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ALBERTA LEARNING NATIVE EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW

Final Report

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Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Executive Board

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Chapter One

Introduction

The Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of its member First Nations that have subscribed to the organization. There are twenty-two First Nations within Treaty 8 (Alberta). These twenty-two First Nations are part of the six tribal entities within Treaty 8 (Alberta). The tribal entities (First Nations) are:

Athabasca Tribal Council:

Athabasca Chipewyan
Chipewyan Prairie
Fort McKay
Fort McMurray
Mikisew Cree Nation

Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council

Driftpile
Kapowe'no
Sawridge
Sucker Creek
Swan River

Bigstone Cree Nation

Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council:

Loon River Cree
Whitefish Lake
Woodland Cree

North Peace Tribal Council:

Beaver
Dene Tha'
Little Red River
Lubicon Lake
Tallcree

Western Cree Tribal Council:

Duncan's
Horse Lake
Sturgeon Lake

Upon recommendation of the Treaty 8 Tribal Council Education Directors' Committee the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta signed a contract in October 1999 with Alberta Learning to conduct a Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta). (C. Goodswimmer, personal communication, April 7, 2000). The Treaty 8 Tribal Council Education Directors' Committee was established by the Chiefs of Treaty 8 (Alberta) on October 22, 1997. The committee is mandated to facilitate the networking, sharing, and advising on education matters affecting

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. The committee is made up on one education technician from each of the six tribal entities, an appointed Treaty 8 (Alberta) Chief as an education portfolio holder, and an ex-officio.

The review was conducted by five out of six tribal council entities. The rationale for the formation of the Native Education Policy Review was based on the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework (Alberta Learning, personal communication, October 7, 1999). One of the premises of the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework is to improve the socio-economic conditions of Aboriginal people through the vessel of education (Alberta Learning, personal communication, October 7, 1999). An invitation was extended to the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta to become representatives as part of the Native Education Policy Review Advisory Committee (Alberta Learning, personal communication, October 7, 1999). A complete and final report of the outcomes and recommendations of the Native Education Policy Review will be presented to the Minister of Alberta Learning. This is A Report of the Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta), it is not the final and complete report that is to be presented to the Minister of Alberta Learning. The contents of this report include short chapters providing an introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion.

Chapter two presents the writer's review of the literature from a colonial theory perspective that addresses the failure of the education system in educating Aboriginal children. Colonial theory is based on the well-documented coverage of Aboriginal children's below average academic performances and results on standard achievement tests. The lack of academic success needs to be addressed.

Chapter three describes the methods of this report. The outcomes for the Native Education Policy Review were introduced by Alberta Learning. Alberta Learning was interested in establishing support and involvement from Treaty 8 (Alberta) in the review process. This chapter addresses Alberta Learning methods, First Nation involvement, participant selection, the interview process, and the method of analysis.

Chapter four contains the results of the Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta). The template provided by Alberta Learning was used to categorize the contents from the First Nation community consultations into the review's four outcomes, issues, and recommendations/comments.

Chapter five provides some discussion of the results contained within this report. It was apparent that First Nation's learner needs within Treaty 8 (Alberta) are not being fully met. A limitation of this study was that full representation from Treaty 8 (Alberta) was not achieved and the information contained within this paper may not address all First Nation concerns. Other limitations of the study were that the design of the questionnaire involved limited participation by Treaty 8 (Alberta) and not all the reviewers may have asked the same questions.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report was to provide a voice for the First Nations within Treaty 8 (Alberta) who participated in the Native Education Policy Review process.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

By Josephine Cardinal, MSc.

Treaty No. 8 was signed in 1899 in the Lesser Slave Lake area with adhesions to Treaty 8 following in subsequent periods. Treaty 8 covers a large land mass composite of northern Alberta, northeastern British Columbia, northwestern Saskatchewan and the southern portion of the North West Territories. The First Nations peoples within Treaty 8 (Alberta) are a very large and diverse group of cultural and linguistic groups. For the purpose of this review only those within Treaty 8 (Alberta) were approached to participate in the Native Education Policy Review. In Chapter Three the First Nation's representation and participation is explained in detail. In general, the peoples that participated in this review were of Cree, Dene, Dogrib, Chipewyan, and Beaver origin.

Colonialism

Since the introduction of a colonial education to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, Aboriginal peoples have not done as well as non-Aboriginal peoples on standard achievement tests and grades (Perley, 1998, p. 118). This achievement of native students has been an ongoing issue. In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood reported that since the late 1960's Aboriginal communities have attempted to seek control over education to increase awareness of the native identity and provide training to achieve economic autonomy (Friedel, 1998, p. 4). According to Friedel:

Despite this movement, it is well documented that Aboriginal children continue to perform below average on academic performance and standard achievement tests. Drop out rates among Native students remains significantly higher than rates for non-Native students. As reported by Statistics Canada in the Edmonton Journal on April 15, 1998, "Aboriginal people (in their 20's) are only one-half as likely to have a post-secondary degree or diploma, one-fifth as likely to have graduated from university and over twice as likely to not have finished high school" (Friedel, 1998, p.4).

Despite advocating for Native control over education there seems to be very little progress in terms of obtaining control over education from the "colonizing European-derived government" (Perley, 1993, p. 118). Reasons for not being able to obtain control remain vague and unclear.

Perhaps it is due to perception of readiness and availability of First Nation educators or exclusion of the colonial educators. In the larger Canadian society, success in educational institutions is based on a relationship of obtaining an education and participation in the economic and social aspects of society (Perley, 1993, p. 118). However, in addition to displacement, land alienation, isolation on reserves, forced assimilation, and legislative and administrative mechanisms that control the affairs of Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal peoples have been excluded from participation in the development process and thus experience obstacles to social mobility (Perley, 1993, p. 120). These factors suggest that it will be some time before full native control over education exists because of the perception that First Nation's are not ready nor available to take control, and

because they have been excluded from meaningful, respectful, participation that allows them to take control and effect change.

There is a perceived deficit in First Nation's human resources and this perception is based on research findings that depict Native people as having psychological or social problems that prevent them from succeeding. As Dr. Beatrice Medicine states, "research in education predominantly has focused on a deficit model, that is, on low self-esteem of Native people" (Beatrice Medicine, 1995, pp. 42-43). Most research within education depicts Native people as failures that cannot do well on standard achievement tests or grades. In juxtaposition, when Native people do not engage themselves in the educational process it is thought that they are rebelling against society by opting out of the colonization process. Some parents within Treaty 8 (Alberta) take their children out of school for periods of time to go hunting, trapping, fishing, or take part in ceremonies because these activities support an Aboriginal worldview that is not taught in an educational system so they opt out of it periodically or entirely. Conversely, a Native person is depicted as either a failure within the educational system or a rebel against the educational system, depending upon which lens the viewer is looking through.

Education researchers like Perley and Iverson explain that it is not the characteristics of the people or their culture that ought to be the focus of the problem, rather the problem must be re-framed. Re-framing the problem of academic failure and low participation prompts an examination of the "internal colonial model" (Perley, 1993, p. 18). Perley explains this model:

The internal colonial model allows for the exploration of educational issues in a broader perspective than simply examining school failure. It requires that Aboriginal education be described in the context of institutional arrangements that have been established by a manifestly dominant group. A major advantage is that it demands treatment from an historical perspective (Perley, 1993, 19).

By looking through the lens of the internal colonial model Native people are not seen as failures because of a perceived sense of inferiority but because they are being educated in a foreign educational system. While some First Nation's people succeed in this system not all are successful because it is a process of engaging in colonization and it is a process that many choose to opt out of because it is offensive to the participant. The end result is the catastrophic drop rates.

Cross-Cultural Research

Research by Piaget suggests that the young child seems to lack an overall logical system that can be applied to scientific and logical problems whereas an older child does possess such a system (Vasta, Haith, Miller, 1992, p. 262). Dasen administered a battery of Piagetian tasks to children who were Inuit, Australian Aborigines, Ivory Coast Africans (Vasta, Haith, Miller, 1992, p. 262). The hunter groups were the Inuit and Aborigines and these groups did well on tasks measuring spatial skill. The agricultural group of Ivory Coast African children did well on quantitative skills requiring measurement of weight and volume. This cross-cultural research demonstrated that "the development can be sped up or slowed down depending on the availability of certain experiences and that even the order in which certain abilities emerge may vary from one culture to another" (Vasta, Haith,

Miller, 1992, p.270). Since experiences from one cultural group to another vary these experiences need to be considered in the context of the learner. Further research into the early experiences of Treaty 8 (Alberta) First Nations children is required to assess whether or not the traditional way of life or contemporary way of life has impacted their abilities to learn.

The Politics Of Education

Some people also believe that political ideology impacts teaching. Carlos Cordero blames the roots of fascism for the rigid formal thinking that is required in a colonial educational institution. He stated that:

According to this view, no matter what changes take place in society, non-Europeans are not capable in terms of performance, intellectually and educationally. We see in the United States the development of rigid formal thinking, which some historically have called Fascism, and an effort again to disenfranchise Native people from public systems of education. This disenfranchisement continues to be part of the process of conquest and colonization of the past 400 years. The Tribal College movement is an expression of the vitality and survival of Native educational systems where explanations for the failure in education do not come from a European perspective, but rather from a Native perspective (Carlos Cordero, 1995, p. 32).

Like many other First Nations, Carlos Cordero seems to support Aboriginal control of education and Indigenous education as a means to reversing the statistics. This may require a review of how rigid formal thinking methods effect Aboriginal

children within a formal educational system. It would seem that the educational system that teaches rigid formal thinking is an inappropriate model for First Nation's students because so few are able to achieve a Western notion of success.

The educational system needs to be overhauled. It is not sufficient to blame students, parents, teachers, or the socioeconomic conditions facing First Nation's peoples. Attention needs to be directed towards obtaining more Aboriginal controlled educational facilities, culturally appropriate curriculum resources, and a culturally sensitive methodology to ensure that First Nations are educated according to their world-view. More students should be completing high school and continuing to a vocational or academic post-secondary institution to broaden their career choices, find meaningful employment, live healthy lives, and contribute to their communities growth and potential. It is only through such a process that the statistics can be reversed. Dr. Beatrice Medicine suggests that:

Although a lot of Native people talk about and emphasize the oral tradition and are seemingly against literacy and books, we live in a world of literature. We need to be aware of these types of publications, especially those written by our own people. If we are to change institutions of higher education, we must build on what I have referred to as *Native intellectuals* in our communities (Beatrice Medicine, 1995, pp. 43).

Native intellectuals that realize the key to making changes at the institutional level need to be involved in the process of educating young people from both an oral and written perspective. The word Native intellectuals, denotes that some are smarter than the rest but it does not necessarily mean that only those with a post-

secondary education are the Native intellectuals. In the native way everything is done using the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. People work in a collective group that is inclusive of Elders, leadership, professionals, and students to make effective change because, in general, more minds are better than one.

The Elders are a very important part of this entire process. Knowing one's cultural identity is important to re-educate the First Nation's who are unaware of their history, background, culture and traditions, the colonized. However, there are imminent problems with re-educating people about culture and traditions. Beatrice Medicine warns against contriving a culture. She states that:

A contrived culture is something that people make up. It results from cultural loss, pressure to change, inadequate education, eroding kinship systems, and eroding Native belief systems. Many Native people are making up their own culture. I think a good example of this is the use of a prairie song in a Northwest coast film (Beatrice Medicine, 1995, pp. 44).

If we are really to know about our values, beliefs, and way of life, and incorporate it into a First Nations educational curriculum the Elders and cultural teachers have to be brought out of the wood work and asked to become involved in this endeavor. It is the Northern Alberta Treaty 8 Elders, living the traditional way of life, who should take their rightful place alongside the curriculum teachers as educators of culture within an educational system.

In order for the education of Native people is to improve significantly, meaningful change is required. Friedel states that:

Inherent in the process of decolonization is a transfer of control from the colonizer to the colonized. This concept has been addressed by Morrisette, MacKenzie and Morisette (1993) who propose a framework for the development of a culturally respectful dialogue and collaboration between Native and non-Natives (Friedel, 1998, p. 4). To begin this process there needs to be recognition of a distinct Aboriginal worldview and a connection to cultural knowledge and traditions in order to empower Aboriginal peoples and their communities (Friedel, 1998, p.5).

Whether the process is a collaborative one it is essential that respectful dialogue and collaboration occur between Native and non-Natives.

In conclusion, colonization has impacted First Nation's people within Treaty 8 (Alberta) and one of the vessels of colonization had been deemed the educational system. Cross-cultural research suggests that the early experiences of children impact their learner development and those experiences need to be considered in the context of Native education. When students are not doing well on tests or grades the educational system needs to be re-framed and the political ideology driving education needs to be addressed and that is the intent of this Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta) because what happens now will affect the future.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter addresses the following procedures: a brief background on the development of the survey instrument, methods provided by Alberta Learning, participant selection, First Nation involvement, the interview process, and the method of analysis.

The Survey Instrument

Alberta Learning and Alberta Community Development designed the questionnaires in collaboration with the Treaty 8 Tribal Council Education Directors' Committee. Once the questionnaires were drafted they were presented to a group of community facilitators', who were to administer them, for further revision and review. Upon their review of the questionnaires, the community facilitators' expressed a concern that the questions were too complicated because the language was technical. The questions were to have been changed again, however, the draft questionnaires that were sent to the communities for review and approval were used by the facilitator's instead of the questionnaire that had a level of language that could be understood by the community members.

Methods

The methods for this review were problematic for various reasons. First, because this is a review for Alberta Learning the methods and questions were not designed by Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta and this may have impacted some First

Nation's willingness to participate in the provincial government review. The questions were leading the First Nation's participants to focus on specific areas and this was a criticism of the review process. Second, the community reviewers did not follow the methods because there were two questionnaires one for focus groups (Appendix A) and one for individuals (Appendix B) and this created confusion. Third, as a result of the community reviewers not using the exact same questionnaire, not all the respondents answered the same questions and this caused some difficulty in conducting the analysis. Fourth, although requests were made by Alberta Learning after the community reviews were conducted to assess the numbers of people that participated in each community review this information was not asked for on either of the questionnaires so the reviewers did not provide that information. Fifth, after writing the first draft of the report the Treaty 8 Tribal Council Education Directors requested some changes in the format of the report and thus this is why the paper does not follow the original template provided by Alberta Learning. Overall, the changes in questionnaires caused some confusion and difficulty in analyzing and writing this report.

Participant Selection

Treaty 8 (Alberta) First Nations were invited to participate in this review but not all of the First Nation's communities submitted reviews. Furthermore, although Alberta Learning verbally requested to know specific numbers of people that participated in each community review process, Alberta Learning did not specifically state that the reviewers within the communities should document this information. As a result, the numbers of people that participated in this review is not provided. Through dialogue with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta sub-office

it was learned that community representation in some areas was low, however, concrete numbers were not provided.

The reviewers did not provide information as to how many participants were involved in the interview process. The participant selection was deliberate. The individuals who were responsible for conducting the reviews within the First Nation's communities obtained community input by asking people to participate in this review. It is not clear whether or not the people who participated in answering these questions were aware of the impact that their answers had because neither an information sheet was initialed nor consent form signed by the participants.

Those who participated in the Native Education Policy Review are composite of tribal council entities, First Nation community members and non-First Nation community members within Treaty 8 (Alberta). Therefore this leads one to believe that this is not an exhaustive review of thoughts collected from all First Nation individuals or First Nations within Treaty 8 (Alberta).

First Nation's Representation

The Athabasca Tribal Council is a collective of the Fort McKay First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, Fort McMurray First Nation, and Mikisew Cree First Nation. The Athabasca Tribal Council submitted a report for this review. The Bigstone Cree Nation submitted a report based on interviews with people from Wabasca/Desmarais and Peerless Lake. The Western Cree Tribal Council submitted a report on behalf of Duncan's First Nation,

Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation. Although the Chiefs of the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council did not sign a contract with Alberta Learning, informal representation from the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council was obtained. The North Peace Tribal Council submitted reviews from the Beaver First Nation, Dene Tha' First Nation, Tallcree First Nation, and the teachers within the community of the Lubicon Lake First Nation.

According to the reviewer who collected information on behalf of the North Peace Tribal Council, One of the First Nation's did not want the community members to be contacted. The report states "it was felt that the provincial government in all likelihood had already an established agenda regarding the Education Policy review and that the review itself was only 'lip service' to First Nations" (Ross Eagles, personal communication, April 25, 2000). Instead of contacting the community members the reviewer interviewed the teaching personnel to address the policy review questions. Therefore, the review does not necessarily contain the views of those First Nation community members.

On May 25, 2000 the Education Director of Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council submitted the following information for the purposes of the Native Education Policy Review. It states:

Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, while being supportive of this Alberta Learning consultative initiative, is in the initial stage of an internal review of the Education programs delivered at the member First Nation level. This review will lead to direct program modification to better meet the needs and aspirations of the children of the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council. Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal

Council will share the results of this internal review and the subsequent program modifications with Alberta Learning when complete. However, in the meantime, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council concurs with many of the observations and recommendations in this report.

With the exception of Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council the Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta) was almost completely representative of all tribal entities within Treaty 8 (Alberta). However, without concrete numbers of the actual number of First Nation's that participated in each community review the Native Education Policy Review within Treaty 8 (Alberta) is not exhaustive.

Interview Process

The interview process involved numerous methods because different questionnaires were drafted and circulated. Some individuals conducting the reviews used the focus group questionnaire and others used the interview questionnaire even though all of the interviews were apparently conducted in a focus group format. Based on the reports that were submitted from the representative groups, the Athabasca Tribal Council report used the focus group questionnaire (See Appendix A). The groups that used the interview questionnaire (See Appendix B) were the Bigstone Cree Nation, Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation. Appendix A and B are somewhat similar except one question is omitted on Appendix B and they are worded somewhat differently. The report submitted by the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council did not follow either the focus group questionnaire or interview questionnaire. North Peace Tribal Council submitted reports using the Native

Education Policy Review Draft Template (See Appendix C) for Final Reports to produce reports of the Lubicon Lake First Nation, Dene Tha' First Nation, Tallcree First Nation, and Beaver First Nation. As a result of using different questionnaires or methods not all the participants answered the same questions identically. In addition, answers to these questions were not all tape-recorded or videotaped and transcribed so it is not clear whether or not the material has been paraphrased instead of a direct quote. The Bigstone Cree Nation had videotaped some of the focus groups using the interview questionnaire. The inconsistent interview process caused some difficulty in conducting the writing and analysis.

Method of analysis

The procedure for analysis was as follows:

1. Each report was read several times to obtain a sense of the participant's perspective.
2. The template provided by Alberta Learning was used as a means to categorize recommendations and comments that emerged from the reports based on topic.

A draft report was prepared by May 1, 2000. The report was presented as a draft at the Alberta Learning Native Education Policy Review Advisory Committee meeting on May 4, 2000 as it had not yet been reviewed by the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. The draft report was presented on May 11, 2000 to the Treaty 8 Tribal Council Education Directors' Committee. Recommendations from these two meetings were considered in the submitted final report.

Chapter Four

Results

The following information obtained from the surveys is incorporated into the template developed by Alberta Learning Native Education Policy Review Team in collaboration with the Aboriginal representatives of the Native Education Policy Review Advisory Committee. The four expected outcomes of the review are identified and followed by the identification of key issues. The recommendations are bulleted under the issues.

1. TO IMPROVE FIRST NATION, METIS AND INUIT LEARNER SUCCESS IN ECS TO GRADE 12 AND POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

K - 12 SCHOOLS

Issue: Jurisdiction and Responsibility

The answers that were provided for the Native Education Review process were varied. Some people would like to see First Nations control the education of students that are in kindergarten to grade twelve. Some just want to have representation on the School Board to ensure that there are respected decisions made regarding First Nations students. Some want the parent advisory to play an increasingly important role to address issues pertaining to First Nation students.

- The local school board makes recommendations that are disregarded at the corporate board
- Shift governance to the local level from Northland School Division in Peace River
- The school board should look after the running of the school
- People from the reserve should decide how to run the school

- In order to get equal representation the Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council wants board representation to discuss payment of courses and other topics
- The school board should evaluate the teachers
- Native control of education
- The governance structures that impact, influence and affect decision-making and accountability for the school needs to be simplified
- The Nation needs representation on the school board, the student council and parent advisory committee
- Reduce the number of groups or organizations that the school leadership (director and principals) is accountable to so as to strengthen their leadership
- Clearly define what issues are to be decided through staff consensus and those which are handled strictly by the administration
- Remove control of education from the hands of the First Nation and bring our [Dene Tha' First Nation] school under the control of a provincial school jurisdiction
- The School Boards should involve parent advisory groups to create awareness of how Native Education will be delivered
- The Parent Advisory groups should decided what is needed to improve their students abilities through funding decisions

Issue: Aboriginal-controlled schools

- Build a school in the community
- The parents who have children going to school should be able to feel that this is our school but it's always the government's school. We should make the government realize that we will run our own education. The governance will be there for our school. Maybe then people will want to go to school if they know the government is not running our school.

Issue: Curriculum

It is without a doubt that the curriculum that is currently being taught to First Nation students in kindergarten to grade twelve is not acceptable to the people who participated in the Native Education Review process. They clearly want a curriculum that reflects the history, culture, language, and traditions of their forefathers whether they are Cree, Dene, or another First Nation. They also want to make sure that the standards are the same level across Alberta. They would like non-First Nations to use this curriculum too. To ensure that the curriculum is accurate they want First Nations to create a curriculum that reflects the needs of their respective communities.

- Standardize level of education with the rest of the province
- Make learning fun
- Provide music and dancing classes for students
- The curriculum standards must be uniform between Northlands & Provincial are not taught adequately
- Curriculum needs to be revisited
- Need strong basis in Math and Language Arts don't water it down!
- Curriculum same level right across Alberta for all children
- Need more community content
- Continue with Alberta Education curriculum
- More life skills should be taught
- Education should relate more to job skills
- To provide equal or same curriculums throughout Alberta; do away with district curriculums (NSD)
- There is a definite requirement for incorporating an Aboriginal perspective within the existing education system.

- Develop curriculum resources on each of the First Nations, provide a calendar of role models, and we should have a book on history and stories of First Nation's experiences
- Reduce the number of concepts that a student is required to learn in one year
- Curriculum should incorporate First Nation content
- First Nation pictures should be incorporated into the Math curriculum
- Have a Cree immersion curriculum in our school [Horse Lake First Nation]
- Teach First Nations children the history of the treaties, Indian Act and how band governments are run
- My son brings home stuff that does not teach him the things he should know about his life here in our community and other communities instead they learn about Japan and Russia
- Curriculum needs to be culturally relevant: students needs to recognize their own Nation's historic achievements such as with their Chief, Bernard Ominayak.
- All students should become aware of our First Nations role models like Senator Walter Twinn, Lieutenant Governor Ralph Steinhauer, and Senator James Gladstone, etc.
- Provide more concrete learning objectives within the elementary social studies curriculum
- Curriculum needs to consider what students don't know and what they do know
- The community needs to determine whether or not the Alberta Learning curriculum is useful within the reserve system
- Need more vocational options like mechanics and beauty culture
- Have science labs
- Incorporate cultural activities within educational programming
- Create curriculum that is relevant and meaningful for the student
- Need community involvement in developing curriculum and teaching curriculum
- Create curriculum that is geared towards First Nation learners
- Provide mandatory First Nations content all Albertans should receive it
- Curriculum should be culturally relevant

- Examine existing curriculum and see if it is consistent with Native needs such as social, and spiritual needs
- Physical training should not be an option for holistic training
- Develop curriculum that is consistent with needs of Native academic children
- Core courses should be revised to meet student needs; equal to Provincial level

Issue: Languages

Language is a very intrinsic component to culture and the identity of the First Nation peoples therefore language retention needs to be respected and honored.

- Courses offered in native language
- Invest the necessary funding, research, curriculum development and training in developing an Athabaskan Dene language and the English language
- That the Cree language program be implemented at all schools where Slave Lake Regional Council students are attending
- Need for language and culture courses within native and non-native schools
- More native culture should be taught in the schools e.g. Cree language and Native history

Issue: Teachers

Teachers spend a lot of time with First Nation children and some teachers are better than others are. And there are some that may cause more harm than good to the First Nation child. The people who participated in the Native Education Review want good teachers that are culturally sensitive and culturally competent. They want teachers, special education teachers and teacher aides that will be able to work with the parents and the community for the betterment of the student and nation.

- Attitude of teachers needs to be addressed

- All teacher aids and liaison workers work towards striving for excellence for Native students
- Teachers foster negative reinforcement of racist comments and these teachers should be reprimanded and replaced with culturally sensitive teachers that are Aboriginal
- Teachers should get in-service of our [Cree] culture and our communities [Lesser Slave Indian Regional Council]
- That all teachers be continually in-serviced of First Nations contributions
- Teachers must be in-serviced to be sensitized of the culture and the community
- Teachers should focus on teaching
- Friday staff meetings; no debriefing or support for teachers
- No extra curricular activities provided by teachers
- ECS teachers should be certified
- Teachers being trained to teach in the "dominant" society; tailor made teacher training needs to occur - applicable to community needs
- Hire qualified teachers
- Hire more teacher aides for main core subjects not only special education
- More First Nation teachers needed
- Need experienced teachers not first year teachers
- Increase their northern allowance
- In Peerless Lake they need tutors
- Teachers should be evaluated to ensure they are teaching the subject
- Use tests to improve teaching also
- Hire teachers who are going to meet the needs of the student and the community
- Use tests to improve teaching skills
- Stop suspending ECS students
- Celebrate the uniqueness of each child
- We need more native teachers who speak the language of the First Nation

- Non-First Nation teachers need to learn about the culture and languages in which they will teach
- Promotion should be based on a student's academic performance or mastery of skills and concepts.
- Teachers need to be educated/oriented to the culture's way in order to understand why kids behave in certain ways
- Teachers need to communicate with parents and build trust and their relationships; that is not there right now.
- Parents need to be able to meet the teacher on a regular basis
- Ensure that teachers are properly supervised
- Ensure that excellent teachers are hired
- Ensure that staff are properly qualified to work in a First Nation setting; provide them with ongoing ESL training, Special Education training that specifically deals with issues particular to the Dene Tha' First Nation.
- Promote accountability checks on the relationship between a teacher's teaching and student performance; move toward outcome based education
- Provide regular and understandable staff evaluation
- Ensure that there is enough funding for regular access to quality professional development that correlates to meeting identified student needs
- Provide a variety of teachers able to teach different subjects (e.g. Phys. Ed., Gymnastics teacher)
- Hire good teachers; keep good teachers; ensure that they want to stay by providing good housing, good pay
- Hire caring teachers, ones who are sensitive to the community's culture
- Hire teachers who are willing to do extra work
- Train teachers within the situation to work effectively within the situation

- Teach the teachers about the community - what the people believe, what the people expect from teachers, why they don't trust teachers, what kind of parental support can teachers expect
- Achieving consistent staffing levels through teacher parity and maintaining evaluation procedures throughout the school system
- Teachers should visit all parents he/she is teaching
- Teachers must communicate results/progress of kids with parents

Issue: Information Needs - reporting student achievement results

Among the people who participated in this review it was suggested that more effective verbal communication in both First Nation and the English language is needed to inform the parents or grandparents of testing and student achievement. The people would like to know at the beginning of the school year how the children are doing academically so that they can encourage the students to do better throughout the school year. They want to be visited in their homes by someone from the school to discuss student achievement and effort.

- I did research on parental involvement a couple of years ago. One of the findings was that it would help some parents if there was a simpler report card because some do not understand what the numbers mean.
- It is felt that teachers need to take more initiative in building relationships and trust with the parents
- The testing should be done at the beginning of the year and then again at the end of the year
- Parents and the Nation need more information regarding student achievement and achievement statistic for Nation students
- Communication between the home and school or vice versa is currently not happening because of a language barrier; parents don't speak English, well, and teachers don't

speaking Athabaskan Dene, well. In some situations, grandparents are raising the children and this problem is more pronounced.

- Teaching staff should have an identified number of home visits that they should make in a given school year
- More career counseling is needed; bring in speakers when (and only when) students show an interest
- That students be directed toward academic routes
- Native students must be geared towards regular programming rather than I.O.P.
- That career planning be implemented for native students

Issue: Delivery

The more opportunities a child has for one to one contact with a good educator the more a child will learn.

- Eliminate split grade teaching: doing so divides quality instruction time significantly among the grade levels
- Reduce class size so that quality instruction can be provided to students who have so many things impeding their learning
- The school needs to develop a consistent/continuous and structured educational program; longevity of such a program is needed

Issue: Access

- Alberta Learning must ensure that all Alberta students have equal opportunity in their access to learning - in terms of materials, equipment, qualified staff, curriculum etc.
- Have computer labs open to the community members
- In Peerless Lake they need computers

Issue: Accountability

What does a child learn when he is put outside of the classroom? What does a child learn when he is put into a time out room? What does a child learn when he is suspended? Who is accountable to the child?

- Children are being kicked out of classrooms everyday
- Lack of classroom management
- Limit student movement between schools in a year; preferably there would be no movement between schools through the year
- Improve the quality and quantity of student records transferred between schools so that the previous teacher can adequately prepare the next for the new student
- Native Education funding must be utilized for the purposes of Native Education only

Issue: School Facilities

First Nation students spend a lot of time in school and so the facilities should reflect their culture and accommodate their spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional needs.

- Government responsible for education must Take Grade 10-12 out of Fort Chip to Fort Smith or McMurray so they can participate in extra curricular activities (e.g. sports teams, drama, music)
- In Peerless Lake they need a bigger school with a bigger gymnasium with a variety of classes and funding
- The facilities should be closer to the communities
- School facilities must be able to accommodate learner interests and provide equal educational opportunity as those of other Alberta students
- School facilities need to accommodate a broader range of options for the students

- Design schools that make children want to learn and that have cultural and aesthetic value; productive learning can only take place in a positive atmosphere/environment
- ensure that educational facilities are built to enhance the health and hygiene of the students within
- Need a bigger and better equipped school that offers a full range of programs.
- The library and resources need to be improved
- All classes should be in the same building
- Class room is size is small may need portables
- Design schools that are non-destructible
- Not enough room inadequate facilities
- Need better facilities and access to the internet
- Need more classroom space, and bigger schools
- The schools need to be separated at the elementary and junior high and high school levels
- The structure of the school should resemble and represent Native peoples
- We need a better more adequate facility [Athabasca Tribal Council] on the reserve.

Issue: Learning Resources and Technologies

Grandmother spider weaved a web that was intrinsic for all peoples - the age of the computer and the world wide web is a phenomenon that is changing the way students learn about the world around them.

The people who participated in the Native Education Review process want up to date technical resources for the First Nations students in Treaty 8 (Alberta).

- By March school runs out of school supplies; (pencils, paper, etc.); also lack of proper equipment
- First Nations schools need more computer training for teachers
- Have up to date equipment at our schools for video conferencing

- Provide more curriculum-based software that helps to reinforce student learning
- Provide more qualified computer lab instructors for students
- Ensure that an educational program is the basis for computer usage
- Update computer equipment and instruct on how to use the computers
- Provide more distance learning
- Need more business courses, technical courses, computer courses
- Resources need to do assessments for special needs students
- That additional resources be provided to do correct assessments of students
- Need expertise training for video conferencing and maintenance
- Receive fiber optic cable [Athabasca Tribal Council]

Issue: Learner Supports: e.g. counseling, tutors

The famous jingle...the bare necessities, the simple bare necessities, are mother nature's recipe of life, are so important for everybody including First Nations children.

Within the context of the Native Education Review it is clear that the bare necessities also include counseling, tutors, and the maintenance of good hygiene.

- Lots of counseling (about life career and decision making)
- Get someone to talk to students on "why" we go through school. How it leads to future life.
- Provide school-community liaison workers to visit student homes
- In Peerless Lake they need a career counselor
- Career counseling is needed
- What if the child's parents were never guided through school, so if their grandparents never guided them either how could you expect them to show an interest in their child's education?

- Having been forced to go to school still has lingering effects on those that were forced.
- A student is more positive if they are given support from the teacher.
- The province should ensure that basic student needs such as shelter and food are met within the community; many homes do not have running water and this fact affects student hygiene and health
- Students need organized, structured activities for recreation after school hours
- The school needs to provide career counseling on legitimate career options for Beaver First Nation students
- Career planning must be implemented
- An ongoing career fair needs to be established to bring in people from different vocations to speak to students
- Counseling is needed to address personal student issues as well as school issues
- Provide students with counseling that helps them deal with various social issues (e.g. grief etc.) they face so that their learning can be improved.
- Let the kids talk until they are free of their problems
- Students need to learn from others that their feelings are valid and their experiences not exclusive
- Students need to be in a healing process
- Have a psychologist and counselors within the school to help kids deal with various abuses
- Provide addiction counseling
- After school the students should have tutoring, access to the library and computers
- There is a need for counselors because the home visits are missing
- We need better facilities for sports [Athabasca Tribal Council]

Issue: Testing

There are many tests in life and they come to us in many forms. Some parents view testing as important for their children and want to be given notice when their child is going to be tested so that they can prepare their child for that exam. Others are critical of the testing tool and believe that the testing tool is not culturally sensitive and further research is required to examine the value of testing.

- Student achievement tests
- Testing done of whole school to determine if grade 10 level is comparable to other grade 10's in the province
- Departmental tests are hard and people need to be taught well about the departmental tests before testing
- Help people achieve more affective results before testing
- It is good that Northland School Division has developed its own achievement testing that is relevant to First Nation student learning
- Use testing as a means of progression in the student's learning
- Multiple choice tests are not good
- Test results must be reported to the parent so that both the teachers and parents can work together on helping the child before it is too late
- Notify parents when important exams are scheduled so that parents can become involved in the student's study habits
- Conduct more achievement tests on a quarterly basis
- Standardized testing and reporting are adequate and complete (Tall Cree Education)
- Testing should be more focused on Aboriginal content
- Test speech, academic learner, emotional levels at the preschool level and make provisions if necessary because early intervention is important
- Make tests more culturally sensitive
- Need to research the value of testing

- Testing tools should be appropriate to age group and culture
- Take out the cultural bias but don't sacrifice provincial standards
- More career testing
- Provincial achievement tests have too much information to interact with in one sitting; testing should be spaced out through the school year
- Develop policies relating to criteria for student promotion
- Allow all First Nations schools to use achievement testing that is relevant to First Nation culture (e.g. Northland School Division Achievement Tests)
- Ensure that student achievement is monitored regularly and informally at the school level (with CTBS and CAT tests).
- Provide more testing so that the teacher, student, and parent can raise the grade point average of the student.

Issue: Special Education

Special Education is becoming a way of life for some Aboriginal children and this needs to be respected by all people.

- There is a definite need for special education support for First Nation students; students need special education help as they are not achieving like they should
- Need to attract specialists into remote communities
- The Special Education Program must be more accountable to the parents
- Integrate special education into the school system
- Have a special education program for older students that are sixteen to seventeen years of age
- Hands on learning is important
- Let the students take a special kind of course they are interested in like art, computers, and home economics instead of the ones they are mandated to take by Northlands

- Address ADD and ADHD effects
- Needed for students who are experiencing difficulties
- Provide more fully qualified special education teachers perhaps at a Masters Degree Level who have a good understanding of the culture and obstacles to student learning
- Provide training to Teacher Assistants before they work in the school
- Provide special education training to teacher assistants working with special needs students
- Acknowledge that our school [Dene Tha' First Nation] is a special education school
- Special Education will need to be a long-term plan and focus on involving the community, culture and history as much as possible
- Special Education needs should not be subject to student numbers
- The children need special help to advance and achieve
- More specialized teachers are needed
- Need proper assessments that are done quickly so child can receive the necessary support and doesn't have to wait
- Resource room for special education students needed
- Aptitude testing is required
- A literacy program is needed
- A life skills program is needed
- Tutoring should be made available at all times
- Provide ADD/FAS/FAE/AD prevention programs targeted at teenagers and mothers-at-risk
- TABE testing should be available for the resources in our community
- SPED should be mandated in the curriculum
- More funding is needed in low-cost SPED
- Need specialists
- Need more SPED teachers to meet students needs
- Should be SPED in the community for students who need it

- There should be a summer school for special needs students even 3 hours per day

Issue: Basic Needs - e.g. daycare, transportation

More classroom supports are needed!

- We need volunteers who will help to assist the student in class
- We also need volunteers to support and create linkages with existing programs
- In Peerless Lake they need a daycare and transportation e.g. a van for students

Issue: Other

The participants of the Native Education Review wanted this to be known. Some First Nations viewed the residential school experience as a frightening and alienating experience. The multigenerational effects of the residential school syndrome are evident through the parenting skills of children today. It is also believed that the parental role to educating their child about cultural activities such as trapping are as important as education taught in schools. It seems that parents want their children to be aware of their identity and be successful in both worlds.

- There is discrimination and prejudice
- Recognize and respect the value of the Cree culture when parents withdrawing students from school in hunting season to educate their children on the land
- Recognize and address the consequences of the residential school upon present day First Nation parents; help the Native population to put this aspect of history in the past and to move towards a positive future
- Ensure that the morale of the school is maintained at a consistently high level
- Students from this community need to be shown what is expected of them in the 'outside' world

- Attendance needs to be reported more often and the result of non-attendance or intermittent attendance conveyed to the parents
- Students need healthy activities to keep them occupied and focussed
- There should be some transitional awareness other schools and programs that are outside of the community
- Need discipline in class rooms to control the students
- The scheduling of classes should reflect the community's needs to accommodate trapping season
- Provide incentive/recognition for student achievement in all subject areas

POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Issue: Jurisdiction and Responsibility

Support for native control of education with more community consultations.

- Conduct more meetings to discuss Aboriginal Based Institutions and provide more written communication to community members
- Ensure that people with traditional knowledge are part of governing team - by all levels of Alberta Learning
- Native control of education
- People should decide what they want for education and how

Issue: Aboriginal Based Institutions

Some discussion of an Aboriginal Institute for post-secondary training in academics and trades occurred.

- Develop and Build a First Nations Training Centre
- Community controlled schools

- Community controlled institution
- Community controlled college
- Community run facility Develop and Build an Aboriginal Centre
- To have an Aboriginal Centre available in the North
- Provide post-secondary education facilities closer to the First Nations
- Need our own college in the community
- Community should have their own college and not be dependant on Distance Learning
- Let's have our own community college

Issue: Access

Greater access to transitional program, inter-session courses, funding, and community based courses were identified as gaps in terms of access to services.

- Improve the transition between the school and the post-secondary institution
- Make programs available in the community. Our students shouldn't always go out of Wabasca to successfully complete their programs.
- Students leaving home and the reserve tend to have difficulties handling post-secondary education; post-secondary institutions need to offer site-based courses and programming
- Provide funding and programs to help students become familiar with post-secondary education institutions
- Some services should be available in the evening hours
- More access to vocational schools in Peerless Lake
- Offer spring and summer inter-session courses

Issue: Information Provision - Making Choices

- Career counseling for anyone on social assistance or anyone interested

- There are not enough counselors to provide post-secondary education counseling and support
- Potential students and current students need to research the program they want to enter
- Students need to be pre-tested in the community and given basic study skills

Issue: Accountability

Northland School Division # 61 must be accountable to the community for decisions affecting funding.

- The issue of no Northland School Division student being able to participate in post-secondary education without upgrading needs to be addressed
- The community [Dene Tha' First Nation] as a whole with their government needs to decide on the value of Education

Issue: Affordability

With tuition costs rising and financial support for all post-secondary students stagnating less and less First Nation students will attend university, college, or technical institutes.

- Financial support for students attending post-secondary institutions needs to be realistic, especially in those instances where the student has children
- Post-secondary institutions should not only establish relationships with the Dene Tha', but should offer courses on site; too much money goes out of the community for transportation and accommodation of students away from our community
- Lower tuition cost (tuition cost is too high)

Issue: Advocacy for Students

The strongest advocates are those that believe in education for Treaty 8 First Nations peoples.

- Involve the grassroots people in meaningful ways
- Involve all groups in education discussions and solutions
- Have agreements and start following through with them
- Have native counselors

Issue: Student Finances/Scholarships

ATTENTION: The phrase "less is more" is a myth when applied to First Nation student funding. Much discussion of post-secondary funding was shared among Native Education Review participants. As more and more students want to go to university, college, or technical institutes they are having to wait years before they receive funding from their bands leading to insurmountable frustration.

- Upgrading dollars are not there and have to be
- First Nation training allowance dollars need to be increased
- Post-secondary student numbers are increasing not decreasing
- You have to pass all your courses in order to get financial assistance, Student Finance is really strict with the sponsorship
- There should be more bursaries to support the student
- Need consideration of special circumstances
- Too many strings on the dollars provided
- Access to post-secondary funding (federal funding is capped; more students succeeding)
- Financial support for students attending post-secondary institutions needs to be realistic, especially in those instances where the student has children

- Funding to accomplish post-secondary education must be increased in order for students who are away from home to succeed.
- Fairness needs to be established in terms of guidelines for who receives funding at the Nation level
- Native students should be considered more closely when applying for student finance
- Ensure student's are receiving enough student finance to maintain adequate food supply
- Revisit student finance amounts (single parent, family, etc.) yearly
- Adult students should get financial assistance if they have children
- Financial assistance should be there for adults who need to upgrade
- Increase living allowance for First Nation students!

Issue: Teaching

- Hire native instructors in the community college as professors, assistant professors
- In Peerless Lake they need more adult education teachers

Issue: Relevant Programming

- Programming has to be presented with a good understanding of the perspective from which the student is coming from.

Issue: Student Support Services

The 70's song Lean On Me by Bill Withers, is expressive of the support that everyone in their life needs at one time or another especially as a student in a university setting far away from home. The Native Education Review respondents expressed a need for financial and emotional support for the First Nation students'.

- Knowledge of budgeting needed

- Provide child care
- Student's in remote communities need support when they leave home for post-secondary studies
- Provide rental subsidies
- Provide more travel money
- Provide more tutoring
- Increase promotion of scholarships and bursaries
- Provide study skills and make sure that the students from remote communities are supported to take the program
- Too few students are making the transition from the First Nation school to post-secondary education; students are too sheltered in the community and experience cultural shock when they leave for higher education
- Provide field trips for students to orient them to other communities
- Provide transportation
- Provide student support and counseling

Issue: Governance Involvement in Decision Making/Institutional Resources

- To have more Aboriginal people in key decision making areas
- The thing that gets people stuck is policies even the ones imposed on our own band. There might be more people who could succeed. The policy is the thing that holds everyone...if a person really needs to help someone you have to override the policy but most people get stuck there.

Issue: Apprenticeship Training

- More access to education and life long learning for all levels including trades, apprenticeships, etc.

- Provide more opportunities to community people who want to apprentice in trades
- The industry should participate and provide more co-operative courses

Issue: Course Transfer Arrangements

Credits should be accepted no matter where the courses were taken

Issue: Other

The people who participated in this review asked that the college offer a wide variety of cultural courses, extra-curricular activities, and student jobs for the First Nation students.

- Provide extra-curricular activities
- Employ students
- Offer cultural knowledge, traditional teachings, and Aboriginal languages in the college
- The instructors should be culturally aware and should be able to fit into the community
- The instructors should be experienced

2. TO RECOGNIZE AND INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF FIRST NATION, METIS AND INUIT LEARNERS

K-12 SCHOOLS

Issue: Paired Learning

Homework is believed to be key for paired learning among parents and children

- There should be more homework for the younger students, this will train them to work at home and will help the parents get more involved
- Make homework fun so parents will spend more time with their children on the homework component
- Emphasize the relevance of parental involvement in a student's long term success

Issue: Community Schools

- Own Board of Education in Band operated schools
- High school in the community
- Larger school on the reserve
- Education that is provided in the community at all levels

Issue: Elder Involvement

The Elders are our teachers.

- Culture and language must be in our vision
- Native component (Language and Culture) as part of credited courses and program achievement
- I think it would be good for the parents and elders to visit the school

- I would like to have elders included with the teaching of my children instead of the teaching coming from only one teacher
- Need to understand the past (education, mission, culture); the community's version

Issue: Liaison Workers

Extra! Extra! More First Nation liaison workers needed! First Nation liaison workers needed to make student's futures brighter!

- Our school [Tall Cree Education] needs someone like a liaison worker working with an elder to track children and talk to parents about their children as to how they are doing because the parents also need to take responsibility for their children attending school regularly and working hard at learning
- Need more liaison workers
- Liaison workers could emphasize the importance of early-to-bed sleep patterns on the learning ability of students, homework habits, parental support, and community involvement.
- Liaison workers in conjunction with schools could host an annual awards night with an evening meal to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of the student's
- One reason why parents don't come to the school is the negative experiences they have had such as physical and mental abuse so native liaison workers could make them feel welcome

Issue: School/Community Interaction

In the Wheel of Life everybody has a role. Mom, Dad, and the Elders, are very important people in a child's life. As a community all the parents and Elders need to get involved in the school so that their children can benefit from their caring and support. Don't be shy!

- Some children are ashamed of their nationality or race. They try to hide their true identity.
- There is a need for an organization that provides culturally relevant programs that teach positive parenting skills for First Nations people
- Not all parents have transportation and they wanted to know if it would be possible to use the yellow school buses to pick up the parents for meetings during school hours or there should be an alternative system set up to transport parents to the schools
- There should be more communication between parents and teachers to hear about what good the student did instead of the bad things all the time. A parent gets tired of hearing negative things only.
- Need buy-in of community, parents
- Make sure the children are eating properly both at home and at school.
- The school should provide morning snacks and hot lunch so that the children can function at their best
- Education has to fit the community
- The school needs to extend an open invitation to parents to have them become involved with their children's education
- Children need to be encouraged that it is not appropriate to make negative comments to other students because it lowers self-esteem
- Teachers need to visit the parents and establish good relationships with parents
- Establish trust between the community and school as a basis for a partnership between parents and school staff
- Parents need to be aware that they are key to the success of their children's studies
- Parents should be held accountable if their children do not attend school, truant officer
- The schools are not helping the students stay in school instead they suspend them for three or four days which discourages students from staying in school

Issue: School Communication

Parents want to know if their children are doing well. They also want to know if the school programs are being evaluated and doing well.

- There is no communication
- The school and the programs needs to be monitored or evaluated and the community and parents need to be informed of the results to help out
- Communication is poor
- There needs to be a newsletter for parents on class progress
- We only hear about when the children are bad we never hear the good

Issue: Information Parents Need

There is a lot of pressure on the parents as a First Nation's community to get involved in their child's education in a meaningful and positive way.

- More invitations for parents to visit children's classrooms
- Parents need to know more about the teaching system
- Parents need to know that their children will perform best with praise rather than criticism
- Request for parent involvement in the classroom
- Provide more personalized information meetings for students and parents starting in Grade 10
- They need to know that in part it boils down to more parent involvement
- We need to tell our children now how important it is for them to keep going through education
- They need to be given a forum to voice their thoughts and opinions about the importance of education; they need to be given the opportunity to become the

"experts" because many who have lived without an education know first hand how important it is to have an education.

- Parents need to know how their school is measuring up in contrast to other schools
- Parents need to attend all school functions
- Parents need to volunteer in the school
- Help parents understand their role in their children's learning
- Providing information, skills and training to parents about good parenting is a must
- Involve the parents during testing
- There needs to be more parent interviews
- Parents need to know when their children are doing things that are positive not just when they are behaving negatively to promote positive enforcement
- Parents need to know when all exams, papers, assignments are due throughout the year to try and keep the students prepared
- Parents need to be involved in the graduation activities
- Parenting skills need to be taught to many parents

Issue: Advocacy for Parents

- Elders could be asked to visit parents and encourage them to become involved in the schools
- We have to be assertive in finding out what is happening in the school where your child or children go to school
- Have a monthly newsletter
- My grandchild was going to a Northland school and he is not able to still too long and doesn't listen. So they totally refused him at Northland until a letter was written to Northland. He's older now. When my son wasn't in school one day, they called me to ask if he was okay.... I liked it when the teacher would talk to me when they needed me to talk about my son.

- I had an experience where I had to go talk to the principal over a situation where a child was suspended for three days ... and I told the principal that if it was not for these native students that she would not have the job
- There is favoritism of some students and this hurts the other children and the community
- There is also labeling issues that parents are dealing with
- Parents need help to deal with the administration because they fear that without support and encouragement of their young people at the administrative level the young people will quit.

Issue: Parent Councils

- Parental support of the school
- Set up PTA

Issue: Other

There is a need for more counselors in all the schools because the teachers and native liaison workers may not have the skills to deal with the personal problems of a child while they are supposed to be teaching or interacting with the community. There should be one counselor for every grade in every school.

3. TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FIRST NATIONS, METIS AND INUIT PEOPLE, SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS, POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS, APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDERS, VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT.

Issue: Existing Relationships

- Native education departments need to exist within Alberta Learning
- Within school jurisdictions change is needed; more courses need to be offered
- Northland School needs to listen to the First Nation parents and community members
- Industry needs to create more jobs in the areas of oil, gas, lumber, and logging
- First Nations are willing to golfing with the government to strengthen relationships!
- Grand Council should negotiate the partnerships centrally
- Post-secondary institutions need to establish longstanding relationships with the First Nation communities they serve
- There are many industries in the area that might be able to support co-operative education (job-shadowing) initiatives
- There needs to be more involvement of the post-secondary institution with the school to create a better transition for students
- Relationships need to be established with other First Nation schools
- Relationships need to be initiated between various post-secondary institutions - apprenticeship programs, vocational schools.
- Relationships supporting school programs need to be established between the First Nation, the school and the local industry
- At present, the control for initiating these relationships is in the hands of the school and the First Nation has no input into this process
- Education is an inherent treaty right and should be available to all First Nations whether they live off or on the reserve

- Post-secondary institutions should offer regional courses regarding native traditional lifestyles to be used in their programs
- Develop native oriented learning materials for the national and international communities
- Offer all native languages in the institutions
- Continually monitor partnerships

Issue: Tuition Agreements

- Lower costs of tuition

Issue: Desired Partnerships

- There needs to be First Nations involvement on education boards to plan and develop curriculum components to meet the needs of First Nation children and to ensure that more reserve schools have experienced teachers
- There was a desire to be apart of a larger school jurisdiction for the purpose of engaging in networking with others [Dene Tha' First Nation]
- There was a desire to establish partnerships with post-secondary institutions and vocational schools and to have them deliver site-based programs [Dene Tha' First Nation]
- There was desire to establish partnerships with local industry for the purpose of co-operative education programming (job shadowing) and for the purpose of identifying potential jobs for students who complete their schooling [Dene Tha' First Nation]
- School jurisdictions - there is an ongoing need to learn from other schools and to share resources and success stories [Dene Tha' First Nation]
- Have native people be part of decision making process
- There should be more meetings for people to get together and talk

- The School Boards must have representation of Native people in their boards. The representative will have all rights of that of School Board Members

Issue: Information Partners Need

- Although there may be an increase cost in providing education to all First Nations the long- term benefits will be less First Nations people placing a burden on society and instead there will be more recognition and respect for First Nations as productive members of society
- What's that called when a person writes a story and someone else uses it? Because that's what happened to my dad. He wrote about Peerless Lake.

Issue: Principles for Effective Partnerships

- Increase the number of group gatherings among Treaty 8 representatives, community members, provincial government officials and federal government officials
- Proportional representation at all levels (business & industry, college, university, government, wherever people work). Involve our people in decision making positions
- Have First Nation community representatives working within Alberta Learning and other departments
- Build a networking system among Aboriginal community representatives working within various government departments

Issue: Establishing Goals and Objectives

Education is a very serious topic to First Nations peoples because it is a beacon of hope to many who are wanting to improve their lives and obtaining employment to raise their families and help their communities. There are constraining limits that are put on First Nation's peoples in terms of funding, policy, and lack of services and

educational programs. This means that only some of the First Nations peoples will benefit from an education at a university, college, or technical institute. The perplexing question remains of the First Nation's community who will benefit from the minimized treaty right to education?

- Increase the financial aid to students in post-secondary institutions
- Fund students who need to upgrade
- Lower the grade point average requirements
- Lower the grade point average so more students could enroll
- Revise policy and standards
- Negotiate better tuition agreements
- Ensure that students are treated with dignity and respect because they are trying to improve themselves; they do not want to be viewed as guaranteed money
- Maintain ongoing communication with native liaison workers at the college and universities
- Facilitate more meetings with the University officials and dignitaries
- Ensure that native liaison workers are employed in the elementary, junior, and senior high schools
- Promote sensitivity of First Nations family dynamics and lifestyles
- Provide student services for those who live off the reserve and out of the community
- A post secondary institution needs to be established closer to home
- There needs to be more communication with native liaison workers in the college or universities with the community
- There needs to be a vocational school established closer to home
- The community needs to be involved in the planning and development of post-secondary and vocational schools within Treaty 8
- Technical institutes need to provide distance learning opportunities, bring information to the community such as entrance requirements, and career choices

- Industry needs to be involved to improve the student's chances of employment
- The community and industry need to formulate a recruiting plan to hire First Nations people

Financing Partnerships

- More funds from government and industry are a need
- Provide more funding for special needs areas
- The way I see it, I think the government should put all the welfare dollars into education and this would get those who are able to pursue education or training
- The way welfare is they will not help people even if they are trying to help themselves, instead they would rather see a person go down instead of supporting them.

3. TO FOSTER A GREATER APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING BY ALL ALBERTANS OF FIRST NATION, METIS, AND INUIT PEOPLE.

Issue: Curriculum - What all children need to learn

The topic of curriculum is a hot one! Treaty 8 First Nation's input into curriculum development is a primary issue because it is believed that there are many stereotypes of Aboriginal people that need to be clarified through facts and culturally sensitive language. The native content in the curriculum needs to be mandatory to all children to foster greater appreciation of all Aboriginal peoples.

- Get rid of the negative thoughts and images about Native people
- Provide information on all the distinct groups First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples
- Develop curriculum (in all subjects) regarding the Dene Tha' First Nation that all Alberta students must be taught
- Summer science camps
- Summer school
- Traditional knowledge should be mandated in core curriculum to be developed by traditional people
- There should be native oriented programming (e.g. social studies)
- Put more history in the classroom of Native people
- Request that First Nation post-secondary students who have graduated from the universities, colleges, technical institutes, come to the communities and talk to the students who are in elementary, junior high and senior high schools.
- A curriculum that deals with the facts, contributions, treaties, languages, art and literature all need to be incorporated into all subjects and this curriculum must be a mandatory part of student learning for all Alberta students
- A First Nation curriculum should be a mandatory part of every Alberta student's curriculum
- Curriculum should cover all cultural group in Alberta in all subjects

- Native curriculum should be mandatory throughout the province

Issue: Public Awareness - Straight Facts, Dealing with Misconceptions Communication Plan

Establish an ongoing relationship between the Media and First Nations to eliminate the "Hollywood Indian" image of First Nation's people and educate the public about the positive accomplishments of First Nations people.

- Have to determine how much Albertans are currently being taught and what they know
- Change or deal with negative attitudes of non-Natives and media
- Produce documentaries of each First Nation community
- The teachers or community resources should teach about the local First Nation history like the history behind Lesser Slave Lake
- Advertise and promote achievement of our successful students
- Publicize achievements (concentrate on positive)
- Establishing an ongoing relationship with the media and First Nations
- At present most Albertans have a Hollywood image of First Nations people; more needs to be done to promote positive First nation role models to Alberta students and the population in general
- Provide cultural awareness/appreciation days and weeks with the school.
- Ensure that events that are promoted or paid for by First Nation peoples are open to all people
- Establishing an ongoing relationship with the media in which the First Nation culture and 'news' is presented and understood by all Albertans; doing so, is also thought to facilitate the First Nation in its ability to look at itself, as well.
- Get the students to represent the community at gatherings, conferences (both Native and non-native events)
- Aboriginal awards night
- Aboriginal awareness days

- Posters of role models
- Documentaries regarding First Nation history, culture, governance and contributions will provide appreciation and understanding of First Nations
- Find a way to stamp out prejudice
- Emphasize First Nations achievement through public relations
- Let them get to know us [Dene Tha' First Nation]; let us get to know them; engage in cultural exchanges, conferences, meetings, pow-wows, pictures, internet e-mail; establish our own website.

Issue: Changing Hearts - not minds

- Accept our differences and that of others; among First Nations first
- Understand multicultural backgrounds
- The First Nation has to demonstrate the same appreciation and understanding for themselves; blaming brings a negative self-image on themselves; moving forward in Educational realm projects a better self-image that they can own
- I would like to see our people overcome the effects from the residential school and to have a different outlook on life

Issue: Messages for all elected officials

- Stop funding cutbacks for First Nations!
- Stop increasing tuition!
- Focus on kindergarten to grade twelve rather than placing all of the emphasis on Post-Secondary and apprenticeship training

5. RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

Issue: Jurisdiction & Responsibility

- Come and visit us and find out our needs
- How many First Nations people does the Minister employ?
- Stop increasing tuition!
- Give us more funding for our school!
- Schools should be run by the community with native teachers in the schools and should have traditional teachings, bush camps, elders involved, etc.
- The problem of student failure when participating in post-secondary education away from home needs to be addressed; students need to be taught how to survive in the world beyond the community
- There needs to be a program with First Nations employees to listen and advocate on behalf of parents/students who are experience negative situations with teachers, principals and the education system
- Enforce policies that are anti-discriminatory
- We want a native school that produces graduates who are knowledgeable about native culture and academia
- Support the recommendations provided throughout this report
- Need to see more students graduating from grade twelve
- Want to see results and positive statistics
- A role needs to be created that specifically is for the purpose of ensuring that students are accountable for their learning
- Implement ways of parent/caregiver involvement in the learning process

- Provide Aboriginal peoples with the same opportunity to access of post-secondary institutions
- Employ more First Nations people in all areas of education if you want First Nations to succeed
- Limit the number of governance structures that the First Nation is accountable to for the provision of education to one governance structure
- Write a native curriculum, but ensure that it comes from First Nations people and those who work with them; such curriculum needs to be written in non-technical language at all levels

Issue: Federal Government - Recommendations/Comments

- Streamline the governance structures that impact students education and add to the chaos and instability of the school's educational delivery; put control of and accountability for student education under one bureaucracy (presently the school deals with the Federal government through Indian Affairs, the Provincial government for programming and policy, a Tribal Council for advocacy and the First Nation for allocation of funding).
- If the Nation is to govern the school, it must have a school board rather than chief and council running the school
- Education is an inherent treaty right and funding should be available whenever students attend post-secondary institutions

Issue: Legislative Changes to Acts/Regulations

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

- Make it mandatory that teachers deliver report cards to their student's parents if the parents do not participate in parent-teacher interviews; meeting parents in their home makes a difference
- Ensure through Acts and Legislation that First Nations students do not lose their language
- Ensure that the Nation has input into and control over its education
- Ensure that the Nation has site-based facilities within which to offer educational programming; and
- Ensure that educational opportunities are equal across the province in terms of resources, equipment, funding
- Ensure that student truancy is dealt with and compulsory attendance at school is enforced

Issue: Governance/Decision Making

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

- Need the Minister to address all recommendations on Native Education
- Conduct follow-up every few years
- Limit the number of governance structures affecting the school to one structure
- Municipality should be more involved in school, education, and community
- Process to be identified by grassroots too

Federal Government - Recommendations/Comments

- That the portability of Treaty Rights must be recognized. These students should be under the jurisdiction of First Nations

- The School Boards must have representation of Native people in their Boards. The representative will have all rights of that of School Board Members
- Where tuition agreements exist the School Board will recognize that Slave Lake Regional Council will pay the amount of how many subjects that the students are enrolled in
- That the parents be involved through the development of Parent Advisory Committees. These parents will decide on the way Native Education funds will be utilized. They will also be involved in the monitoring of Native Education Projects

Issue: Structures Needed (Both in government and at the K-12 and post-secondary level)

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

Need programs to support the parents to support the students

Issue: Funding

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

- Stop increasing tuition!
- More funding for Aboriginal learning to ensure adequate resources and qualified personnel are implanting high quality curriculum/programs
- Provide greater funding for the Child and Family Services/Social Welfare workers to deal with the social problems impeding children in their ability to learn
- Provide greater funding for the Child and Family Services/Social Welfare workers to deal with the social problems impeding children in their ability to learn

Federal Government - Recommendations/Comments

- There should be enough federal funding for Treaty students
- Government has to be more flexible and sensitive to community needs
- Government has to give some more flexibility with funding requirements
- More dollars!
- More money!
- More money for programs.
- Stop funding cutbacks!

Tuition Agreements

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

Stop increasing tuition!

Issue: Other

Alberta Learning - Recommendations/Comments

- Invest necessary funding in addressing the lack of parenting skills
- Provide affordable student housing

Federal Government - Recommendations/Comments

- Invest necessary funding in addressing the lack of parenting skills
- Provide more money for educational transportation
- Provide more money for tutors.

CHAPTER FIVE

General Discussion

The following discussion includes important themes that emerged from the compilation of the Treaty 8 (Alberta) tribal entity reports concerning Native education. These important issues were examined as "What stood out?"

During the course of writing this report, I discovered that some Aboriginal peoples describe their experience as survival and this denotes existence despite apparent problems. "Thus, in the Aboriginal context, one needs to be resilient in order to survive, and this paints a picture of existence under harsh circumstances" (Auger, 1999, p. 76). "The lived experience of Aboriginal peoples involves coping with the historical past while contending with the contemporary social milieu of Canadian society" (Auger, 1999, p. 76). Aboriginal peoples "have experienced displacement due to European expansion, land alienation, isolation in reservation systems, forced assimilation, and legislative and administrative mechanisms that control the affairs of the Aboriginal communities" (Perley, 1993, p. 120). This is the colonial experience of Canadian Aboriginal peoples, "a geographically extended political unit" (Perley, 1993, p. 119). Coping with colonialism has meant either rebelling against forced assimilation by opting out of the educational process (a self-preservation reaction) or becoming very successful at engaging in colonialism.

One reaction to education, a system that colonized Aboriginal peoples, is apathy. Based on the information provided from the community reports, apathy among First Nation's is due to "system discrimination" and a "curriculum [that] is geared to a non-native population". One respondent stated that he or she "does not see

the purpose" in the methods and approaches that are taken to educate the child. One participant stated that "if teachers treated our children the same as other white children maybe our children would try harder." These sentiments reflect the current situation but also the past.

Some respondents discussed their failure within the residential school education system. From the Bigstone Cree Nation report one person stated:

For our community there is very limited success [when we] look at the numbers. Why did we fail? The thing is, the way I see it, we never had any say or choice. That's [what] could be the reason...The way I understand [it], is that we were isolated and had no opportunity to do anything.

To look at success, we have to recognize our failures within our community. Why did this individual fail in this area (education) but is most successful in other areas (like raising a family)? If someone was to hit success, the way I look at it must be that they know how to look after [the] family. Failure came when the white-man came. He gave us a book to learn from and we all tried to learn from it.

Trapping is the one thing that has to do with success, but now we have no animals to trap. They're all dying due to the new ways after the sixties. That is where we have to recognize the failures in our community (Personal communication, 2000, p. 1)

This person has a view of learner success as being able to raise a family in a traditional native way not one imposed by the residential school system because within that education system he or she has experienced failure. When a person has experienced failure within an education system, they are less likely to promote the educational experience to their family or other people. Thus, there is a tremendous amount of apathy in First Nation communities.

What stood out?

Improving First Nation, Metis and Inuit learner success in ECS to Grade 12 and post-secondary institutions

- To improve learner success in ECS to Grade 12 and post-secondary institutions, First Nation's either want representation on school boards regarding decisions affecting the students or they want Aboriginal control of education
- They requested that Native people with traditional knowledge be included in the decision making process
- They would like the community controlled schools located in their community at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels
- Fees at post-secondary level institutions need to be lowered for First Nation students because the education departments have a limited budget and cannot afford to send many people who are waiting to attend
- Federal funding needs to be increased
- Bursaries and scholarships need to be increased to First Nation students
- Students need housing subsidies, daycare, and transportation available on-reserve and off-reserve

- Apprenticeship training programs need to be available within the First Nation communities
- Post-secondary credits should be transferable and accepted at all institutions to save costs and time of having to take more courses
- The curriculum needs to be equal to provincial standards with First Nation's content included. The curriculum was suggested to include First Nations' facts taught to all children in a culturally sensitive way. The communities want more meetings to define native education and provide information regarding curriculum content
- They want native languages taught to their respective students that are culturally specific
- The communities want more teachers who are qualified, experienced, knowledgeable about native culture and traditions, knowledgeable about the community, and can teach special education. The communities are requesting the hiring of more teacher aides to help the students
- The teachers need to communicate the achievement of students with their parents and if there is a language barrier a native liaison worker with the language skill must be hired to help communicate the academic achievement to parents
- The parents are not satisfied with split grade teaching. They want class size reduced
- Some students do not have access to computers and computers are needed
- They want the number of suspensions, expulsions, eliminated or reduced
- They want school facilities closer to the communities that are bigger and better equipped

- They want more computers and instructors who are qualified to teach computer courses
- Career counselors and addiction counselors are vitally needed
- Communities need tutors to help students with homework after school
- Testing is needed on a more frequent basis but students need to be helped to prepare for the exams and the exams should be spaced apart so they can study adequately
- Special Education programs are needed with qualified instructors teaching culturally relevant material to students. Programs for older students with special needs were identified as needs
- Attendance needs to be reported more often and the result of non-attendance or intermittent attendance conveyed to parents but information need not be conducted in inquisition format

To recognize and increase parent involvement in the education of First Nation, Metis and Inuit learners

- Hire more native liaison workers, counselors, and elders within the schools
- Parents want to hear positives instead of negatives regarding their children
- Recruit all parents to be actively involved in the schools because they need to know the importance and relevance of parental involvement
- Parent councils need to be developed and could possibly serve as an advocacy body for parents

To strengthen partnerships and relationships between First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, school jurisdictions, post-secondary institutions, apprenticeship providers, vocational schools, industry and government

- There needs to be a Native education department within Alberta Learning
- Relationships need to be formed
- Some communities want to establish relationships with post-secondary institutions and vocational schools
- Some communities want to establish relationships with industry for the purpose of cooperative education programming
- The School Boards must have representation of Native people on their boards
- More meetings among all parties is required
- Increase the number of Treaty 8 First Nation's students in post-secondary institutions and ensure they are able to graduate
- Establish a Native post-secondary institute that offers academic and vocational programs for Treaty 8 First Nation's community member

Foster a greater appreciation and understanding by all Albertans of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit People

- Traditional knowledge should be mandated in the core curriculum to be developed by traditional people from Treaty 8
- Develop a curriculum that deals with facts relating to treaties, languages, art, literature, and all other native content into all subjects of the curriculum. Make this curriculum mandatory for all students in Alberta Learning

- Dispel stereotypes of Native people through a media campaign promoting positive achievements of individuals and nation's.

Recommendations to government

- Support the recommendations throughout this report
- Stop increasing tuition
- Increase funding for post-secondary education
- Provide funding for upgrading
- Develop a tribal post-secondary institute within Treaty 8 that offers academic programs and vocational programs within a cultural environment
- Hire Treaty 8 First Nations educators within Alberta Learning
- Enforce policies that are anti-discriminatory
- Ensure through Acts and Legislation that First Nations students do not lose their language
- Conduct a follow-up every few years

Conclusion.

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta are a distinct people with distinct needs that must be addressed specifically. It is the hope and desire of the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta that these distinct and specific educational needs of Treaty 8 First Nations are specifically identified in the final provincial Native Education Policy Review document.

As mentioned earlier in the report Treaty No. 8 covers a large geographical land mass, approximately 840,000 square kilometers, most of this territory covers the northern half of the province of Alberta. For the twenty-two First Nations which are scattered throughout Treaty 8 (Alberta) the cost of doing business in the north is a factor that must be considered in ensuring the provision of equitable quality learning opportunities that are expected by all other Albertans. In making this statement (as expressed at various forums during the consultative process of the review) the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta wishes to reiterate that the unique status of treaty First Nations' people must not be compromised.

According to the respondents of this report the implications for further research are paramount. First, the respondents did not have a working definition of what Native education is, therefore, Native education needs to be defined with the involvement of Treaty 8 First Nations in this definition process. Second, with Treaty 8 First Nation's involvement curriculum needs to be developed. Third, native ways of teaching need to be researched, promoted, and taught to future educators. Fourth, further research of the early experiences of Treaty 8 First Nation children growing up in a native traditional setting and native contemporary

setting is suggested as a means to know if their experiences impact their learning. Fifth, ongoing reviews are required to ensure that the recommendations of this report are met and the statistics of First Nation students are improving.

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