them what math was about. For spelling, we'd do games with spelling, and they'd go do their books and they were happier to do it. They didn't have to be forced to do it.

In turn, the core recommendation from these comments is that students need to be presented with learning environments that are fun and where they experience what success feels like. Doing so promotes their motivation to learn and builds positive self-esteem, which, in turn, support continued the cycle of educational success.

**Multiple Instructional Methods**

***Multiple ways to learn***. One parent explained her belief that students learn in different ways. More specifically, she said, "You have your visual learners, auditory learners, and then you have your hands-on [learners] … You need to understand that not everyone learns the same way (FG5, Part3). Another parent made a similar point when she said, "I think there are lots of people who are more hands-on. I am more hands-on. I learn more by doing and not out of a book" (FG3, Part1). Similarly, a postsecondary student described how she felt during many high school classes, "I just couldn't wrap my head around the stuff they were trying to say. I couldn't understand without seeing it, and teachers don't do that. They just make you think it. I can't learn that way. It was hard" (FG6, Part1). Another postsecondary student talked about her current learning needs when she said, "I need to see it, hear it, and touch it. Some people can just read it, and they'll get it right away, but I have to read it and touch it and smell it" (FG6,

Part3). A third postsecondary student described the type of learning that most professors promote. "With university, it's a lot of lecturing. It's someone standing at the front of the class and speaking" (Phillip). These comments show that teachers need to present curricular content in multiple ways. In doing so, more students have a greater chance at succeeding in school.

***Hands-on learning***. Many participants talked, in particular, about the importance of hands-on learning. A high school student articulated this point when he said:

> It was a hands-on experience, rather than being in class and just learning about it. You actually get to go into the shop and let you take it apart and try to put it back together and try to find out what's wrong. It was great.(FG 6, Part4)

Gabby talked about the importance of the hands-on, creative aspect of art in school. She said:

> The creative side for Aboriginal people are so high, but, in the schools, there's not much in art anymore … When you're in an Aboriginal community, and a lot of people are artistic in different ways, they should have just as much focus on those hands-on activities as educational skills, because you know what? … If you help give them the tools to grow their art skills, they could make a living. It's a big part of who we are.

An Elder provided a story about how, in past days, learning transpired from hands-on and social experiences. He said:

> If people were making baskets, it wasn't just about making baskets. People would be pounding ash, and they would be talking to their kids as they ran through shavings and were playing and making things themselves. That was the learning. What the wood smelled like and how they stripped it and cleaned it. And a kid at 7 or 8 years old could

> do just about what their father was doing. That's how it was picked up. You don't get that in the classroom. You just get a bit of head knowledge—one and one makes two, and most times we say three. I remember my sisters standing around my mother as she was making bread or doing whatever, and they would be there learning. (FG1, Part10)

In turn, these comments highlight that hands-on learning helps some students learn more, helps some students stay focused or motivated, and it often has a social component to it. In turn, more hands-on learning experiences should be incorporated into school experiences.

***Real-life examples***. Many participants talked about the need for teachers to use real-life examples within their instruction, because doing so increased the students' motivation to learn. Angela said that her teacher usually started the class by talking about the local news. The teacher would then get into the other content of the class. Angela explained that because the teacher started with real-life example and spoke to the students as "real people," the students were happy and focused on other aspect of their schoolwork. Denise said, "I think there needs to be a greater level of value put on the real-life, experience-based education." Gabby was pleased that her postsecondary teacher referred to many life examples. Gabby said that because her postsecondary instructor used many personal examples and case studies in the class. In turn, Gabby said that she was more prone to understand the course content. In sum, threading real-life examples into teaching appears to capture the students' attention. Moreover, the content is something that the students can relate to.

## Aboriginal Presence and Content into Mainstream Education

A dominant point articulated by many participants was the need for mainstream society to have a better, less-biased understanding of Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing. The way

to achieve this goal is to thread more Aboriginal content and ways of knowing into mainstream education. In further focusing on this point, the following sub-themes emerge: (a) need for more Aboriginal teachers, (b) need for more Aboriginal content in curriculum, (c) the need to focus on teaching the Mi'kmaq language in school, (d) need for a focus including Aboriginal culture spirituality in school. Each of these issues is discussed below.

***Aboriginal teachers***. One parent shared his belief that "I think there should be an Aboriginal teacher in schools" (FG4, Part2). Many additional participants relayed a similar point (see Table 7 below).

*Table 7: Comments Pertaining to the Need for More Aboriginal Teachers in School*

| Participant | Comment |
|---|---|
| FG6, Part2 | Other classes, such as English and Math, they focus more on the White students rather than the Aboriginal students. As soon as that Aboriginal teacher comes along it's like "This is my favorite class. I love going to this class!" |
| FG6, Part 2 | There are not any Aboriginal teachers at that high school anymore. Right now, we have the Aboriginal counselors but they track student's attendance to see if they're going to school. There's no Aboriginal teachers. |
| FG6, Part1 | Teacher-wise, it was all White. I never had in my whole time in school a Caucasian teacher through Kindergarten all the way to Grade 12. |
| Sarah | There were only a few Aboriginal teachers, like my math teacher. He was Aboriginal, and we got along well. |

These and other participants explained that they usually felt very comfortable with Aboriginal teachers. Furthermore, Aboriginal teachers, at times, were role models for the students. In such a manner, these participants expressed an educational need, which was they wanted to be taught by more Aboriginal teachers.

***Aboriginal content.*** Another point that was brought up by many participants was the need for mainstream education to thread more and truthful Aboriginal content into educational books and curriculum. One high school participant described the amount and type of Aboriginal content he had been presented throughout his school career. He said:

> In elementary, I might have done half a class on Aboriginal people, and that's it. In junior high, a little bit more, maybe one section on the Métis, and we did an assignment on all of the Blackfoot or something like that … There might have been a couple of assemblies where someone would come in and speak Mi'kmaq or whatever, and they'd play the drum. That might have been it. (FG7, Part1)

Another high school student recalled the amount and type of Aboriginal content that was presented throughout her school experience. He said, "The only thing that I remember is in Grade 7 in social studies. We just had one section to do with Aboriginal culture. That was basically it" (FG7, Part4). Emily said, "School-wise, unless you take Grade 12 history, throughout my whole high school career, I never heard it talked about once. Not even a 10-minute lecture."

Scott shared a story about how, in Grade 8, he asked his teacher if they could talk about Aboriginal land rights. He explained:

> For one class I asked her [the teacher], "Can we discuss how the White man took our land away from us?" Her response … was, "Now is not the time to talk about that." It seems to me, looking back, that she was just shutting it down and wasn't opening it up to be discussed. Granted, Grade 8 might not be the best time to discuss it, but I wanted to talk

> about it … I thought that she meant we might talk about it later that day, or even next week or something, but as the semester went on, we never got around to it.

Phillip found it strange that even though Aboriginal peoples live throughout Canada, there is limited school curriculum focused on these Indigenous peoples. "When you think about it, given all of the different Aboriginal communities in every province, there is no real emphasis in the school system on Aboriginal culture, identity, and the history." A parent suggested, "Across Canada there should be a course that covers Inuit, Mi'kmaq, Cree, and all of our other Native peoples that we have in our own country. Because you know what? A lot of people don't know squat" (FG2, Part2). Rebecca explained that many people in mainstream society are not knowledgeable about Aboriginal culture. Then, when Aboriginal issues arise, these people don't know how to react; they are scared of the unknown.

***University setting***. Some postsecondary students indicated that they received some Aboriginal content in some University of Prince Edward Island courses. Christina explained:

> Last year, I took Canadian History, and we spent weeks on Aboriginal history looking at American Indians and writing comparative essays. We talked about Aboriginal people on the Plains and farming and things like that. We covered a broad range of Aboriginal issues. The first part was contact to Confederation, and the next part was Confederation to present day … We talked about treaty rights now, conflicts because Aboriginal people claiming land, and things like that.

Sarah also explained that the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island offers a Specialization in Indigenous Education. This Specialization is offered through the

Bachelor of Education program, where students take two courses on Indigenous Education and do a teaching internship in an Aboriginal community. However, Sarah also explained that other than these couple of courses, in the area of Aboriginal curriculum, “UPEI doesn’t have much to offer for Aboriginal students.” In turn, Sarah said, “When it comes to Aboriginals in general, there’s nothing really to attract Aboriginal people so they are going to choose Cape Breton University over UPEI.”

In sum, these participants did not see much, if any, Aboriginal content in Kindergarten to high school curriculum. A related recommendation they spoke to was the need to incorporate Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing into Kindergarten to Grade 12 Prince Edward Island curriculum. As well, although there appears to be some Aboriginal content embedded in some postsecondary institutes on Prince Edward Island, more option for Aboriginal courses should be offered at these institutions.

## Mi’kmaq Language, Culture, and Spirituality

***Language***. Many participants talked about the importance of learning their native language. Two of the Elders indicated, “I’d like to see more language taught in the schools” (FG1, Part1) and “There should be language programs. They do it for the French and English, but it is not done for the Indian” (FG1, Part10). In a similar light, Emily said, “We have French and English and that’s it. But that’s one thing that I want to learn, Mi’kmaq. I’ve always wanted to learn it.” Betty thought that at least, Mi’kmaq language classes should be held somewhere. She thought both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people should be free to sign-up for such classes. One parent summed up these comments by saying, “I don’t think there’s a family who wouldn’t want their child to speak the language” (FG4, Part7).

***Culture and identity***. One participant said, "Knowing that you are Aboriginal … gives you a sense of where you came from (FG3, Part6). A parent continued on this topic of how a sense of culture and identity are intertwined. He said:

> When I started respecting who I was as an individual … where I come from, who I am, and everything else, I found I had a lot more respect for myself, as a person now … I want them [students] to know where they come from, who they are, and never to be ashamed of who they are. (FG5, Part2)

Another parent indicated that she believed that the biggest gift she could offer her children and the youth, in general, is pride in who they are (FG5, Part3).

These participants indicated that a valuable part of education is learning about one's cultural identity. In turn, a recommendation or need to support the educational success of Aboriginal learners is to provide cultural teachings to the youth. With regard to this point, though, one parents cautioned:

> Our culture and our traditions are a way of life. It's not something you can learn Monday to Friday from 9 to 3. It is day in and day out. It's what I live and breathe. I am very traditional [indicated specifics] … this is not something that can be brought to the general public schools … It's not for sale; it's not for show (FG5, Part3).

***Spirituality***. In particular, participants talked about the need for more of a focus in school to be dedicated to the spiritual aspects of life. One Elder was disappointed that, "As far as education, spirituality, and the Native people, they don't let us practice our spirituality in schools" (FG1, Part9). Another Elder explained where he believed education needs to start. He

said, “We have to make our God, our Creator, first. You’ve got to have a good foundation, and, if that foundation isn’t your Creator, then everything else is going to fail” (FG1, Part10). Phillip said, “I think if regular Canadians could experience some [Native spirituality] … I think that would be helpful.” These participants believed that learning about spirituality is a part of being an educated person. Thus, many participants viewed that more spirituality in school is a way to improve the education system and the educational experience of off-reserve Aboriginal students on Prince Edward Island.

## Elder Teachings

***The youth need Elder teachings***. With regard to fostering quality education for off-reserve Aboriginal students, a topic that surface is that the youth should spend more time with Elders. Denise provided some background to this point and said, “The Elders are the people who hold our knowledge and our traditions. They don’t demand respect. They earn it because of their nature and the way they are.” In turn, an Elder said, “I think we should be with our youth. Our youth really need Elder people now … We should have more outings with the youth” (FG1, Part7). An Elder provided an example of the work she had done with youth. “We took the youth with us, and I showed them where the medicine is, how to prepare it, and how to store it for the winter” (FG1, Part1). This same participant provided more ideas and said:

> I think, as Elders, we should start a Mawi’omi Day, where we invite people in, especially youth and children, about having our knowledge given to them. We could go and cook bread in the sand and show them how to do that. We could show them what hunting is about, and what medicines to pick … We Elders should be teaching the teachers, too. (FG1, Part1)

Another Elder indicated that in the past she was glad to talk to the youth about building Aboriginal cultural pride (FG1, Part7). One student spoke about how much she enjoyed the Youth and Elders in Action (YEA) Program, where "we play bingo with the older people, we sit down and talk to them" (Angela). Angela explained that not only did she enjoy time spent with Elders who were also participated in the YEA program, through the program she met someone her age who could tutor her in Biology. One parent indicated, "They [students] should have that—Aboriginal teachings. Have an Elder come in, learn the alphabet and whatnot" (FG2, Part1). Heather shared her belief that the youth should be given more opportunities to be with Elders and to learn their teachings. These comments highlight one of the educational needs for Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island is more time with Elders and more learning from Elders.

**Sports, Extra-Curricular Activities, and Other**

***Sports***. When asking student participants what they wanted more of in school, an array of answers were given. Some students talked about wanting more opportunities for sports. As one high school student talked about the importance of sports, she excitedly expressed, "My coach was actually talking to me about going to a university in the States to play softball and having school paid for, so that's another option" (GF6, Part3). Another high school student also indicated that his after-school sports might be a springboard toward his acceptance at a university. On this topic, he said, "Well I'd like to get a scholarship from a university for hockey or something like that but I also wouldn't mind if there was softball [scholarship] for men somewhere" (FG7, Part1).

***Extra-curricular activities***. Other students explained that their involvement in out-of-province drumming groups, powwows, student conferences, and university tours enhanced their self-confidence and sparked their interest in postsecondary education. For example, Angela and Sarah, when they were high school students, participated in tours of various Maritime universities, including Cape Breton, St. Francis Xavier University, Mount St. Vincent, University of New Brunswick, and the University of Prince Edward Island. In Angela's case, her parent took her to the universities for visits. For Sarah, she visited the university while attending a Grade 11 Students Against Drunk Driving conference. In a third case, one parent talked about how important it was for university representation to come to high school via job fairs. She said, "The universities come set up during certain times of the year for students to go ask questions (FG3, Part1).

A recommendation that surfaced from these comments is that the extra-curricular aspects of school can and often have as much of a positive influence on student and their educational future as the curricular content presented during school hours. Although, in some cases, participants talked about some influential teachers who helped them attended after-school events, for the most part, students attended these events with the help of their parents or with sponsorship from Aboriginal associations such as the Native Council. Although gaining such support from parents and Aboriginal Associations is great, in tandem, schools need to foster and communicate an array of after-school events and activities targeting the curricular and extra-curricular interests of students

# Chapter 4: Conclusion

In isolation, educational institutions cannot address the social injustices, economic issues, and blatant disadvantages experienced by many Aboriginal learners, their families, and their communities. Promoting educational success for Aboriginal peoples requires holistic and systematic reform across all public and private domains across Canada. Having stated such, there are many things that educators and schools within Prince Edward Island can do to promote a richer, more culturally safe school environment for Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. For example, a Mi'kmaq language curriculum could be taught before, during, or after school hours to promote the culture and identity of Aboriginal learners. The training and staffing of Aboriginal teachers on Prince Edward Island is a financial and social responsibility of public and private sectors. Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development needs to continue to develop and promote curricula grounded in the values, histories, and traditions of Aboriginal peoples. These curricula must be presented to all Prince Edward Island learners, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, because "We are all treaty people" (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008, p. 16). Culturally responsive leadership training for principals, teachers, and educational assistants need to be provided throughout Prince Edward Island school divisions. Ideally, such training should include hands-on experiences such as smudging ceremonies, sweats, cultural camps, and Elder teachings. Wherever possible, an Elder-in-Residence should be welcomed into the school's culture, too. In addition to offering cultural knowledge, skills, and expertise, Elders are role models of patience, understanding, and kindness. Being in the presence of such warmth, undeniably would have positive effects on students, regardless of their ethnicity.

The above depiction of ideas to support the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island is *extremely* limited and is not address all of the needs of Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island. Improvements to education for off-reserve Aboriginal learner on Prince Edward Island need to be also addressed by the members within all school communities. To promote a louder, more-diverse conversation on supporting the needs of Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island, 85 additional ideas is provided in *Appendix F*. Potentially, every school community on Prince Edward Island could use some of ideas articulated above and within Appendix F as a start point to creating their own *Action Plan to Improve Education for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island*.

In closing, attention is drawn to British Columbia Ministry of Education's (2010) articulated a set of learning principals, which foster educational success for Aboriginal peoples. Although these elements do not encompass the essence of quality education for *every* Aboriginal person, these principles are a general reflection of what quality learning is for many Aboriginal peoples. As Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together to improve the education of Aboriginal learners, it is important to incorporate aspects of these principles into the discussions that ensue.

- The education and learning of one Aboriginal person supports the wellbeing of self, family, community, the land, the spirits, and one's ancestors.
- Quality education and learning is holistic, self-reflective, relational, and experiential.
- Quality education and learning recognizes the role Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Quality education and learning requires and exploration of one's identity.
- Quality education and learning is a process of generational roles and responsibilities.
- Quality education and learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

- Quality education and learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and can only be shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

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Interestingly, all of the above points were articulated or alluded to, in one way or another, by the participants involved in this study.

In closing, the successful completion of this research was due to help, goodness, skills, and willingness of participants to share a part of their lives. A heartfelt thank you is extended to all participants involved in this study. The sharing of their wisdom is helping to ensure that a quality education will be experienced by increasing numbers of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Information About the Study

We invite you to participate in a research project called, ***"Fostering Educational Success for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island."*** In order to make an informed decision about whether you wish to be a part of this research study, you should understand enough about its potential risks and benefits. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information in this letter. This letter is part of the process of informed consent. It is up to you whether or not you want to take part in this research. If you choose not to participate in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

**The Purpose of the Study and its Design**

The purpose of this research is to describe the educational successes, challenges, and needs of off-reserve elementary to adult Aboriginal students in PEI. The questions we want to answer are: (a) What parts of the PEI educational system promote the educational success of off-reserve Aboriginal students? (b) What are the educational challenges of off-reserve Aboriginal students in PEI? (c) What are the educational needs of off-reserve Aboriginal students in PEI?

To answer these questions, we will conduct approximately 13 meetings (often called focus groups) with different groups of people. We will have sets of these groups meetings in each of the zones of PEI: Zone 1 Kings County, Zone 2 Queens County, and Zone 3 Prince County. We will have one group meeting with parents/guardians in each zone. We will have one group meeting with elementary students (Kindergarten to Grade 6) in each zone. We will have one group meeting with junior students (Grades 7 to 9) in each zone. We will have one group meetings with high school students (Grades 10 to 12) in each zone. We will have one group meeting with adult/postsecondary students, which will be conducted in Charlottetown, PEI.

As well, we will be doing about 20 individual interviews. We are inviting 10 parents and 10 high school/adult students to participant in these interviews.

As well, a paper survey will be given to attendees during the Native Council of Prince Edward Island's Annual General Assembly (scheduled for October 2013). The attendees can decide if they want to complete the survey or not.

**What you will do in this study, where it takes place, and how much time it takes**

Each group meeting will consist of approximately seven people. The focus group will be held in a location convenient for focus group members, such as a local community center or school. All adult participants (age 16 and older) will be given a copy of the focus group questions prior to the interview. Participants do not need to prepare for the focus group interview in any way, other than the adult participants may want to review the questions and think about their answers ahead of time, if they desire.

The length of parent and high school/adult student group meetings will be approximately 60–90 minutes. The length of youth group meetings (Kindergarten to Grade 9) will be about 20–45 minutes, because younger students do not have the attention span of adults.

The research team will also collect data from individual interviews with 10 parents and 10 high school/adult students. All individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. If individuals want, they can volunteer to participate in both the focus group interview and the individual interview.

Individual interviews will be located in a place and time convenient to the participant. All participants will be given a copy of the individual questions prior to the interview. Participants do not need to prepare for the individual interview in any way, other than potentially reviewing the questions and thinking about their answers ahead of time, if they desire.

The paper survey given to attendees during the Native Council of Prince Edward Island's Annual General Meeting will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Withdrawal from the study**

Participation within this study is voluntary. That means, it is up to you whether or not you want to participant in this study. If you decide to participate, but later decide you no longer want to be part of the study, you may withdraw from the study up until we write up the results and hand-in a report to the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. Up until handing-in this result, if you decide to withdraw from the study, there will be no consequence of any sort and all the data you have contributed will be destroyed. Any participant who withdraws from the study and received a $20.00 gift card may keep the gift card.

**Possible Risks and Benefits**

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

All participants in the parent, postsecondary, and high school group meetings and all participants individually interviewed will receive a $20.00 gift card (e.g., for Superstore, Indigo books, etc.). Also, during parent, postsecondary, and high school group meetings, refreshments (e.g., cheese, crackers, and a drink) and childcare (for any individual in need of this service) will be provided. All participants in the elementary and junior high group meetings will receive pizza and a drink during the meeting. A person who volunteers for a group meeting and an individual interview will receive two gift cards (valued at $40.00)

**Confidentiality and Storage of Data**

The field notes and audio-recorded data collected during the study will not be available to anyone other than the researchers, who are Jane Preston, Carolyn Taylor, and a research assistant. We will keep all data in a locked cabinet. After five years, all data will be destroyed.

In the field notes and transcripts of the audio-recorded data, the researchers will take out the real names of the participants and give them false names. The researchers will then share the data with an Elder, who will assist in analyzing the data. However, in all reports, presentations, and publications, the participants' names and any personal information that might identify them will not be used. In all reports, presentations, and publications, the researchers will use a false name for the participant.

At the beginning of each group meeting, the researchers will remind the participants not to repeat any comments or information talked about during the group meetings with anyone who was not in that

meeting. Although the researchers will keep all comments or information talked about during the meeting confidential, the research will remind group meeting participants that the researcher cannot guarantee that comments and information talked about during the meeting will remain confidential by all group participants.

**Reporting of Results**

We will publish the results of this study in a report that will be given to the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. We will communicate the results of this study during a community meeting in the three Aboriginal zones in PEI (e.g., Zone 1 Kings County, Zone 2 Queens County, and Zone 3 Prince County) and at academic conferences. We also hope to publish the results of this study in journals. If participants are interested, we will provide an e-copy of the final report to them.

**Questions**

If you have any questions concerning the study, please ask the researchers at any time. This research has been approved by the UPEI Research Ethics Board. Any concerns regarding your involvement in this study may be directed to Lisa MacDougall at reb@upei.ca or (902) 620-5104.

**Choosing to Participate**

Enclosed are two copies of a written consent form for your consideration. If you decide to accept the invitation to participate in this study, please sign and date both consent forms. Return one consent form to the research in the self-addressed stamped envelope or through a fax or email. Please maintain one copy of the consent form for your records. Please contact us if you have any questions about the study or if you would like more information about the study.

Sincerely,

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(902) 892–5314 / 1–877–591–3003
carolyn@ncpei.com

# Appendix B: Consent Form

We invite you to participate in a research study called, "**Fostering Educational Success for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island**." Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you might have.

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study and are satisfied with the answers to your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that there are minimal risks associated with the study.
- You understand that all participants in the parent, postsecondary, and high school group meetings and all participants individually interviewed will receive a $20.00 gift card (e.g., for Superstore, Indigo books, etc.). Also, during parent, postsecondary, and high school group meetings, refreshments (e.g., cheese, crackers, and a drink) and childcare (for any individual in need of this service) will be provided. All participants in the elementary and junior high group meetings will receive pizza and a drink during the meeting. A person who volunteers for a group meeting and an individual interview will receive two gift cards (valued at $40.00)
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study (until the results of the study are published) without having to give a reason, and your withdrawal from the study will not affect you now or in the future. You understand if you withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed. If you withdraw from the study, As well, any participant who withdrew from the study and received a $20.00 gift card may keep the gift card.
- You understand that the information you provide will be confidential within the limits of the law.
- You understand you can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form (if you want to sign the consent form).
- You understand that you can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104, or by email at reb@upei.ca if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.
- You understand that, if you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

1. I understand what this study is about. I know there are minimum risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about participating in this study. I had the opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered.
   □ I agree to participate in the research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may end my participation (and have my data destroyed) until publication of the data.

2. Check only one box:
   □ I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.
   □ I do not agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

3. Check only one box:
   □ I agree to that the researchers may use of quotations of what I have said, but my name will *not be* identified in any publications resulting from this study.
   □ I do not agree to the use of quotation.

______________________________ ______________________________

**Signature of Participant** **Date**

Signature of Researcher: I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he/she has freely chosen to be in the study.

______________________________ ______________________________

Signature of Researcher Date

# Appendix C: Assent Form

The information on this page will be orally explained to each participant who is 15 year old or younger. After explaining this information, the participant will be asked to participate in the study. For any individual who assents, their parent/guardian will have already signed a Consent Form on the behalf of this individual.

**1. What is this research about?**

Our names are Jane and Carolyn, and we like to ask people questions. We want to get a group of kids your age together and ask you some questions about school. We will ask questions like: What do you like about school? What do you find difficult about school? If you could change anything about school, what would it be? We just want to talk to a group of kids and ask them what they think about school.

**2. How long will we be talking? How long will the discussion be?**

Once we get a group of kid together, we think we will talk for about 20 to 45 minutes?

**3. Will you tell people my name and my answers?**

We will write a story/report about what you said. In our story, we will not tell anyone your names, but we would like to tell people your answers.

**4. Do I have to do this? Do I have to be a part of this meeting?**

No, you do not have to be a part of this meeting. Nothing bad will happen if you decide that you don't want to be a part of this meeting.

**5. Will anything bad happen to me if I take part in this meeting?**

Nothing bad will happen to you whether you take part or don't take part in this meeting. (But, if you do want to participate, you must first ask your parent/guardian if you can participate.)

**6. If I take part in this meeting, do I have to answer every question?**

If you decide you want to be a part of this meeting, only answer the questions you want to answer. If there is a question that you don't know the answer to or don't want to talk about, then you don't have to say anything. Nothing bad will happen if you don't answer a question.

**7. Will you give me anything if I participant in this meeting?**

During the meeting, we will give you piFG2a and something to drink.

**8. What if, after the meeting, I wish I wouldn't have talked during the meeting?**

After the meeting, if you don't want us to use anything you said, we will get rid of everything you said, and we will not use what you said. However, after we finish our story/report about the meeting and hand it in to the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, we can't make any changes to our story.

**9. Are we going to tell anyone what you said?**

We are going to write a story/report about what you and other people think about school. We are going to give this story/report to the Native Council of Prince Edward Island. We are also going to invite parents and community members to a meeting and tell them what we found out. We also want to go to some meetings outside of Prince Edward Island and tell other people who are interested in your school. We hope to put what we found out in books that people around the world can read.

**10. What if I still have question about parts of this study or what you are saying?**

Please ask us anything you want. We will answer any question you have about this study.

**11. If I want to participant in this study, what should I do? If I don't want to participate, what should I do?**

You need to ask your parent/guardian if you can participate in the group meeting, and your parent/guardian needs to tell us that you can participate. Then all you need to do is tell us that you would like to participate.

## Appendix D: Guiding Questions for Focus Group Interviews

**For Parents/Guardians**

1. Let's go around the table. Please tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.
2. Tell me a bit about your children. How old are they and what grade are they in?
3. Tell me about a time when your child felt happy or successful in school.
4. Is there a particular subject, person, or any part of school that your child really likes?
5. As a parent/guardian, is there anything about your child's school/education that you really like? In other words, what is working well in school? What would you like to see continue?
6. Tell me about a time in school when your child felt sad or unsuccessful.
7. In general, what do you think are the main challenges that your child faces in school?
8. If you could change school/the educational system in any way, what would you change so that your child could be more successful in school?
9. Please add any additional comments that you have about what school and education.

**For Postsecondary Aboriginal Students**

1. Let's go around the table. Please tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.
2. Tell me a bit about where you received your Kindergarten to Grade 12 education.
3. During your Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, describe a time that you felt happy or successful in school.
4. During your Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, was there a particular subject, person, or any part of school that you really liked?
5. In general, during your Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, did you enjoy going to school?
6. During your Kindergarten to Grade 12 education, was there a time when you felt sad or unsuccessful.
7. In general, what do you think are the main challenges that Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal students face in school? In other words, what is the hardest thing about school?
8. If you could change Kindergarten to Grade 12 school/the educational system in any way, what would you change?
9. You are now in this program (college or university). What do you thing is the main reason you are here?
10. Do you feel that you were well prepared for this post-secondary experience?
11. What do you like and not like about your program?
12. If you could change your program in any way, what would you like to see changed so that you could be more successful? What do they need?
13. Please add any additional comments about what we talked about school and education

**For High School Students**

1. Let's go around the table. Please tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.
2. Tell me a bit about where your experiences in school from when you started Kindergarten until now.
3. Where did you go to school during your elementary and intermediate years?
4. During the time you have been in school, describe a time that you felt happy or successful in school.
5. Is there a particular subject, person, or any part of school that you really liked?
6. Describe a time when you felt sad or unsuccessful in school.
7. What do you find challenging about school? In other words, what is the hardest thing about school?
8. What do you need to help you do even better at school?
9. If you could change school in any way, what would change?
10. What do you want to do in the future?
11. Are you interested in college or university programs?
12. Please add any additional comments about what we talked school and education.

**For Junior High Students**

1. Let's go around the table. Please tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.
2. Tell me a bit about school? Do you like it or not and why?
3. Where you do go to school during your elementary years?
4. Describe a time when you felt happy or successful in school.
5. What is it about school that you really like?
6. Describe a time when you felt sad or unsuccessful in school.
7. What do you find challenging about school? In other words, what is the hardest thing about school?
8. What do you need to help you do even better at school?
9. If you could change school in any way, what would change?
10. What do you want to do in the future?
11. Are you interested in college or university programs?
12. Please add any additional comments about what we talked about school and education.

**For Elementary Students**

1. Let's go around the table. Please tell me your name and a little bit about yourself.
2. Where do you go to school
3. Tell me a bit about where your experiences in school, from when you started Kindergarten until now.
4. Describe a time when you felt happy or successful in school.
5. What is your favorite thing about school?
6. Describe a time when you felt sad in school.
7. What is the hardest thing about school?
8. If you could change the school, what would you do?
9. What do you want to be in the future?
10. Do you have anything else to say about school?

## Appendix E: Guiding Questions for Individual Interview

**For Parents**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself and your family.
2. Tell me a bit about your education? Where did you go to school? What grades did you finish? What degree do you have?
3. What do you think was the best thing about your educational experiences?
4. Tell me about a time when you felt successful in school?
5. What did you find more challenging in school?
6. Is there anything that you wanted from school that you didn't get?
7. Tell me about your children and their schooling? Where do they go to school? What grade are they in.
8. What do your children like most about school?
9. Do you think it is important to have Aboriginal culture/language taught in school?
10. Tell me about a time your children felt successful or happy in school?
11. Is there anything that your children do like or find changing about school?
12. If you could change school/the educational system in any way, what would you change so that your children could be more successful in school? What do they need?
13. Please add any additional comments that you have about school and education.

**For High School/Adult Students**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself and your family.
2. Tell me a bit about your school? Where do you go to school? What grade/program are you in?
3. What do you think was the best thing about school/your program?
4. Tell me about a time when you felt happy or successful in school?
5. What did you find more challenging about school?
6. Is there anything that you wanted from school that you don't think you are getting?
7. What about your Aboriginal friends. What do they like or do not like about school?
8. What do your parents/guardians think about your school or education?
9. If you could change your school/program in any way, what would you change? What do you need from school?
10. Do you think it is important to have Aboriginal culture/language learned in school?
11. Please add any additional comments that you have about school and education.

## Appendix F: 85 Ideas to Support Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island

To continue the discussion and promotion of education success of off-reserve Aboriginal learners on Prince Edward Island, a brainstorm of ideas is provided. These ideas are intended for leaders, educators, parents, and community members. The ideas are meant to promote safe conversations among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

*Suggested Activity*: In promoting safe conversations, a group of people may want to review this list and put these individual ideas into groups, themes, or categories. For example, some overarching categories may be (a) professional development for educators, (b) activities for students, (c) decolonizing the school environment, and (d) community events. While creating these categories and deciding where each idea should be placed, participants can talk about each idea and, in doing so, additional ideas may surface. After all ideas are categorized, participants can review the each category and highlight their top choices. In turn, attention and effort can be directed to a few specialized ideas in each category and an *Action Plan to Improve Education for Off-Reserve Aboriginal Learners on Prince Edward Island* may ensue.

1. Access Aboriginal material and display/use in school (e.g., posters, books, flag puFG2les, dolls, videos, posters, etc.)
2. Acquire CD/audio tapes of Aboriginal songs and play them, learn them, sign them.
3. Ask parents to participant in an after-school homework club
4. Celebrate National Aboriginal Day (June 21)
5. Contemplate the conversations that are not happening with regard to the educational needs of Aboriginal students and create time to have these conversations
6. Create a Parent Support Group for Aboriginal parents/ caregivers
7. Create a welcoming space for parents and community members into the school (e.g., community coffee room, daily parent activities, etc.)
8. Create an anonymous questionnaire for parents in an effort to solicit their candid feedback
9. Create and provide a list of private tutors for all grades and subjects
10. Create and regularly update a private tutor list for parents
11. Create recipe book based on Aboriginal foods
12. During a social event, sponsor an Aboriginal history/cultural quiz
13. Educators, learn and use basic Mi'kmaq sentences
14. Educators, learn and use basic Mi'kmaq words and phrases (e.g., salutations, thank you, good-bye, etc.)
15. Encourage K to 12 Aboriginal learners to pursue postsecondary education
16. Encourage youth leadership of Aboriginal students
17. Ensure school libraries are well stocked with Aboriginal resources
18. Ensure a variety of after-school sports are offered during and after school
19. Ensure a variety of fine art activities are offered during and after-school

20. Ensure school posters include Aboriginal representation
21. Ensure that all students, regardless of grade level, get ample time to eat and socialize during noon hours and recesses
22. Ensure that Office of the Treaty Commissioner's Treaty Kit is included in the school library
23. Ensure that the school cafeteria is stocked with nutritious food choices
24. Ensure that welcome signs are some of the first images parents and community member see when approaching and entering the school
25. Focus on forming relationships with Aboriginal parents and caregivers
26. Go berry picking
27. Have a Medicine Wheel painted on your school wall
28. Have a place in the school and give students the freedom to smudge.
29. Have childcare available during parent-teacher interviews
30. Have food available during parent-teacher interviews
31. Have traditional Aboriginal food available in the school cafeteria
32. Have transportation available for parent during parent-teacher interviews
33. Hold a bannock-baking contest
34. Invite Aboriginal guest speakers and media-related role models to your school
35. Invite Aboriginal performs and artist to your school
36. Invite Elders to your school for "Elder Teachings Night"
37. Keep class sizes manageable so that teachers can learn about each student as an individual (e.g., 15 students for late elementary, junior , and high school classes)
38. Learn and teach the basic concepts of the Medicine Wheel
39. Led by an Aboriginal Elder, include opening and closing prayers during school and PD events
40. Make a place and a space for a "friendship center" within the school
41. Make sure there are a variety of after-school activities that students can sign-up for during every day of the week
42. Monitor and assist in the transition of Aboriginal students from school to school
43. Offer a workshop on medicinal plants
44. Offer an Aboriginal language workshop
45. Offer family movie night at the school
46. Open your school library to parents and community members
47. Organize a sweat for educators, parents/ caregivers, and youth
48. Plan an activity with a partner school, located in a First Nations community
49. Promote after-school Aboriginal cultural activities (e.g., drumming group, dance group, beadwork, throat singing, Elder time, etc.)
50. Promote and retain Aboriginal principals, teachers, and educational assistants
51. Promote early educational success by promoting community-based, early-childhood centers for Aboriginal learners
52. Promote more after-school opportunities for students to be tutored
53. Promote positive self-esteem in Aboriginal learners
54. Promote the integration of Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing into every grade level

55. Promote understanding and awareness in non-Aboriginal educators
56. Recognize Treaty Days (e.g., NS: October 1, SK: June 6, MB: May 12)
57. Regularly acknowledge that we are all on treaty land
58. Remember that all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, need to learning about Aboriginal culture and history.
59. Remember that effective leadership is "we" not "me"
60. Schedule parent-teacher interview for at least 30 minutes, and let the parent talk for the first 15 minutes
61. Seek funding for after-school Aboriginal cultural activities
62. Send out invitations to the students' grandparents, uncles, aunts, and other family members to attend school events
63. Sponsor a concert with Aboriginal performers
64. Sponsor a month-long Mi'kmaq language course (e.g., Mi'kmaq Basics in 4-Weeks)
65. Sponsor a parent-child board game night
66. Sponsor a parent-day once a month, where parents are welcome to walk in and out of any classroom
67. Sponsor adult workshops and classes in your school
68. Sponsor after-school Aboriginal crafts
69. Sponsor an Aboriginal artists to guest speak / conduct a workshop in the school
70. Sponsor family picnics in the school playground
71. Sponsor postsecondary "satellite/distance" classes for adults within the community
72. Sponsor school-wide potlucks
73. Sponsor storytelling events
74. Sponsor tea talks with teachers
75. Start a pen pal club with a partner school in a First Nations community
76. Start a student-to-student mentoring program between elementary students in Grade 6 and junior students in the transitioning school
77. Start a student-to-student mentoring program between junior students in Grade 9 and high school students in the transitioning school
78. Start an after-school games club created by traditional Aboriginal games
79. Take students on a field trip to a pow-wow
80. Teach the history of the Indian Act, 1876 and its ensuing atrocities
81. Teach Treaty education at every grade level
82. Teacher character education through the principals of respect, honesty, trust, love, wisdom, humility, and bravery
83. Use Aboriginal teaching strategies (e.g., talking circle, hands-on activities, visual demonstration, self-reflection, storytelling, etc.)
84. Work with Aboriginal parents to find out what they view as good ways to support their child's cultural identity. Be open to their ideas.
85. …utilize these ideas to create your own ideas and action plan…