

THE EXPERIENCES OF PRESENT AND FORMER
NON-ABORIGINAL TEACHERS TEACHING IN AN
ABORIGINAL SCHOOL ON THE
NORTH COAST OF LABRADOR

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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NORMA L. DENNEY



The Experiences of Present and Former Non-Aboriginal Teachers Teaching in an
Aboriginal School on the North Coast of Labrador

By

Norma L. Denney

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland

June 2004



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Your file *Votre référence*

ISBN: 0-612-99070-2

Our file *Notre référence*

ISBN: 0-612-99070-2

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Abstract

This study describes the life and work experiences of current and former non-aboriginal teachers working in an aboriginal school on the north coast of Labrador. Interviews with present teachers and mailed questionnaires to former teachers provided a rich description of the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal schools. Additional information was provided from field notes compiled in the school during the course of the study.

The major findings of this study were; a) Non-aboriginal teachers who stay working in aboriginal schools for more than two years do so because of a dedication to and concern for the students they teach; b) Non-aboriginal teachers who are open-minded, responsive to cultural challenges and demonstrate cultural sensitivity, easily adapt to community life; c) Non-aboriginal teachers who leave aboriginal schools and communities after a short period of time, do so for personal and professional reasons; d) the Labrador School Board must provide current and accurate information to prospective teacher candidates regarding aboriginal schools and communities; e) the Labrador School Board must become more proactive in dealing with teacher concerns in aboriginal schools.

Chapter One

Introduction

Teachers play a pivotal role in the life of a child. Teachers and students spend their days constantly interacting with one another. Whether it is in the classroom, the gymnasium or in the corridors, teachers have numerous opportunities to communicate with students both formally and informally. Building students self-esteem or supporting them with their plans, teachers influence students simply by being figures of authority and role models.

Teachers and students relate primarily in the classroom, where teachers, by and large, establish the atmosphere and the classroom environment. Outside of the classroom teachers and students relate in an informal manner without the pressures of evaluation or work expectations. In both of these situations, teacher's attitudes and behaviours towards the students they teach are affected by pressure from parents, the school board and the legal system.

A positive relationship develops between teachers and students if both parties fulfill the other's expectations in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. The teacher expects the student to attend class, participate to the best of his or her ability, complete assigned work and behave in an appropriate manner. Students expect their teachers to treat them as individuals, mark them fairly and consistently, present effective, interesting lessons and be available to help them (King & Peat, 1992).

When the teacher is of a cultural background different from their students, the relationship between teacher and student takes on a different dimension. This is indeed the case where the student is native and the teacher is non-native. The quality of education that native students receive depends upon the willingness of the teacher and other school personnel, to create a supportive learning environment for them. In order to do this, educators must be educated themselves. It is essential for the teacher of non-aboriginal students to acquire as much information as possible about the culture they will be entering in to. Research regarding the history, customs, culture, traditions and nuances of community life, must become as much a part of the non-aboriginal teacher's knowledge base as teaching theory and educational pedagogy. Such information enables the non-aboriginal teacher to make a smooth transition into the new teaching environment as well as dismiss previously held views of aboriginal people.

Stereotypes and assumptions regarding native people represent the biggest challenges to overcome in education. The 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples states " Teachers cannot convey accurate information about Aboriginal people and instil respectful attitudes until they have been prepared to do so" (p.499). The cultural assumptions that we carry around with us affect how we see others and for teachers, these assumptions affect how we see our students and their families.

Perry and Fraser (1993), state, " Our culture provides a lens through which we view the world and interpret our everyday experiences. Culture informs what we see and understand as well as what we omit. Many components make up our view of the world:

our ethnic and racial identification, the region where we come from, the type of neighbourhood we live in, our socioeconomic background, our gender, the language(s) we speak, our disabilities, our past experiences and our lifestyle” (p.100).

Indeed, our culture is very much a part of who we are. The characteristics, which constitute our particular culture, define us, make up our history, and structure our lifestyles. Unfortunately it is these varied characteristics, which define how society labels and treats people of various cultural origins.

Many teachers do not think of themselves as being cultural or ethnic. This is due to the socialization process, which has been monocultural in nature. Teachers have learned mainstream or “whiteness” to be the norm by which knowledge about others is measured. The training of teachers also has a role to play in this respect. Many teacher-training programs do not address how to teach culturally diverse students effectively. (Finney & Orr, 1995, Ogbu,1995). Preservice teachers receive only formal training with no formal learning of cultural differences. Hence, they enter the native classroom with attitudes, values and beliefs about native children, which have been shaped, by the media and fall far short of reality. (Barry & Lechner,1995).

What must always be the essential motive and driving force behind any action or question in the educational setting is what is best for the child. Education must be adapted to the needs of the student. Education should facilitate the growth and development of the child and recognize the uniqueness of each individual. Thus, it is the teacher’s job to figure out how children approach the world and incorporate that understanding into their

instruction. Teaching requires that we see situations from a student's perspective. In order to do this non-native teachers of native students need to become bicultural (Liston & Zeichner, 1996). They need to understand the behaviour, idioms, expectations and past experiences of the culture of the students they teach. Teachers need to become acquainted with their student's distinct cultures. If they are unfamiliar with them, their job is to learn about the needs, desires and aspirations of the parents and children they serve. It essentially means that teachers inquire about and become sensitive to the children whom they teach. For example, sometimes non-native teachers are unable to talk to and get information from native children due to their shy, quiet manner. Teachers often have no idea of what may be troubling the child or how to bridge the gap. The end result of these types of encounters is usually a misinterpretation of behaviours and all too often a misdiagnosis of learning ability on the part of the teacher. At other times, students may be tired, hungry or bad weather may keep a child at home. In this instance must make modifications and be willing to give extra time and attention to students with sporadic attendance.

In the native setting specifically, lack of understanding about a child's home life and lack of communication with parents about the home environment, can leave a teacher at a loss about how to reach students.(Manning, 1995). Liston and Zeichner (1996), recognize the essential link between the home and the school in the native setting. They state:

“ When parents and the child’s home life are not explored, understood and incorporated into the classroom environment, everyone loses out, but ultimately it is the child who loses most. There is so much at stake in the education of children, that not to be open to and not to consider all of the elements that make up each child, can do nothing more than hinder how and what the child learns. Each child is unique and the most essential parts of who they are develop and are influenced at home, so schools and teachers must make every effort they can to get to know and integrate these elements” (p.51).

Teaching is communicating and good communication must create meaningful interaction. In order to teach well, cultural features have to be considered. (Ogbu, 1992). In this respect, teaching, learning and culture are inseparable. If teachers ignore the cultural heritage and knowledge of their students, communication will be poor, instruction will fail and so will the student. Teachers need to be culturally sensitive to their students, develop sound instructional practices and a curriculum that centres on the student’s experiences and the diverse world around them. This would provide an ideal opportunity for the non-native teacher to make a connection with the child’s home and facilitate parental involvement in the school (Liston & Zeichner, 1996).

Most future teachers are well intentioned. They enjoy children and want to help them learn. Yet, their experiences may limit them. Their understanding of culture and their knowledge of children from different cultural backgrounds may be minimal. These teachers are just becoming aware of their own cultural identities and in the process of

formulating their professional identities. Coming to terms with the two can be quite confusing. Their ability to recognize and interact with other cultural norms is limited. In essence, they become hindered by their own experiences. Having little experience with people and children from backgrounds different from their own, they have difficulty seeing children clearly and understanding them. If these issues are not addressed in the early stages of their careers, these teachers will have difficulty penetrating cultural barriers that confine minority and disadvantaged children (Liston & Zeichner, 1996).

Many new teacher graduates from Canadian universities enjoy a lifestyle, which they hope to maintain throughout their professional careers. Amenities such as a vehicle, paved roads, water and sanitation facilities, banking, shopping and access to recreational facilities as well as a comfortable home, are all part and parcel of what teachers hope to enjoy in their professional lives. This would certainly be a typical middle to upper middle class lifestyle commensurate with educational qualifications and the salary a new teacher would earn. From a professional standpoint, young teachers envision themselves working in an urban setting. The school would be a large facility containing all the resources and materials necessary to effectively teach the children in their care. Classroom lessons and lectures would be supplemented with field trips and guest speakers, which would create excitement for learning among students. The students themselves would be average to bright students with resources and teachers available to assist children who may have learning disabilities.

While this may be the ideal teaching situation, many new, young teachers encounter a different reality. For the researcher in this study, reality was an isolated aboriginal community on the north coast of Labrador. The facility was an all-grade school with a student population of approximately 225 students and a staff of 22 teachers and support staff. The school building was over 25 years old and in disrepair, plagued by heating problems, structural problems, mold, and an unreliable water supply. The building was eventually abandoned and replaced with a new, modern facility in February 1999. Students came from a disadvantaged economic background dictated by the economic conditions of the community. Families earned a living through fishing, working for the two local stores, local government service agencies, and hunting and trapping, supplemented by social assistance. Academically, students represented a wide range of abilities. Most students progressed well through the school system mastering the provincial curriculum. There were also those students who were challenged by various academic, behaviour and emotional problems. Field trips were limited by the geographic isolation of the community. Guest speakers consisted of community elders, RCMP officers, and parents of students. Four times throughout the school year students were selected to attend sports meets and drama festivals held outside of the community. Such an environment tested the limits of a teacher's creativity and ingenuity. During the course of nine years of teaching on the Labrador coast, the researcher can attest to the resourcefulness of her fellow colleagues.

While “ideal teaching situations” may exist, in today’s economy and competitive job market, few young teachers are able to find positions in their “ideal school”.

Decreasing demand for teachers, declining student enrolments, school closures and tighter government fiscal policies, have changed employment and mobility patterns for teachers across Canada. (Dibbon, 2002). Today it is the market that dictates the placement of teachers, not the teacher’s desires. For those who are able to find employment, many young teacher’s first job is in a rural, remote or isolated community. Often times these communities are native. The transition from the student desk at university to the teacher desk at a public school is daunting. Young teachers feel anxious, nervous and become distressed quite frequently as they attempt to settle into their professional lives (Green, Roebuck & Futrell, 1994).

First year teachers typically begin their careers with very little support. The principal or administrator of the school usually introduces the new teacher to colleagues or they may provide information about rules, policies, schedules, materials or school services. Beyond this, the new teacher is expected to assume full responsibility from day one. A teacher who enters a classroom after five years of university training is not ready to teach without some sort of feedback and supervision that they may have had during their university career.

Teachers in isolated or remote areas face even greater challenges than their counterparts in urban areas. (Friesen, 1984). They may be asked to teach some of the more difficult classes, both behaviourally and academically. Often times they are given subjects

to teach in which they have little or no background knowledge. They may be asked to assume extracurricular activities such as supervising intramural programs or drama clubs. The teacher begins to feel isolated in the school building itself because they cannot share their experiences with other colleagues (Hersh, Stroot & Snyder, 1996). Lack of equipment, facilities and materials combined with a limited curriculum serves to undermine the professional competence of the teacher and they begin to feel inadequate in their job.

Community factors also take their toll on a young teacher. These teachers feel they are more closely observed and scrutinized than their colleagues in urban schools. Lack of privacy is often cited as a reason why many teachers do not remain in isolated communities. These teachers may have difficulty adjusting to a rural lifestyle where everyone knows everyone else and their business. This results in teachers limiting their interactions with community members and consequently, they become socially isolated from the community (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989). These ideas will be explored and expanded further in the literature review section of this report.

If the element of culture is added to this rural milieu, the task of teaching becomes an even greater challenge for new teachers. The teacher is entering into a world where the physical, social and cultural environment is totally new. It is a world where, for maybe the first time, they are in the minority. It is no surprise that the teacher is apprehensive about the expectations that the community has for him or her. Teachers soon find that traditional teaching methodologies may not be effective in their new environment. Optimism fades

when the teacher does not receive the results they expected. Explanations such as “ They are slow learners” or “Their parents don’t care” become commonplace. Ambivalence and frustration with the school and community are common feelings shared by young teachers in native communities. Teachers begin to focus on the negative aspects of the school and community and exclude the positive. Stereotypical and prejudicial views of community inhabitants come to the fore and teachers come to closely associate with other more cynical teachers who share their views. Close living quarters and the lengthy and extreme weather conditions may lead to a condition known as “ cabin fever” which many first year teachers suffer from living in native, northern communities.

Other teachers come to understand the host culture and are able to adapt to their new environment and remain in the community for a considerable period of time. Then there are those teachers who simply “survive” the school year and leave the community on the first available plane in June and never return. This is unfortunate for both the teacher and the student. The teacher misses the opportunity to become part of a unique teaching environment which small schools offer. For the student, they lose a qualified teacher who can help them to succeed academically and may be the one source of stability they have in their life in a native community (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989). A further explanation and discussion of these issues will follow in chapter four of this report.

School boards have continually been faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers for aboriginal schools for years. This has not always been an easy task. The main concern of school boards who hire teachers for aboriginal schools is to attract

good quality teachers who will stay on the job for more than just one or two years. Depending upon the geographic location and financial resources, some school boards are able to offer incentive packages and financial benefits to attract and retain new teachers. For recent teacher graduates shouldering a heavy student debt load, the promise of a high paying teaching position in a native, northern community is too great to pass up. This is a trap which many young teachers fall into. They allow economics, rather than genuine concern for students, determine their career choices. School boards do take advantage of this situation and hire these teachers without considering their “cultural suitability” for the position. While a teacher may have the best academic qualifications, they may lack the social, emotional and cultural qualifications, which are essential for working in a native, northern community. As a result school boards may be faced with the dilemma of replacing a teacher midway through the school year due to the teacher being unexpectedly leaving or being dismissed by the school board. Replacing teachers during the school year in a native, northern community is an even greater challenge than during the normal recruiting period in the spring and summer months.

School boards also have the added concern of dealing with the negative experiences of former teachers of native schools. Former teachers leave teaching positions in native schools with a negative attitude and stereotypical view of native students and native people in general which they often share with other prospective teachers. While teachers can share in the responsibility for their inability to work and cope in a native school, they are not totally to blame. School boards must also accept their share of the

blame for the apparent “failure” of new teachers to succeed in the native setting. In their haste to fill positions in native schools, school boards fail to provide prospective teachers with a honest and accurate job preview. This can certainly be the case where the school involved has had a history of behaviour and academic problems. By providing prospective teachers with current and honest information regarding teaching positions and communities, teachers are able to make well informed decisions, and for school boards, teacher turnover may be reduced.

History of Education in Northern Labrador

Historically, the Inuit of Labrador lived a productive, solitary existence. Living off the land and sea around them, they forged their own social, economic, legal and medical systems. Education was practical as children learned the skills and knowledge of their people through the songs, stories and legends of the elders. Whole villages lived, worked and hunted together for the benefit of all. However, this soon changed with the coming of the Kablunak (white man), in the early eighteenth century. Most notable were the Moravian missionaries from Germany.

The first attempt to begin mission work in Labrador was started by John Christian Erdhardt in 1752. This attempt failed as Erdhardt and his companions were killed by a group of Inuit before leaving Labrador. However, under the direction of another missionary, Jens Haven, the Moravians were given a large tract of land in northern

Labrador and in 1770 the first Moravian mission was established. A mission in Okak soon followed this in 1776 and in Hopedale in 1782. Through the establishment of these mission stations, the Moravians were able to control the social, cultural and economic systems of the Inuit in order to make the Inuit lifestyle match their own idea of a Christian society (Borlase, 1993).

The Moravians began their first school in Labrador in 1791. Children were required to attend school at the age of five and were taught to read and write in the Inuktitut language using the Bible and Christian principles as the basis of the curriculum. Adults who converted to the Moravian religion had to promise to send their children to school. The Moravians did much to preserve the Inuktitut language. In the 1800's hymnbooks and the New Testament were printed in Inuktitut and used as school texts. The school curriculum expanded to include Geography, History and Mathematics. Local Inuit teachers were hired to work with the missionaries especially when teaching younger children. By the 1840's there were few Inuit who could not read or write. Even today the missionary influence in education can still be felt. The Labrador Inuit still count in German and use German names for the days of the week (Borlase, 1993).

This system of education continued up until 1949 when Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation. New economic and education schemes were put in place in hopes of improving social conditions in Labrador. Almost immediately, a wave of strangers with various skills became residents of Labrador's communities. Nurses, RCMP officers, social workers and teachers brought with them new ideas creating rapid changes

in local culture. For the first time money became available and welfare programs were put in place. The paternalistic manner in which these changes were implemented reflected an attitude that is still felt today: Labradorians are not capable of looking after themselves and they require outside help to satisfy their best interests. Adjustments to these new changes brought many problems for the Inuit. The strong influence from government made it hard to adapt. Poverty, crime and alcohol abuse became common concerns (Borlase, 1993).

During the 1960's and 1970's, English language and culture were rapidly replacing Inuit language and culture in northern Labrador. Earlier, in 1949, Inuit elders voted to change the language of instruction in schools from Inuktitut to English to give their children an equal advantage in modern society. Yet, as Inuktitut disappeared, the concern was expressed that the language would soon die out. The steadily increasing influence of English language and culture was also facilitated by the movement of coastal children to the Grenfell mission schools in Muddy Bay and St. Anthony. As Moravian control of education declined in the mid 1960's, education became a provincial government concern and beginning in the late 1960's, the Labrador East Integrated School Board assumed direct responsibility for schools on the north coast of Labrador. Since these schools could only provide an elementary education, coastal children were sent to the North West River residential school to continue their high school education. The curriculum mandated by the provincial government at the time strongly discouraged the use of native languages in the classroom (Borlase, 1993). However, as improvements to coastal schools were made

and new facilities were built on the coast, the North West River School no longer became viable.

As improvements in curriculum and facilities were made in education along the coast, the issue of the dying Inuktitut language still remained. In October of 1977 the Labrador Inuit Association held an education conference in Nain, Labrador to address this issue as well as other issues affecting the education of Inuit children. Out of this conference twelve goals of Inuit education were formulated which would become the basis of Inuit education in Labrador. The most notable of these goals were:

- “ 1.) To promote a strong sense of Inuit identity
- 2.) To perpetuate Inuit values
- 3.) To develop Inuit skills
- 4.) To teach Inuit language
- 7.) To ensure Inuit survival within the larger society
- 8.) To develop and entrench Inuit culture.” (LIA conference, p.1, 1977).

As a response to the conference the Labrador East Integrated School Board began to implement a core Inuktitut native language program for students from Kindergarten to grade nine. In the 1990's, this program now includes an Inuktitut immersion program for students in Kindergarten and grade one. There is also a one-credit course, Inuktitut 1120, at the senior high school level. These programs are taught by local people who are part of the Teacher Education Program in Labrador (TEPL). A native Life skills program is also part of the curriculum in north coast schools in Labrador. In the Life skills program

students from grades four to eight are instructed one afternoon each week in the traditional skills of beadwork, cooking, carving and komatik (sled) making. Local people from the community are employed as instructors. In addition, a Labrador Studies unit in all grades from Kindergarten to grade nine, supplements the provincial Social Studies curriculum. Stressing cultural heritage, this program is only offered in northern Labrador schools. These changes in curriculum have met with the approval of the Labrador Inuit Association. Yet, fundamental issues still continue to be raised regarding the education system in northern Labrador. This study will examine one of these issues: the employment of non-native teachers in native schools.

The researcher of this study has lived and worked on the north coast of Labrador for nine years. During that time the researcher had travelled the coast extensively visiting the five other communities and developing both personal and professional relationships with other teachers and community members. Consequently, the researcher has witnessed and become part of a unique teaching situation, very different from colleagues on the island. Over the years visitors to the north Labrador coast have been struck by its rugged beauty and the endurance and perseverance of the people who inhabit the area. They question the value and intelligence of living in an environment which is harsh and unrelenting and a region that offers little by way of social and economic benefits. Yet, the Inuit have survived for over 15,000 years on the north Labrador coast by creating a culture and a way of life that is uniquely their own.

This is the situation in which many young, non-native teachers find themselves. These teachers take positions in isolated, native communities often because they cannot find jobs in larger urban centres. For many of them the plan is to teach for two years, gain some experience and then move on. The reality is quite different. These teachers soon realize that five years of university training is no preparation for life in a native community. Heavy workloads, lack of professional support, professional isolation and the difficulties of making the transition from university student to school teacher, appear insurmountable to the first year teacher. Add to this the culture shock and the geographic isolation, and these young, teachers become disillusioned and critical and often leave the community and the teaching profession. However, this is not always the case. There are those like the researcher who do stay. They adapt to their surroundings, rise above the culture shock and make a life in the community.

For teachers who teach on the island of Newfoundland, the Labrador teaching environment is foreign and unique. Problems such as buying drums of oil, ordering a year's supply of groceries or purchasing a new snowmobile before the shipping season ends, do not enter into the vernacular of the island teacher. For the Labrador teacher, these concerns are a way of life. They are as much a part of the teaching experience as parent-teacher interviews or supervising extracurricular activities. Teachers working on the island generally have an unrealistic view of the salaries of Labrador teachers and comment that the negative aspects of isolation pale in comparison to the lucrative benefits packages offered to Labrador teachers. The experienced Labrador teacher is all too

familiar with the discrepancies between coastal and western Labrador teacher's salaries. Hence, it is the shared experiences of the researcher and other north coast teachers and a desire to present an accurate and realistic portrayal of coastal Labrador teachers that has provided the impetus for this study.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the life and work experiences of present and former non-aboriginal teachers working in an aboriginal school on the north coast of Labrador. Specifically, the research will address the reasons why some teachers choose to remain in these communities to work and the reasons why others leave after only one to two years of teaching experience.

This study will give voice to a group of professionals whose life and work have been misunderstood and criticized by the general public and those in positions of authority. Over the course of nine years of teaching on the Labrador coast, the researcher has encountered various views and opinions of teaching aboriginal students which run contrary to the actual experience. This misinformation has been disseminated in a large part by both former teachers and the media. For prospective teachers, "horror stories" of northern teaching can be daunting. Many young teachers may simply not apply to northern school boards, thereby denying themselves of a truly unique and challenging teaching

opportunity. By documenting the life and work experiences of present and former non-native teachers, this study will do much to dispel the myths surrounding teaching in northern, native communities.

The life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in aboriginal schools in Newfoundland and Labrador has not been documented in the provincial education literature. It is the intent of this study to contribute to the developing knowledge of teachers and the conditions in which they work in native schools in this province. This study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on native education. Problems of aboriginal underachievement, drop out rates in aboriginal schools and the apathetic attitudes of aboriginal students have as much to do with teachers as it does with curriculum matters. Some of these problems have their roots in the inability of non-aboriginal teachers to cope with living conditions in aboriginal communities and the additional challenges of teaching in an aboriginal school.

On a policy level, this study could have implications for the Department of Education in issues relating to poor academic achievement among aboriginal students and relevancy of curriculum and instruction in aboriginal schools. This point has already been addressed and recommendations made in the 1992 Royal Commission Report on the provincial education system.

For teacher training programs, this study could be used to enhance the understanding of the various teaching environments in which new teachers may find themselves. In addition teacher-training programs may choose to re-examine internship

policies and place greater emphasis on multicultural education.

School boards and administrators which control aboriginal schools could use the results of this study to implement programs and services which would help facilitate the movement of new teachers in to aboriginal schools and communities. These programs and services would do much to alleviate the many cultural problems which school boards and administrators must deal with when hiring new teachers.

Professional organizations such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association could use this study to possibly create a branch of the organization which would deal exclusively with issues relating to teachers in aboriginal schools. At the present time such a division does not exist even though it has been strongly advocated by Labrador teachers.

Delimitations

The researcher used purposive sampling to identify 31 potential participants which were interviewed for this study. These individuals represent present and former non-aboriginal teachers of the school under study. Ten of the teachers are presently employed at the school under study. They range in terms of teaching experience from two to twenty-six years. The researcher has chosen two years as a cut off point for teaching experience due to the fact that teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador are granted a permanent teaching certificate after a two-year probationary period. Non-native teachers in the Primary and Elementary areas have between four to fifteen years teaching

experience. Non-native teachers in the Junior and Senior high school areas have three to twenty-six years teaching experience. These teachers have either built homes, married local people or have started families in the community.

Twenty-one of the participants are former non-aboriginal teachers of the school under study. These teachers are now living and working in various parts of this province and across the country. Their teaching experience ranges from one to six years. These teachers have been identified through school board records of employment and personal correspondence on the part of the researcher.

The researcher employed purposive sampling when identifying potential participants for the study due to her own teaching experience. The researcher first began her teaching career in September of 1990 at the school under study. As a result, present and former non-aboriginal teachers employed with the Labrador School Board were interviewed and surveyed for this study. Because of their professional and life experiences along the coast, the researcher felt that these teachers would provide her with the most honest and insightful information to accurately and realistically portray the life of a coastal teacher. The researcher has lived and worked on the north coast of Labrador for nine years. In particular, the researcher is a colleague of the teachers under study. As a result, the personal and professional relationship the researcher enjoys with the participants, made access to them and the research site fairly convenient.

It is the opinion of the researcher that the sample groups chosen adequately reflect the experiences and perceptions of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in aboriginal schools

on the north coast of Labrador. Whether or not the research findings can be generalized to the entire population of non-native teachers from Nain to Rigolet, will be left to the discretion of the reader and subject to future research.

Limitations

The validity and reliability of this study may be limited by several factors. The use of questionnaires as an instrument of data collection may have had some drawbacks. The meaning and context of some of the questions may not have been clearly understood by respondents. While every effort was made to avoid educational jargon, it is entirely possible that respondents may not have fully understood the content of the questions. Different respondents may have drawn different conclusions as to what a particular question asked and responded accordingly.

Due to financial and time restraints it was not possible to question all present and former non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal schools on the north coast of Labrador. The researcher selected present and former non-aboriginal teachers from the school she is employed in because they were easily accessible and the researcher had built both professional and personal relationships with the teachers. Most importantly, these individuals provided the most valuable source of information required to complete this study. Yet, the researcher acknowledges that the respondents may have had preconceived ideas of what the researcher expected and answered accordingly.

The data in this study were derived from views and perceptions as they were stated in writing and tape-recorded interviews. Interview tapes were transcribed verbatim and given to respondents to review for accuracy in recording before they were used in the study. However, written responses from questionnaires were certainly open to interpretation on the part of the researcher. Since a follow up study was not conducted, it would be difficult to state whether any interference on the part of the researcher was truly reflective of a respondent's view.

Terms and Definitions

As stated in the Labrador Inuit Association's By-Laws (LIA, 1994), the term Inuit means the aboriginal people of Labrador formerly known as Eskimos. They traditionally used and occupied and currently occupy the lands, waters and sea- ice of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Area.

The Labrador Inuit Association or LIA, was formed in 1974 to represent the views, concerns and culture of the Labrador Inuit. There are approximately 3500 members of the Labrador Inuit Association in Newfoundland and Labrador today.

Settlers are the long-term residents of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims area who are not of Inuit descent.

Kablunangajuit are the people who are;

- 1.) Pursuant to Inuit customs and traditions
- 2.) Have Inuit ancestry

3.) Became permanent residents of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims area prior to 1940 or are descendants of such a person and was born on or before November 30, 1990.

TEPL is the Teacher Education Program in Labrador. Started by Memorial University in the late 1970's, this program trains native people to work in the schools of coastal Labrador. This is a three-year diploma program offering students two options for employment in native schools. Candidates have the choice of becoming a classroom teacher teaching a variety of subjects in conjunction with the regular classroom teacher or a core language teacher or either the Inuktitut or Innu-aimun languages.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The field of native/aboriginal education has been the subject of much research and scholarly writing. The research generally falls into eight general categories. In order to understand the context in which native education takes place it is necessary to examine the state of native/aboriginal affairs in Canada today.

1.) Historical Implications

The idea of the lazy welfare recipient is a stereotype that many Canadians are reluctant to relinquish when referring to native people. Literature on the plight of native people in Canada and their social problems is quite abundant.

Across Canada native people have been the subject of intense scrutiny and examination by the non-native majority. Studies of native population growth, native languages, socioeconomic status, quality of life and social problems such as alcoholism, substance abuse, suicide rates and native crime, have done nothing more than reinforce pre-existing stereotypes and negative attitudes of native people. Couple this with the superior attitude of the white majority which manifests itself in the form of prejudice and discrimination and the result is a continuous source of friction between the two groups.

This state of dependency of native people and the subsequent racism and discrimination carried with it is not new. It has been a fact of life for native Canadians for

the past 200 years. “Their situation is the result of the historical and current distribution of power, particularly economic power and the domination by powerful interest groups. The Indian (native) people have had interaction with Canadian society on the economic, political and social levels that have shaped their unique position in Canada’s stratified (social) system; nevertheless, their involvement has been marginal and episodic” (Friederes in Singh Bolaria & Li, p.108.1991).

In essence, it is the structure of Canadian society and not society itself that can be held responsible for the problems facing native people in Canada. For the native Canadians of the prairies the expansion and development of the fur trade drew them into an economic system which they were unfamiliar with and had little control over. For the Labrador Inuit, the coming of the Moravians struck at the very basic norms and values of Inuit life and culture. The mission stations along the coast and the subsequent conversion to Christianity forced the Inuit into a life of dependency. This was further emphasized by the fact that the Moravians combined trade with their mission work in an attempt to prevent the Inuit from travelling further south to trade with the English and the French (Borlase, 1993). “All have led to a high degree of dependency for native people as well as forcing them into a position of marginality” (Friederes in Singh Bolaria & Li, p.34, 1988).

Today in Canada the native population is growing rapidly. Estimates project that by the new millennium the native population will exceed one million people. Reasons for this increase include a steady increase in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy

for native people. Approximately two thirds of the native people in Canada live on reserves. The remainder live in cities and towns throughout the country. On an economic level, native Canadians earn less than the average non-native Canadian. It is estimated that 75% of native people receive social assistance. Housing for native Canadians is inadequate and fails to meet some of the basic standards of safe and decent living, i.e. lack of water and sewer and overcrowded conditions. Illnesses resulting from poverty, overcrowding and poor housing have led to circulatory and respiratory diseases, cancer, suicide, tuberculosis and diabetes. Social problems have been the result in the form of juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, alcoholism, and violent deaths (Friederes, 1998).

The history of native people in Canada has been dominated by subjugation and institutional racism. Efforts have been made to address these problems but little progress has been made. The end result has witnessed native culture being devalued and natives being stripped of their dignity and pushed to the margins of Canadian society.

2.) Curriculum Development

Curriculum emphasizing cultures other than the native one has caused adjustment and cultural identity problems. "Because the curricular content is alien to the existing culture there is little or no reinforcement in the home and family or in the community as a whole, for what happens in school. The school is isolated from the cultural system it is intended to serve" (Williamson, p. 62, 1987).

The 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples notes that curricular changes in native schools have been “ far too slow and inconsistent” (p.456). Native children still consume the “standard curricula of mainstream educational institutions” (p.459). Changes that have been made consist of adding units that supplement the curriculum. The report emphasizes the need to change the core assumptions, logic and values of the curriculum itself. For native education, curriculum change is not a matter of watering down the existing mainstream curriculum. It is rather, a question of representing native values when designing curriculum. The Royal Commission recommends, “Federal, provincial and territorial governments collaborate with aboriginal governments, organizations and educators to develop or continue developing innovative curricula that reflect aboriginal cultures and community realities for delivery ;

- a) at all grade levels of elementary and secondary schools
- b) in schools operating under aboriginal control
- c) in schools under provincial or territorial jurisdiction.” (p.463).

This is a common dilemma encountered by teachers of native children. Both teachers and students suffer frustration and anxiety as they attempt to complete a curriculum which has very little meaning or relevancy for the native student. The problem is in most cases not the subject or concepts, but the format, length scope and sequence presented in curriculum guides and textbooks (Rhodes, 1994). Hence, the question begs to be asked; How can curriculum be made culturally relevant for native students?

Much of the native curriculum research emphasizes the relevance of curriculum for native students. Grant and Gillespie (1993) explore the issue of curriculum relevance and discuss ways how non-native teachers can become more responsive to native students. The importance of native languages in native schools as a way of preserving culture, is common in native curriculum research. A proposal for research by P. J. Gambin (1988) emphasizes the need for curriculum to be tailored to the unique learning styles of native children. He presents a developmental theory for the creation of curriculum and remedial programs for native students. In a report to the United States Congress in 1994, the United States Department of Education recommended using culturally relevant materials, adapting the curriculum to accommodate the local community and maintaining the integrity of the child's culture as key elements in developing curriculum for native Alaskan schools. In addition, training teaching staff in the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the cultures they serve, would be an important element of curriculum delivery.

Other authors make important contributions to the field of native curriculum research. Oake (1988) encourages the teaching of courses in Inuit history, mythology, religion, dance and nutrition as a way for students to develop an understanding of themselves and their heritage. Kirkness (1981) notes the importance of cultural environment in developing curriculum in native schools. She states, "The curriculum must be structured to use the child's awareness of his own cultural environment as a springboard for learning about the outside world. Curriculum must be integrated through

the program, so that the teacher can use every opportunity to make a given subject meaningful to the child ." (p.453).

The use of cultural role models, traditional stories, songs and oral history and the historical contribution of native people to society in general, promote cultural pride in native students. It also demonstrates the combination of traditional values with success in the modern world (Van Hamme, 1996). In an effort to promote and preserve Inuit culture and language, in 1977 the Labrador Inuit Association recommended the implementation of a native Life skills program and core language instruction in Inuktitut from Kindergarten to grade nine. At the present time the Life skills program continues in coastal Labrador schools. The language program has expanded to include an Inuktitut immersion program for Kindergarten and grade one as well as a one-credit course, Inuktitut 1120, at the senior high school level.

Another suggestion for curriculum relevancy which has surfaced in the native education literature is that of multi- aging or an ungraded school system. This idea is based on the holistic concept of the native community; working and sharing together. It also reflects more closely the family relationships outside of the school. This idea has met with success in Saskatchewan. At one school where the "natural or family grouping" concept was implemented, teachers have reported more regular attendance, increased comfort and relaxation for students, and a decrease in discipline problems. Since a child stays with one teacher for several years, teachers come to know the ability level of students and can plan instruction suited to their needs (Ward & Barton, 1995). The

ungraded school system for native students is also advocated by Bates (1997). “ If we could assess where the child is developmentally instead of grade level, we could better meet student needs “ (p.12).

Many of the curriculum studies are qualitative in nature. Cummins (1986) used participant observation, key informant interviewing and unstructured interviews in his study of curriculum development at the Beaver Lodge School. Using open-ended interviews, Ingrid Pearson (1995) researched the experiences of native children in special education classes. Adapting mainstream curriculum to become more culturally relevant for native students was the basis of a study by Heather Jane Sykes (1992). Critical action research focussing on the experiences of a non-native teacher in a native teacher education program provided the data for this study. A combination of interviews, questionnaires, and self made surveys provided the data for a study conducted by George E. Burns (1990). The study also examined the importance of native language in the native school. Research conducted by K. W. Schwager (1994) for the Ontario Ministry of Education, used questionnaires and open-ended interviews to survey native parents as to the type of education their children were receiving.

In Canada, the model for curricular change in native education has been the North West Territories. The North West Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment, educators and elders have worked together to develop curricula for all subjects from Kindergarten to grade nine. Courses such as Northern Studies 15, Dene Kede and Inuuqatigit reflect the worldviews, culture, language and tradition of the people

of the North West Territories. They are also compulsory for high school graduation.

School boards also develop programs to teach these courses in a way that reflects local language and culture (Jewison, 1995).

3.) School-Cultural Mismatch

The research on the educational problems encountered by native students in the school system is diverse. Much of the work is theoretical in nature and various researchers have put forward theories to explain the problems encountered by native students. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), recognizes the problems of native students in the educational systems of the past and the present day. Despite this, the commission views education as a vehicle to foster cultural identity and economic renewal. Education should be a means whereby native people can develop the linguistic and cultural competence to lead their nations and cultural groups. The report also goes on to state; "Current education policies fail to recognize these goals. The majority of aboriginal youth do not complete high school. They leave the school system without the requisite skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people. Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth" (p.434).

The work of John Ogbu (1992 & 1995) provides some fundamental insights into the cultural discontinuity between the education system and cultural minorities. Although Ogbu has completed much of his work with minority Black, Asian and other immigrant

children, many of his ideas and theories have significance for non-native educators of native children. Ogbu (1992 & 1995) argues that what children bring to school, (their cultural understandings and social realities), are just as important as in school factors. Teachers must recognize this. In order to fully understand where native children are coming from and to achieve success with them, teachers must be willing to acquire knowledge about native culture and language. Even then, teachers must realize that their learning is situated outside the cultural context and would be different from the type of knowledge that would be obtained if the teacher were a member of that culture (Darder, 1991).

Teachers of minority and native students still contribute academic failure of these students to cultural and language differences. Ogbu disagrees with this and explains minority and native student failure in terms of “cultural inversion”. Cultural inversion is the “tendency for minorities to regard certain forms of behaviour, events, symbols and meanings as inappropriate for them because they are characteristic of white society” (p.8). In the classroom, this translates into rejection of school rules, lack of participation in class activities, infrequent attendance or being quiet and withdrawn. At home there is no pressure to succeed from parents. There is no stigma attached to being a poor student. Those who do achieve in school are torn between their cultural peer group and face criticism and isolation because they are engaging in behaviours that are considered white. Ogbu states that cultural inversion is characteristic of minorities and cultural groups that have been assimilated into the larger, dominant society through conquest or colonization.

The Inuit are an example of cultural conquest.

Peter McClaren (1989) expands this idea further. He argues that victims of “cultural oppression” live their oppression by viewing themselves from the perspective of the way others view them. This is certainly true of native people considering the negative publicity and stereotypes which the dominant, non-native society holds regarding them. A case in point is Davis Inlet. Native children are aware of the negative implications of being a member of a different racial group even before starting school. As they progress through the school system their sense of cultural identity is devalued and their self-esteem as a native person declines. Consequently, these children come to have less confidence in their academic ability than their non-native counterparts (Brembeck, 1973). They may withdraw from school activities and school in general. Teachers come to view these students as lazy, apathetic and lacking ambition. “Such a condescending and patronizing attitude can only reinforce a vicious myth that too often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in the classroom” (McClaren, p.160, 1989). As a result the present education system has created culturally depriving schools, not culturally deprived students (McClaren, 1989).

The focal point of this cultural mismatch or cultural discontinuity between the cultural environment of the home and that of the school is the child. The child comes from a home environment interested in preserving cultural heritage and traditions. They enter into a school environment where they encounter values and traditions which are alien to them, taught by a representative of a much larger national culture (Brembeck, 1973). Linda Davis (1996) argues that minority and native children do not experience

cultural discontinuity until they enter school. Davis has identified twelve cultural practices in school that create problems for the minority child. These difficulties are also shared by native students. Some of the practices which have direct relevance for native students include:

- 1.) Cooperation vs. Competition: Public schools emphasize competition while native cultures value sharing.
- 2.) Time: The dominant culture emphasizes the value of being on time and using time wisely. To native cultures time is expendable.
- 3.) Eye Contact: In school, teachers use direct eye contact when speaking. Native cultures use the eyes to communicate. Native children rarely look a person in the eye when speaking.
- 4.) Gender: Native Inuit girls are trained in domestic chores and childcare. Males are given more freedom and taught traditional skills such as hunting. There is also a tendency for males to dominate women in relationships. Schools teach the equality of men and women in all aspects of life both domestically and economically.
- 5.) Individual vs. Family Orientation: Schools place great importance on the individual in terms of success and achievement in life and school. Native cultures value the individual as a family member (Cuch, 1987).
- 6.) Communication: The language of school is verbal. Inquisitiveness and verbal ability dominate. Native children come from an environment where there is little verbal communication. Native children are not questioned at home like they are in school. Very

rarely are children engaged in conversation at home (Villegas, 1988).

7.) Perceptual Style: Native students are holistic in their approach to learning. They see elements as part of a larger whole. In school, emphasis is placed on seeing parts or concepts separate from the whole (Davis, 1996).

Damian McShane (1983) examines the various models and theories to explain the academic success and failure of native students and puts forward his own theories known as the “Five D Models”. The first of the five D’s is:

- 1.) Disadvantage/Deficit/Deprivation: This model states that native children are raised in detrimental environmental conditions that put them at a greater risk for learning disabilities than more privileged children. Conditions such as poverty, poor nutrition, poor health care and overcrowded housing hinder learning for native students. These disadvantages lead to deficits such as hearing loss and vision problems which subsequently lead to language and writing difficulties. This combination of disadvantage and deficits leads to deprivation. Poor health leads to sickness which means increased absenteeism from school. Poor nutrition leads to less energy for learning. Economic poverty leads to family mobility which translates into loss of educational continuity.
- 2.) Cultural Disorganization or Disruption: Similar to the ideas of Davis (1996).
- 3.) Dependence Model: As welfare becomes a dominant part of family and community life, there is less incentive to learn and progress through the school system.
- 4.) Difference Model: Similar to the Cooperation vs. Competition elements of the Davis (1996) model.

5.) Developmental Change: This model explores academic success and failure as it relates the various physical, mental, emotional and cognitive aspects of a child's development (McShane,1983).

The relationship between parents and the school has also been explored in the research on the school-cultural mismatch. Many educators and teachers believe the myth that poor parents do not care about their child's education. This is far from the truth. This misunderstanding is due a great deal to a lack of understanding of native child rearing practices by non-native educators. For the Inuit sharing is an important aspect of life. Sharing food, housing, etc., is valued. This practice also applies to the physical care of children. Children are cared for and raised in a group. Uncles, aunts, grandparents and members of the community share in the responsibility for raising children. Children are quite frequently adopted by extended family members and community members. Children are also valued for their role as future providers for the elderly and the next generation. Inuit children are taught various responsibilities according to gender. Boys learn how to use a kayak or a dog sled and are taught hunting skills. Girls learn domestic skills such as cooking and preparing animal skins (Williamson, 1987). To the outsider, these practices are undisciplined. Yet, as Williamson (1987) states, "The same critical observers have commented that this socialization process resulted in adults completely prepared and fully participant in their own hunting society...every member of the group is socially worthwhile and valuable" (p.67).

For natives, the parent-child relationship is permissive. Physical punishment is rare and there are no strict rules of moral conduct. There is a great deal of emphasis placed on individual choice and internalization of experiences. The native parent believes that the child learns best through success and mistakes that are the result of their own choices. In native societies, the child is viewed as a person in his or her own right from birth on; not an extension of the parent. This means parents exercise less control over their children and only give advice and guidance when they feel it is necessary (Cuch, 1987).

Native children come from a highly flexible and permissive environment. When they enter into the rigid and highly structured environment of the school, they may encounter problems. The child may be disruptive, act out, be disobedient or they may completely withdraw and become silent (Cuch, 1987). When teachers attempt to contact parents to discuss problems with their child, teachers run into difficulty themselves. Parents may miss meetings or they fail to attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss problems. This leads teachers to assume that the parents have no concern for their child's education and they do not care. Teachers become bitter and frustrated as they are left to deal with problems on their own. Once again, negative stereotypes come into play due to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the teacher. Realistically, teachers do not often attempt to contact the parents of a child except when problems occur.

What many teachers fail to realize is that native parents and families may not fully understand the school system and may feel uncomfortable talking with teachers.

According to Manning (1995) native parents may resist contact with teachers because:

1.) They fear revealing personal and family matters which may reflect negatively on the family.

2.) Language differences between teachers and parents may require a translator.

3.) Previous negative experience with the school system. (i.e. residential school). At these schools children were separated from their parents for months and years at a time.

Students were expected to conform to institutional life and study and speak English only.

They were totally immersed in the White culture. The effects on intellectual, emotional and physical health is still being felt today by the people who attended these schools

(Chisholm, 1994).

For some native parents issues of racism and ethnocentrism may surface when they are called to a school to discuss their child's problems. Based on their own school experience they begin to receive traditional messages from the dominant culture which the teacher represents (Manning, 1995).

According to Douglas (1994) the greatest concern Inuit parents have with the educational system is values. There is a conflict between Inuit community values and what the school system values. In order to make schooling equitable, meaningful and relevant for Inuit students, inconsistencies in these two competing value systems must be rectified. School-community partnerships must be formed in Inuit communities to create a viable educational experience for Inuit children.

Most Inuit parents see education serving two roles. One is to teach the skills, competencies and knowledge needed to succeed in the dominant society. The second is to uphold and teach the traditions and values of their culture (Villegas, 1988). As Trauwick-Smith (1997) states, “ Parents want their children to retain their cultural heritage and at the same time, learn the knowledge and abilities of mainstream society” (p.551).

The research on native dropout rates and the socioeconomic factors which contribute to them, is quite prevalent in the native education literature. Much of the work is theoretical in nature and various researchers have put forward theories to explain the phenomenon. Interviewing native and non-native educators, native dropouts and their parents, Ronald MacKay (1991) discovered that a lack of communication between school, community and parents contributed to the dropout rate. Researcher J. P. Rothe (1981) examined academic and non-academic factors which contribute to dropout rates. High unemployment, dysfunctional families, social problems and cultural inequality were found to be major factors affecting dropouts in studies by Szasz (1994), LeCamp (1996), and D. P. Ross (1991). Jewison (1995) reported that in the North West Territories 76% of students leave school before completing grade 12. Peter McClaren (1989) noted that socioeconomic status is the greatest predictor of academic success for minority and poor students. There is a tendency for the white majority in our society to look condescendingly towards minorities and natives who experience difficulty in earning a living and adequately providing for their children.

For students, the frustration of not understanding, not succeeding and not being stimulated becomes the impetus for self-devaluation which undermines the child's confidence. Rampaul, Singh, & Didyk (1984) concur with this idea. In their study of native children in a northern Manitoba school, they found, "as the Indian child progresses through the school, his or her self-concept and academic achievement tends to decrease simultaneously" (p.215). Deyhle (1983) also reported that by the fifth or sixth year in school academic achievement of native students begins to decrease. In her study of Navajo students, teachers reported that students just did not care or simply gave up.

Research by Chisholm (1994) demonstrates that many native students are unable to bridge the gap between local culture and school curricula. The conflict between culture and school can result in anxiety, tension and hostility. In native students this may lead to substance abuse or crime. In the classroom the anxious student is unable to concentrate and will be depressed and unmotivated. Chisholm concludes, "Ultimately, a student who has encountered too many frustrations and failures may reject school, parents and society as a whole" (p.33).

The 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples notes that the highest dropout rate for native students is between grades nine and ten. By the time these students enter high school they have spent eight or more years in an educational system from which they and their parents feel very far removed. Their self-confidence and self-esteem have been undermined and students feel hopeless as to how to change their circumstances. Essentially, students are caught between the values and expectations of two different

worlds. Added to this are the intense social pressures which these young people encounter. The unfortunate result of these conflicting demands is alcohol and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, suicide attempts and finally, early school leaving.

To counteract this phenomenon the Report recommends the empowerment of native youth to change their environment and become active citizens and students. Using native role models to motivate youth, providing programs to develop academic skills, providing sports and outdoor education and transformative education, education can become meaningful and relevant to native youth.

Friesen (1984) offers other reasons as to why native students leave school early. They may include; disliking a teacher or subject, finding temporary employment, parental pressure to work and support the family, warm weather which provides an incentive to leave the community, pregnancy, caring for younger siblings and lack of parental support to stay in school.

Teacher attitudes and expectations also have a role to play in native students leaving school early. The beginning teacher's first experience with native students is in the classroom. These teachers not only bring with them five years of university training but also a culture and many years of socialization and training within that culture. Liston & Zeichner (1996) state, " The assumptions that we carry around with us, those created by our advantages and past injuries, affect how we see students in the classroom and schools. If we are white and have had little interaction with students of colour (native), we will be guided by assumptions and beliefs that have little basis in actual personal practice" (p.39).

In a study of Preservice teacher training for native American Indian students in 1983, John W. Tippeconnic III, found that these teachers held very low expectations for their native American students. Hostile, mean, lazy, dumb, inferior and dirty were the words used to describe teacher attitudes towards their native American students. In fact, many of the teachers believed the children would fail in life and in school and saw their role as one of civilizing rather than educating native students (Tippeconnic ,1983). Kleinfeld & McDiarmid (1987) discovered similar results in a study of teachers in rural Alaska. These teachers held low expectations of their native American students attending college or completing post secondary training. In addition, these teachers were pessimistic about whether their students could read proficiently at the end of high school. What is most noteworthy about this study is that these teachers did not consider these findings as low expectations but rather as realistic evaluations of the current educational setting in rural schools. Native leaders, on the other hand, saw these results as proof that non-native teachers expect too little of native students and underestimate their abilities.

Wilson (1978) states, “ The attitude of the teacher is paramount. We should instill in our prospective teachers a positive attitude toward the children they will be teaching. The Indian child is as bright, enthusiastic, as naughty, as lovable, as teachable, as human, as much of an individual as any child...anywhere. Cultural differences...blind the “untaught teacher”. Student and teacher suffer frustration and failure which impel many to dropout” (p.35). These thoughts clearly echo those put forward in the 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples. Even though across Canada today, non-native

teachers are still in the majority when teaching native children, these teachers must be educated culturally as well as academically. The report recommends changes to the curriculum in Canadian schools regarding the history and culture of native peoples as well as the contribution native people have made to Canadian society. "In training future educators a compulsory component focussed on Aboriginal people will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of what is at stake in their relationships with Aboriginal students and will prepare them to teach Aboriginal subject matter. Educators already in the school systems must have an opportunity to learn about Aboriginal people through professional development programs that foster cultural sensitivity" (p.499).

The end result of cultural misinformation, misinterpretation and ignorance is academic failure for the child. Often times non-native teachers fail to take into account the attitudes and expectations that children have of their teachers and the school system. Historically, the education of aboriginal children has been viewed by aboriginal people as an attempt to civilize and assimilate them into the larger, dominant white culture. Examples of this assimilation/education endeavour include the establishment of Moravian mission schools in northern Labrador, and the establishment of residential schools in northern and western Canada. Through these experiences native people have come to view the education system in a negative light. These experiences have also served to reinforce the prejudice and discrimination which native people believe is inherent in the non-native educational system. Consequently, native children may come to internalize and accept the negative images of their culture which are perpetuated by society (Trauwick-

Smith, 1997). As a response to this native students may not attempt to compete in the educational system. Some children may have little motivation to succeed in school at all. They may withdraw from school tasks and activities or drop out of school completely. Thus the meaning and value native students may associate with school learning and achievement plays a significant role in determining their efforts towards learning and performance (Silver, Mallett, Greene, & Simard, 2002).

The idea of cultural oppression and the negative reaction to it is reinforced by Villegas (1988). Villegas quotes Obgu who states, “ The poor school performance of minorities is an adaptive response to a history of limited opportunities in society. The racism these groups have encountered has led them to believe that academic success will not improve their lot in life. Given their history of oppression, these groups distrust society and their institutions including school. Distrust results in oppositional behaviour which is active resistance to the white, middle class ways of school, for fear of losing their own identity” (p.262). Many cultural minorities including native people have come to distrust and hold in contempt any attempts to educate/assimilate their children.

This is the environment in which a native child is born and raised. Upon entering school the native child is faced with an entirely new culture very different from his or her own. They also encounter who assumes that all learners are the same and views learning from a middle class perspective. These teachers teach and plan lessons the way they were taught. When native students fail to perform in the appropriate manner, they are labelled as having behaviour problems, disruptive, lazy, learning disabled and lacking motivation.

In the classroom the native student may be quiet, withdrawn, lack attention, be slow to respond and come to class with incomplete homework assignments. At the high school level native students become aware that overt behaviour is punished and that by doing nothing they assert their freedom, flaunt authority and escape punishment. These students are also aware of the negative expectations and attitudes which non-native teachers hold regarding their academic abilities. Consequently, native students perform accordingly. As a result, negative teacher stereotypes are upheld and self-fulfilling prophecy becomes a reality for many native students. Add to this the perceived lack of parental concern and the native student is academically doomed. Once labelled, they are placed in special education classes where they are unchallenged and where they are not expected to achieve anything. This happens because of cultural misinformation, not because of learning disabilities.

Deyhle (1983) also finds that native students are aware of their teacher's attitudes and expectations regarding their academic abilities. In her studies of native students, Deyhle has found that students demonstrate a lack of attention and subsequently give up on schoolwork. The researcher of this study concurs with these findings. Teachers become frustrated and upset when native students do not accept or understand personal failure on tests. This leads teachers to assume that since native students do not take tests seriously, or show remorse for poor grades, they are not serious about school in general. They become alarmed by what they interpret as apathy and neglect for the education system by both the parents and the students (Deyhle, 1983).

Upon entering the native classroom, teachers need to ask themselves some fundamental questions. What framework do we bring into the classroom? How does our cultural perspective colour our view of the world ? Asking these questions helps teachers begin the process of understanding how our beliefs and behaviours are culturally based and how our system of beliefs is similar to or different from our student's beliefs. This process of reflection helps teachers reconcile different versions of reality. This is a powerful experience because teachers begin to realize that the information we trusted and believed may not be entirely correct and the particular cultural environment in which we teach may demand that our existing framework of knowledge be changed (Perry & Fraser, 1993).

4.) Teacher Training Programs

“ It has been recognized for decades that having Aboriginal teachers in the classroom represents the first line of change in the education of Aboriginal children and youth” (Royal Commission, p.490, 1996). These teachers can help set a direction for change in native schools and take a leading role as mentor or leader to influence practice in native schools (Lipman,1996). Research into teacher training programs highlights the need for more native teachers to work in native schools. These teachers serve as role models and portray a positive image of success. Native teachers understand the background of native students and therefore could help alleviate academic achievement and dropout problems in native schools. Qualitative research by Greg Prater (1995)

confirmed these findings as well as research by Butterfield (1994), Ralph (1993) and Grayson (1994).

With respect to teacher training programs which prepare teachers for multicultural or native teaching environments, the literature is diverse. In “ A Staff Development Program for Teachers in Native Northern Villages”, Steve Grubis (1985), discusses the Cross Cultural Orientation Program at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. The program provides participants with the intellectual, cultural and social survival skills necessary for living in an isolated northern community. The importance of a program such as this is made real by the fact that approximately 98% of teachers in Alaska are non-native. The purpose of the Cross Cultural Orientation Program is to produce effective teachers for rural Alaska and improve the quality of the student teacher’s internship experience. Basically, the one-year program is designed for teachers and administrators who have had no exposure to rural Alaska and it’s diverse native population. The first phase of the program begins in the summer in the university campus. Here students examine problems they are likely to encounter on the job. Issues such as native lifestyles, learning styles, multigrade teaching and teacher performance are examined. Phase two and three of the program occur on site at a native school during the Fall and Winter. Students complete one course during the Fall and Winter as well as teach. These courses focus on the influence of the community on the school, developing effective teaching strategies for native students and the role of the educator in cultural transmission. (Grubis, 1985).

Goals for the course are explicit and implicit. Explicit goals are reflected in course

content. Implicit goals are those acquired in the learning process. Two major implicit goals have been identified throughout the program. The first is the existence of a support network among rural teachers. The knowledge that teachers are not alone in their experiences is important. The second goal is the informal approach to learning which the learner acquires. There is a flow of learning from the university setting to the rural school setting. For example, the building on campus actually resembles a rural school. i.e. There is no running water, no telephone and outhouses are used. Thus, students come prepared to their internship in the rural school (Grubis, 1985).

Overall, the program has had a positive impact on teaching in rural Alaska. Teacher attrition rates have declined. Those who have gone through the program and have stayed in rural Alaska have stayed for more than five years.

Breaking from traditional teacher education programs and making reflective inquiry an integral part of the program, is an effective way of preparing teachers for cross cultural or multicultural classrooms. Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1993) state that Preservice teacher education programs which focus on providing courses which offer teachers knowledge about different cultures, do not improve the ability of the teacher to relate subject matter to their students. It also does little to enable Preservice teachers to reject traditional stereotypes. In fact, it may lead Preservice teachers to over generalize different cultural groups of students.

The idea of departing from traditional teacher education programs and focussing on teacher reflection is also advocated by Barry and Lechner (1995). In their review of teacher education programs, they have also found that many programs inadequately prepare teachers for the cross cultural or multicultural setting. According to the results of their studies, Preservice teachers commented that their teacher education programs did not adequately prepare them for teaching in a cross-cultural setting. These teachers reported experiencing difficulty with developing appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies to teach students in the cross-cultural setting and communicating effectively with their diverse students. When questioned as to what they felt should be included in an effective teacher education program, the teachers commented that more courses were needed in multicultural issues, internships in a cross cultural setting and discussions and examinations of possible situations they may encounter in the cross cultural setting. Tim Goddard (1995) also reports that teacher education programs need to produce culturally and critically aware teachers. In order to do this, greater emphasis should be placed on the needs of culturally diverse students. By doing this, the present “monolingual and monocultural” (p.43), teaching force will become more effective teachers of our culturally diverse student population. Barry and Lechner (1995) state, “ When teacher training programs address both theory and practice in multicultural education throughout the curriculum in a comprehensive, long-term manner, students can acquire the knowledge and confidence necessary to deal with multicultural issues in education with intelligence, professionalism and understanding” (p.161).

In their study of a cross-cultural education course at the University of Saskatchewan, Finney and Orr (1995) discovered that teacher education students are far removed from the portion of students they are likely to teach. Students enrolled in the cross-cultural education course in the study remarked that they lived in a “protected world”, where poverty and oppression were never present. Other students acknowledged their ignorance of native culture and issues and stated that they knew no native people on a personal basis.

Taken prior to teaching internships, the cross-cultural education course aims to instill in prospective teachers an understanding of how cultures are influenced by social conditions and the differences that exist between privileged and oppressed people. Most importantly, the course aims to send student teachers into the school system questioning the labels and assumptions that they may hold regarding native people. Finney and Orr (1995) argue that the best way to challenge the prejudices and misunderstandings which teacher education students may hold is to create opportunities for cross cultural experiences. i.e. internships in a native school.

At the end of the course when students were asked to submit papers, the effectiveness of the course was obvious. Students came to realize that many of the beliefs they held about native people were based on half-truths and stereotypes. Students experienced tension and frustration as they tried to reconcile their old beliefs with the new reality they were facing. Many students were left with questions but they all had the opportunity to experience and reflect on a teaching situation that would, no doubt, become

reality for them (Finney & Orr, 1995).

The 1996 Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples acknowledges that not all teacher education programs adequately prepare teachers for the native classroom. The report states that it is essential to base teacher education programs in the cultural traditions of the communities in which teachers may eventually work. This is certainly the case with the training of native teachers. Consequently, the immediate concern is to increase the number of native teachers being trained. At the secondary level the lack of native teachers is of great concern (Report, 1996). At this level, native students need the greatest source of support more than any other time during their school experience. They need native role models. The alienation of native youth at the high school level leads to early school leaving and a lack of candidates for university education who could, in turn, become secondary teachers. The Report goes on to recommend early intervention at the grade seven or eight level to make native youth aware of teaching as a viable career option and the academic requirements necessary. Training non-native teachers to be culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of native students is acknowledged in the Report. This is essential in light of the fact that many native children will spend most of their school experience being taught by non-native teachers.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, two programs offered by Memorial University prepare teachers for the native classroom. The Teacher Education Program in Labrador, is a three-year diploma program offering native students two options for employment in native schools. Upon the completion of twenty courses or sixty credit hours, students have

the choice of becoming a classroom teacher teaching a variety of subjects in conjunction with the classroom teacher or a core language teacher of the Inuktitut or Innu-aimun languages. Admission to the TEPL program requires that candidates speak either one of the native languages of Labrador.

The program is uniquely tailored to suit the needs of native teacher education students on the north coast of Labrador. First, the course offerings reflect the unique culture of the native peoples of Labrador. Courses specializing in teaching in native schools, aboriginal languages, drama, art and the history and culture of Labrador are offered to students both in the coastal communities where students work and in larger centres such as Goose Bay. Students receive funding for travel and accommodation and a living allowance while attending courses in the different communities. Upon completion of this program students are not eligible for membership in the NLTA. Students completing this program acquire a provincial grade three teaching certificate. Membership in the NLTA is presently based on a fourth grade teaching certificate.

The program is not without its drawbacks. Offering a university course in a rural setting requires modifications. Courses are usually condensed into 4 - 6 week time frames and are taught by qualified instructors in the community. These instructors are usually school teachers who hold Masters degrees. If these people are unavailable, an instructor from outside the community is brought in. Many of the TEPL students are mature individuals with families. Leaving their homes and communities for extended periods of time often proves to be overwhelming. Financial concerns and child care issues prevent

many students from completing required courses and as a result, they withdraw from the program. For those TEPL students who are fluent in either Inuktitut or Innu-aimun, the English 1030 requirement proves to be a challenge which they cannot overcome. Difficulties with this course is also cited as a reason why many TEPL students withdraw from the program.

The second program offered to both native and non-native students is the five year degree program in Native and Northern education. B.Ed.(Native & Northern). Admission requirements into this degree program are similar to other education degree programs offered by Memorial University with one exception. Students who have previously completed the TEPL program are automatically accepted into the B.Ed.(N&N), program if they desire to continue their education. All course taught under this program are taught on site at the university campus in St. John's. For native students who have had no exposure to urban living, the transition from an isolated community to a city is intimidating. The transition for some of these students becomes too difficult to surpass and they subsequently withdraw from the program and return to their communities. However, these instances are few. Students in the B.Ed.(N&N) program have a common room in the Faculty of Education where they meet to discuss issues and concerns unique to their degree program and their lives in general. As part of the B.Ed.(N&N) program, students are required to complete a thirteen week teaching internship in a native school. This is a very young degree program with the first aboriginal graduate graduating in 1994. Since that time there have been other native and non-native graduates who have procured

employment in Newfoundland and across the country.

5.) Aboriginal Learning Styles

Research on native learning styles is diverse. Studies conducted on verbal abilities, sociolinguistic difficulties, visual acuity and the native preference for experiential learning, dominant the literature.

“Native Americans are right-brain thinkers. They are non-linear, creative, spiritual, holistic, perceptive, imaginative and intuitive” (Cuch, p.67 ,1987). These are the strengths which the native child brings to the classroom. The means by which native children learn before entering the school system are influenced by their early socialization experiences. Native parents raise their children in an experiential learning environment Male and females learn traditional skills by observation. According to Cuch (1987), native children will watch a task being performed, inspect the finished product, and then try it for themselves. Native parents believe that experiential learning is more effective than learning by force or control. In this process of learning, most of the actual learning takes place privately. Once children observe a task, they perform and experiment in private, at their own pace (Rhodes,1994).

Swisher and Deyhle (1989) have reported that native children are visual in their approach to learning. By looking and observing, native children are able to recognize animals at great distances, or by simply watching a task being performed, native children

are able to perform the task many times without verbal instruction. Rhodes (1994) supports this idea of observational learning. He also states that native children in the classroom need much more time to watch and understand tasks before being asked to perform them. Native children need time to observe activities and time to try ideas and perform them when they feel comfortable. VanHamme (1996) notes, "Native children often excel at visual-spatial learning tasks and learn much more readily when instruction is multi sensory, concrete, active and relevant to their direct experience" (p.27). Bates (1997) highlights the superior visual discrimination skills of Alaskan native students. In his study he reported children as young as four or five years old were able to follow complicated directions without verbal instructions. He also states that the school system should not view these skills as weaknesses but rather as exceptional talents which can become part of the child's school experience.

With regards to verbal ability, studies have shown that native children are low in abstract, verbal abilities (Bates, 1997). They rank far below grade level norms in reading and language arts. McShane (1983) reported that on ability tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales, native children demonstrate a significant discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal abilities. Verbal abilities have been shown to be lower than those for non-native children and non-verbal abilities being equal to or above those for non-native children. These findings also support the work of Greenbaum and Greenbaum (1987). Many educators attribute these deficiencies to low intelligence or emotional immaturity. In reality, these communication problems result from conflicting cross-cultural values, not

any lack of intelligence. Native children are of a culture and environment where there is little experience with the purpose of literacy and exposure to reading and writing behaviour. Thus, when these children enter the language saturated environment of the school, they are at a disadvantage. Short conversations with family and friends are now replaced with school language, concepts, abstractions, long verbal explanations and an unfamiliar world of print. School systems need to take these factors into account in educating native children. What these students require upon entering school is a foundation in oral language development. Yet, what they receive is the standard school model of teaching them to read and write (Bates, 1997).

VanHamme (1996) notes that the silence of native students is often perceived negatively by teachers and causes anxiety. Teachers may feel a need to break the silence and fill the void with constant conversation. For the native student, the silence communicates a sense of respect and unity. Nonverbal forms of communication and reticence are valued. In the school system this reticence results in native children being viewed as shy, withdrawn, passive, unmotivated and not interested in the learning process.

Native children also demonstrate a propensity for group learning experiences. Once again, this is a result of the early socialization of these children. From an early age these children are taught the value of family and caring for family members. Females take over domestic responsibilities such as child care. Males take on responsibilities such as hunting for older family members and contributing to the whole family. Generosity,

sharing, family obligations and working for the good of the group are seen as worthwhile endeavours. Swisher and Deyhle (1989) argue that if native children have been socialized and learn in a cooperative way, problems may result when they enter the competitive and individualistic world of the school. Because of this, these students may avoid competition which they view as unfair, and violate the norm of contributing to the group. High ability students may not want to violate the group experience and may shy away from displaying their knowledge and competence. Consequently, their achievement is lowered. Native students will avoid individual competition when one individual appears to be better than the other. In many native cultures the humility of the individual is respected. Native students may not display their knowledge before others or try to appear better than their peers. They usually withdraw and become the stereotypical “silent native child” (Swisher & Deyhle, 1989).

VanHamme (1996) argues “The restructuring of classrooms to promote small group cooperative learning activities, peer tutoring and the recognition of group rather than individual achievement, will allow the gradual development of individual competence a part of a group while emphasizing traditional values of sharing, helping others, and cooperation in group efforts” (p.29). Ward and Barton (1995) have found that this approach to teaching native students has proven to be successful in teaching native students in Saskatchewan. Their results have previously been acknowledged in this study.

In summary, when developing curriculum for native students educators should begin with their strengths and build upon them. These strengths include:

- 1.) High awareness of spatial relations
- 2.) Awareness of and memory for patterns
- 3.) Attention to and memory for detail
- 4.) Concern for the slower person
- 5.) Good hearing and listening skills
- 6.) Slow and thoughtful decision making
- 7.) Individual responsibility
- 8.) Non-judgemental attitude
- 9.) Taking time to complete a task
- 10.) Sharing
- 11.) Patience (Rhodes, 1994).

6.) Teaching Strategies

The teaching style or method a teacher may use to impart learning can have a significant effect on whether students learn or fail. For the native student, the choice of teaching strategy is especially important. “Unfortunately, many instructors ignore culture and it’s impact on learning both in content and style rather than devising methods and techniques through which culturally diverse individuals approach problem solving” (Swisher & Deyhle, p. 9, 1989).

Bates (1997) has discovered that often times it is the teacher that is the main obstacle to change. Teachers tend to teach in the same manner they were taught. They

continually work with students and after repeated attempts if the child does not learn, the finger is pointed at the child. When teaching native students, teachers need to make a paradigm shift and move away from traditional teaching methods. Teachers fail to recognize that it is their methods which are contributing to the failure of native students.

For example, Whyte (1986) notes that the classroom in which the native student is shy, quiet and withdrawn has the following characteristics:

- 1.) The teacher is the supreme authority.
- 2.) Formal lecturing is the typical mode of instruction.
- 3.) Highly structured conversation centred around the teacher.
- 4.) Students are singled out by the teacher to verbally respond to questions.
- 5.) Students are given the impression that their opinion does not count if their conversation deviates from the teacher's subject.

Rhodes (1994) states, "If the learning you expected doesn't take place, teaching didn't happen" (p.i).

Throughout the educational literature various researchers have made suggestions as to how teachers can change their strategies and methods and teach native students more effectively. Whyte (1986) organizes effective teaching strategies under four categories:

1.) *Classroom Organization*

- a) An open classroom environment as opposed to a more structured one, would best meet the needs of native students. This approach is advocated by Davis (1996) and Swisher & Deyhle (1989).

- b)** The teacher should act as an equal to his or her students rather than acting authoritatively.
- c)** Focus on student-centred teaching practices which encourage student initiative and responsibility for learning.
- d)** The teacher should interact with the student in small groups so that individual students are not placed in competitive situations in front of the class.

2.) Instruction and Resources

- a)** Curriculum should reflect traditional native values.
- b)** Instruction should reflect real life examples of contemporary life. This will enhance the meaningfulness and relevance of school and develop more positive self-esteem (Bates, 1997).
- c)** Create experiential learning situations so students can learn through doing.

3.) Verbal Activities

- a)** There is a need for English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Second Dialect (ESD) instruction.
- b)** Additional school readiness time may be necessary for native children to develop English language skills.
- c)** Provide instruction wherever possible in the student's native language.

4.) *Community Relations*

- a) Acceptance and respect of native culture by a teacher will create an atmosphere of tolerance in the classroom that is suitable for learning. Parents will also come to have more respect for the school.
- b) Role models from the native community should become a vital part of school activities.
- c) Teachers should become involved with community activities. They should make every effort to get to know the parents of the children they teach.

Rhodes (1994) also puts forward similar ideas to those of Whyte (1986) and also advises teachers as to how to best handle discipline problems in the native classroom. He suggests that if teachers want to receive the respect of native students, teachers, in turn, should treat students with respect. Reprimand and praise should be done in private as native children do not like to be singled out. Teachers are encouraged to use indirect criticism. Harsh discipline may damage a child's self-image. The best discipline for native students is internal. Students need to understand and accept why a project or task is necessary, realize their place in the learning process and assist themselves or the group toward increasing knowledge or success. Essentially, teachers of native students need to:

- 1.) Effectively communicate to students what is needed.
- 2.) Provide instruction that matches the student's ability.
- 3.) Listen to students.
- 4.) Vary teaching styles

- 5.) Offer choices
- 6.) Allow students to accept responsibility for learning.
- 7.) Realize that they will not reach every child.

The most important implication of the research on teaching and learning styles is the fact that each child must be “taught in a way that maximizes his/her potential by identifying and building on individual cognitive strengths. School tasks must be structured to respond and adapt to the preferred ways of learning demonstrated by individual students if every student is to be provided with an equal opportunity for academic success” (VanHamme, p. 29, 1996).

7.) Aboriginal Control of Education

“I have no hesitation in saying- we may as well be frank- that the Indian cannot go out from school, making his own way and competing with the white man... He has not the physical, mental or moral get up to enable him to compete. He cannot do it” (Sifton in Armitage, p. 135, 1993).

These were the words of Clifford Sifton, Minister of Indian Affairs for the Canadian government in 1904.

The literature on native control of education chronicles a history of subjugation, indoctrination and assimilation. The paternalistic attitude toward the education of native children begun in the 17th century, continues to the present day. “The primary purpose of education was to indoctrinate Aboriginal people into a Christian, European world view,

thereby civilizing them” (Royal Commission Report, p. 434,1996). At various times and at different locations throughout the country, missionaries played a role in the education of native people, supported by governments.

Passed in 1868, the Indian Act, was the first piece of government legislation specially designed to “deal with” Indians in Canada. Sections 114-123 addressed education. These sections concerned only those Indians who lived on reserves. This was an indication of the government’s attitude they would negotiate with and educate only those people who satisfied bloodline and territorial requirements. The act was very specific concerning the education of native children. Sections 116-118 made it compulsory that every Indian child between the ages of six and sixteen attend school on the reserves. The act was also specific regarding excuses which children could use for absence from school. For example children were allowed to be excused for assisting in farming or household duties or lacking accommodation in a designated school. If students were absent without sufficient reason or parents did not report absences, truant officers were given the authority to search the homes of native people and seize any child who was habitually absent from school. These children were considered juvenile delinquents (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1987). At no place in the Indian Act was there a provision made for native governance in the educational system.

Historians have termed the period from 1867-1960 as the “Assimilationist Period” in native Canadian history (Armitage, 1993). During this time the residential became the major tool of indoctrination. Aboriginal children went to the residential school for ten

months of the year from the age of 6 to 18. The local Indian Agent in each reserve or community collected children in September and returned them home in late June. These schools provided a very basic education designed to prepare students for work as farmers or maids. Residential schools were oppressive as children were subjected to a strict regimen of work. Boys were expected to work in the fields or stables while girls worked in the kitchen and performed various other household duties. Mortality rates in residential schools were high and many children did not live to benefit from the education they received (Kirkness, 1992). According to Andrew Armitage (1993), “The residential schools best prepared it’s graduates for other institutional communities, particularly jails and mental hospitals, to which a disproportionate number of the students appeared to have gone” (p.143).

In 1951 the Indian Act was amended to allow native children to attend provincially owned and operated day schools with non-native children. These changes to the Indian Act were made without native consultation and without preparing teachers to accommodate children from the native culture. The results of this policy were disastrous. If anything, the integration policy reinforced differences and stereotypes between native and non-native cultures. Native students and parents felt alienated from the school system. As a result, drop out rates for native students increased. The lack of and need for participation of the native community was evident (Kirkness, 1981).

Moving into the 1970's, the call for native control over education became stronger.

In 1972 the National Indian Brotherhood, issued a policy paper calling for Indian control of Indian education. The basis of this paper were two principals; Parental responsibility and local control of education. These rights have been denied to native Canadians since Confederation. The paper asserted that “only Indian people can develop a suitable philosophy of education based on Indian values adapted to modern living” (Indian Act in Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, p.15, 1986).

Since 1972 changes in native control of education have been slow. Residential school have been closed and the number of schools under native administration have grown slowly. Schools under native control have hired more native teachers, changed curriculum and introduced native language classes. However, federal and provincial governments still insist that schools conform to provincial regulations regarding curriculum and the school year (Royal Commission Report, 1996).

Across Canada various native communities and groups have been pressing the federal and provincial governments for fundamental change in the education of their children. At a federal level there are no measures in place to allow native people to take control over their education systems. According to the Indian Act, the Minister for the Department of Indian and Northern Development has complete control over which schools native children attend and the nature of educational agreements. Changes to the Indian Act would require Parliamentary approval and the federal government have made it clear that they will not amend the act on a piecemeal basis. Even today, the paternalistic attitude of the original Indian Act prevails as the federal government puts more trust in

provincial school authorities rather than in native people to control their own school system (Friederes, 1998).

Yet, native people still continue their struggle to control their education system. Native people believe their children have a right to be educated in a system that values their heritage and cultural identity. Native people argue that a school system controlled by native people can better prepare native children to participate in both the native and non-native worlds. A native controlled education system would promote the culture of the society it serves. The school experience for native children would be more meaningful and relevant for them compared to the present education system. Local control of education would offer flexibility in the development and implementation of educational policy. A native system of education would build the self-esteem of native children and help them develop a positive self image (Green, 1990).

Native people believe in the value of education. They believe in the value of an education system that would foster cultural pride and growth in their native children. A system that would enable native people to fully participate in their own social, political, economic and educational advancement, is their desire (Kirkness, 1981).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Labrador Inuit Association works in close association with the Labrador School Board to ensure that the recommendations made at both the 1977 and the 1987 Inuit education conferences are being met. As has been previously cited, changes in curriculum such as native language and Life skills programs have been implemented. In addition, where enrolments warrant, there is both a principal

and an Inuk vice-principal as part of the native school's administration. Native community residents are members of the school board and there is active parent participation on local school councils. However, fundamental changes and curriculum decisions still continue to be made by provincial education authorities and non-native school board administrators. As the native population of coastal Labrador continues to rise and native parents become more vocal in their concerns, a shift in control and decision making power can be expected.

8.) The Teacher of Native Children

The majority of teachers that teach native children still continue to be non-native. This situation is not expected to change anytime soon. According to Noley Grayson (1991), the number of students enrolled in teacher education programs is declining. Two reasons account for this. First, native students who do enter colleges and post-secondary institutions are not choosing teaching as a career. Secondly, many native students fail to complete post-secondary programs and drop out for various reasons. These reasons may include, inability to cope with the urban lifestyle, homesickness or family reasons. Hence, non-native teachers constitute the majority of the teaching force in native schools.

Teaching in a native, northern or rural community presents its own unique set of challenges unlike those of other rural communities. Each year many newly graduated teachers find themselves in these unique situations. Thus the question must be asked, Why do these teachers choose to accept teaching positions in native, northern

communities? Recent literature suggests the reasons are varied. Economics tops the list of reasons as to why new teachers accept positions in native schools. Canadian universities continue to produce teacher education graduates. These teachers compete for a limited number of teaching positions in provinces where tight fiscal policies have severely impacted the school system. Cutbacks in provincial education funding have resulted in increased workloads for teachers, school closures and the elimination of teaching positions. Consequently, some school boards across the country are experiencing a “buyer’s market” when hiring new teachers for their schools. Dibbon (2002) has found that Canada’s aging population has had a great impact on the number of school aged children in the general Canadian population. As our population continues to age, Canadian fertility rates decrease. Add to this the continuing out migration of people from Canada to lucrative job opportunities in the United States and abroad, it is reasonable to conclude that the demand for new teachers will decrease. Coupled with this is the ever increasing student debt load which many new graduates have to shoulder upon graduation. These factors combined, literally “force” new teachers to apply for positions in aboriginal and northern regions where they would not otherwise apply. The possibility of work for a spouse is also another reason why teachers choose to move to native, northern communities (Murphy & Angelski, 1997).

Apart from economic reasons, Johnson and Amundsen ((1983), report other reasons as to why teachers accept teaching positions in native communities. Their research has found that teachers are attracted to the lifestyle of native, northern areas.

Recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and skiing, prove to be inviting to many new teachers. The “laid back”, slower pace of life is also an attraction. The chance to interact with a different culture is cited as another reason as to why teachers move to northern, native areas to work. The attraction of a higher salary and lucrative benefits packages appear to outweigh concerns of isolation for teachers in remote, northern areas.

McCracken and Miller (1988) indicate that new teachers feel that small, isolated schools offer the best opportunity to create a positive environment for teaching and learning. In their study of teachers entering rural communities, they have found that new teachers are attracted to small schools because:

- 1.) A chance to develop good student-teacher rapport
- 2.) Teacher control over what and how they teach.
- 3.) Few discipline problems.
- 4.) Respect for the teacher
- 5.) Students possess a work ethic
- 6.) Small class size .
- 7.) Students are motivated.

Haughey and Murphy (1983) reported similar findings of their study of rural school teachers in British Columbia. They also note that new teachers are attracted to the possibility of getting to know students well due to small class sizes and the prospect of individualized instruction, which a small, rural school affords.

The work of Cross, Leahy and Murphy (1989) supports these findings. They also note that teachers with children are attracted to remote communities because of the slow pace of life and friendly atmosphere. The relaxed pace of life, the low cost of living, parental assistance in education, community respect for teachers, and the friendly population of small towns, have been discovered to be reasons why teachers with families accept teaching positions in native, northern communities.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, literature documenting the problems encountered by non-native teachers who teach in native schools is abundant. In fact, many of the factors which attracted teachers to these areas prove to be the very factors which compel them to leave teaching positions in native communities.

Upon entering a native community the idealized version of quiet, rural life is soon replaced by reality. Johnson and Amundsen (1983) report that new teachers to rural Alaska encounter native communities suffering from high unemployment, few skilled workers, low income families and villages accessible only by water or air. Hansen (1987) has also found that these small, isolated communities suffer from high rates of infant mortality, high divorce rates and contaminated sources of drinking water. He also argues that new teachers are unaware of the vulnerability of rural families and the unique needs of the children which come from these families. It would not be uncommon for new teachers to find these children lingering behind after school, students relating personal stories from home in the classroom or students asking to visit the homes of teachers. Once this situation is understood, teachers can begin to develop strategies to teach these

children.

According to the literature, the reasons why new teachers leave teaching positions in native, northern communities generally fall into two categories;

- 1.) Personal/Community factors
- 2.) Professional factors

1.) *Personal/Community Factors*

In their work with teachers in rural British Columbia, Murphy and Angelski (1997) have reported that teachers leave native teaching posts due to factors such as isolation, inability to adapt to weather conditions, cost of travel to larger centres and inadequate shopping facilities. While these may be valid reasons for leaving, Murphy and Angelski make a very important point regarding life in native, northern communities. “Teaching in a small, rural community is a “way of life” which is influenced significantly by the cultural milieu that characterizes a community or region. The isolation, weather conditions, remoteness and basic facilities are fundamental elements of the social fibre of this culture” (p 9). Thus, teaching in a native, isolated community is more than just a job, it is a way of life.

Blase and Pajak (1986) report that the impact of the community is one of the major reasons why teachers leave native, northern communities. In their study, teachers reported that their personal lives were subject to public scrutiny. Teachers resented being

in a fish bowl and having to monitor their own behaviour. McCracken and Miller (1988) reported similar findings in their study of rural teachers in a small town in the midwestern United States. In this study, teachers reported that the narrow mindedness and close examination of community members made life difficult for them. Teachers also reported that the lack of privacy and the tendency of parents going to the administration to report inappropriate teacher behaviour out of school, were negative factors they could not cope with.

Cross, Leahy and Murphy (1989) discovered that lack of privacy isolation were the two main reasons why teachers left teaching positions in rural British Columbia. These teachers had difficulty adapting to the social fabric of a community where everyone knew everyone else's business. This resulted in teachers limiting their interactions with the community. Consequently, they became socially isolated from the rest of the community. " Teachers are in a conspicuous position in the community and while the attention is enjoyable, the lack of privacy may lead to feelings of vulnerability" (Gjeltan in Miller, p.2, 1988).

In Blase and Pajak's (1986) study, teachers reported that the community in general showed little appreciation for their position in the community. Teachers did not have the respect of the community and were subject to criticism by community residents. Feelings of anger, guilt, resentment and defensiveness were common among teachers in this study. These findings are also supported by the work of Baksh and Singh (1979).

Hatton, Watson Squires and Soliman (1991) address this issue in their study of

teacher mobility in New South Wales, Australia. These researchers state that the unwillingness of teachers to stay in rural areas may be interpreted by community residents as rejection of the community. Residents come to regard teachers as outsiders or passers-by. They stay only long enough to accumulate money and experience and move on to the next rung up the professional ladder. Teachers are seen as unsympathetic to a region's culture, lifestyle and values. Parental attitudes in rural British Columbia are similar. Parents here felt that in order for teachers and schooling in general to be highly regarded by the community, teachers should show support for community traditions and practices and communicate the aims and objectives of the school to rural parents clearly, in a manner they can understand (Murphy & Angelski, 1997). Absence of social contacts is another reason why teachers leave native communities. For single teachers the absence of compatible mates proves to be a factor in their decision to leave their teaching position (Blase & Pajak, 1986). The friendships which these teachers make are usually with other community professionals such as nurse, social workers or law enforcement officers (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989).

In the literature, other reasons are given as to why teachers leave teaching positions in native, northern communities. These include ; poor medical care, inadequate housing and maintenance (Miller,1988), exhaustion (Vance, Miller, Humphreys & Reynolds, 1989), inability to adjust to rural living (Martinez, 1994), poor recreational facilities, lack of artistic or cultural facilities (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989) distance from family and friends and community social problems (Bello & Bello, 1980).

2.) Professional Factors

“ Many of the younger, unmarried teachers consider bush teaching a stopping point for a few years, rather than a long term commitment” (Bello & Bello, p.28, 1980). This finding reported by Bello and Bello (1980) with teachers in the small, isolated schools of British Columbia, has also been reported in various other studies of teachers in isolated and native schools. In their study of a female first-year teacher in a small, native community in Canada, McAlpine and Crago (1995) reported that after two years of experience, during which time the teacher secured her permanent teaching license, she left her position to find employment in a larger public school. Martinez (1994) studied the life and work of a first year teacher in an Australian aboriginal school. At the end of one year of teaching she reported that the teacher left the community to seek employment elsewhere even though his commitment to teaching faded. Opportunities for advancement and better working conditions elsewhere have also been reported in the work of Murphy and Angelski (1997).

Excessive work demands in high on the list of why teachers leave positions in native schools. Upon coming to a small school in an isolated area a teacher may be called upon to attend meetings, coach or supervise extracurricular activities. Blase and Pajak (1986) found, “ Teachers indicated that they felt anger, frustration, resentment, stress, panicky, cheated, used, drained, guilty, failure, burned out, rushed, exhausted, overextended, bitter, anxious, pressure, trapped and on the verge of a collapse as a result of the workload “ (p.312). Vance, Miller, Humphreys and Reynolds (1989), conducted a

survey of teachers in a native American school and found similar results. Teachers reported high levels of stress, too much work, lack of preparation time and too much paper work as being negative aspects of their job. They also reported that these factors resulted in the physical exhaustion of teachers which detrimentally affected their job.

Lack of resources and facilities figured prominently in the literature as well. Bello and Bello (1980) found that teachers in small, remote schools often were short on items such as textbooks, paper and other educational resources. They attributed this to the very small budget which the district administration provides to the school. Haughey and Murphy (1983) cited lack of resources, funding, teaching equipment, materials, facilities and outdated material as reasons for job dissatisfaction among teachers of native students. Limited information resources for student use, lack of support for dealing with special needs children and outdated instructional materials and supplies were common occurrences in Miller's (1980) study of small, rural schools. He states, " Teachers must contend with limited and/or dated curriculum materials. They have to learn to be flexible and creative, using available resources in the school and community" (p.4).

Stenlund (1995) reported that the students themselves may play a part in a teacher's decision to leave a teaching position in a native school. In particular, the low motivation of students was identified as a major source of discouragement for teachers. Teachers expressed much anger, hurt, a sense of failure and a blow to their self-esteem when they were not able to help their students academically. Students who made the wrong choices or when teachers were not able to get through to a child, proved to be

sources of regret for teachers. Blase and Pajak (1986) and Vance, Miller, Humphreys and Reynolds (1989), also reported that teaching students who were poorly motivated, having to constantly monitor student behaviour, handling discipline problems and the rejection of authority by students, were major areas of frustration for teachers of native American students.

Little or no professional development support and little administration support also impact heavily on a teacher's decision to leave a native community (Miller, 1988). Many small schools find themselves without a professional development library for teachers. Consequently, they are not kept abreast of current educational trends. The lack of administrative support appears to be the most crucial and yet, the most neglectful in the first year of teaching. Martinez (1994) notes in her study of a beginning teacher in an Australian Aboriginal school, that the new teacher was given an informal talk held with teachers on administration day. The only official source of information he was provided with was the curriculum guides for the course he would teach. Watson, Hatton, Squires and Solman (1991) reported that teachers who were given a formal induction to their school and teaching position were more satisfied in their positions than those who were not. The researchers also noted that staff support was a part of this induction process. Very little peer and administrative support was found to be a problem among teachers of native American students (Vance, Miller, Humphreys and Reynolds, 1989). The provision of inadequate support services for students was reported by Cross, Leahy and Murphy (1989). These teachers argued for more assistance in solving reading and

behaviour problems. In this study teachers reported that the lack of opportunities for further study, sabbatical leave and the promotion and evaluation policies of the school board, did little to encourage them to stay in their teaching positions.

Lack of substitutes, condition of the school building and poor salaries and benefits were cited as additional reasons why teachers left positions in small, native schools.

Chapter Three

Research Questions and Methodology

The research questions used in this study were designed to provide the researcher with the information needed to produce a concise and reasonably accurate account of the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in aboriginal schools on the north coast of Labrador. The formulation of these questions was guided by the researcher's own personal and professional experiences with teaching Inuit children as well as the desire to contribute to the developing knowledge of teachers and the conditions in which they work in aboriginal schools in this province. This study has aimed to fill a gap in the existing literature on aboriginal education. This chapter also outlines the research methodology used for the study and provides a description of the type of analysis used in the research. The choice of research methodology and data analysis will be supported by citing relevant literature.

Research Questions

Teaching in an Inuit community on the north coast of Labrador is unique both professionally and personally. For the non-aboriginal teacher, the challenge of educating students of a different cultural origin brings with it a wide range of experiences and opportunities that few teachers encounter. For many non-aboriginal teachers these

challenges prove to be too great to surmount and they subsequently leave their teaching positions. Other non-aboriginal teachers adapt to their new environment, rise above the culture shock and make a life for themselves in the community. Why do these two opposing realities exist? Why do some teachers leave while others stay? Using an aboriginal school and community as a case study, this thesis has attempted to answer these questions.

Two major research questions formed the basis of this study. These questions were:

1. What are the factors which cause non-aboriginal teachers to leave teaching positions after a year or two of teaching experience?
2. What factors cause non-aboriginal teachers to remain in teaching positions at aboriginal schools?

The researcher felt that these two questions would provide her with the information needed to produce a reasonably accurate portrayal of the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in an aboriginal school in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Design of the Study

A total of thirty-one participants were identified for this study. They were selected to provide a wide range of information pertaining to the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal schools. Of the thirty-one participants identified, twenty-one were former non-aboriginal teachers. Each of these participants was sent a questionnaire along with a letter of consent that explained the nature and purpose of the study. Fifteen former teachers completed the questionnaire. The remaining six teachers had moved to various areas of the province and country and attempts to contact them were unsuccessful. (Appendix A). Twelve present non-aboriginal teachers were selected for this study. These participants were contacted in person by the researcher. They were informed of the nature and purpose of the study. These participants consented to a tape-recorded interview lasting approximately thirty to forty-five minutes. All precautions were taken to ensure that the participant's responses were recorded as honestly and accurately as possible. Participants were provided with a copy of the interview questions before the interview to address any questions or concerns they might have had. (Appendix B). Early in the research process two of the present non-aboriginal teachers made known their intentions to resign their current teaching positions. These participants were then approached to complete a former teacher questionnaire. Both participants agreed and completed a questionnaire.

Qualitative Research

The nature of my research was qualitative. The major objective was to seek understanding and produce a realistic portrayal of the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in an aboriginal school in Newfoundland and Labrador. In order to accomplish this, qualitative analysis of the data was necessary. Qualitative research has as its primary goal the description and understanding of a phenomenon, process, a culture or the perspectives and world-views of the people or group under study (Merriam, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that qualitative research means different things to different people. They define qualitative research as "...multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactions, and visual texts - the described routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives"(p.2).

Seidman (1998) uses the analogy of a woodchopper to explain the value of qualitative research. A researcher can watch a man chopping wood and have an observational understanding of the woodchopper. Yet, what we may understand through observation may not be consistent with what the woodchopper thinks of his own behavior.

To understand the woodchopper's behavior we would have to gain access to the meaning that the woodchopper attaches to his behavior. Qualitative research methods provide the tools to gain access to such meaning. Seidman does caution that the legitimacy of a research method does depend upon the purpose of the research and the types of questions being asked. In many cases research interests operate on more than one level and as a result more than one method of data collection may be used.

In this study qualitative research methods were chosen as the appropriate means to study non-aboriginal teachers in an aboriginal school. Apart from the researcher's own personal interest and experience with the topic, there was an overwhelming desire to document and record the life experiences and work experiences of a small segment of the teaching force in Newfoundland and Labrador. This unique population of teachers has often been misunderstood, misrepresented and up until this point, undocumented in provincial education literature. To fully understand this microcosm of the larger teacher population, in-depth interviews and questionnaires as well as field notes were employed as the main means of data collection. These methods resulted in an abundance of rich, descriptive data which will be discussed in chapter four of this study.

When employing qualitative methods as a means of data collection, issues of validity and reliability come to the forefront. Questions such as, do the findings of the research hold up in other settings or situations, and how credible are the findings of the study, plague the field of qualitative inquiry. According to Stewart (1998). "The pertinent question for ethnographers is not whether they have measured what they think they have,

but rather, have they really observed what their descriptions claim?" (p.15). In this study the researcher dealt with issues of validity and reliability on two fronts. First, the structured in-depth interviews and mailed questionnaires were checked against the objectives of the study. For the in-depth interviews, a schedule or list of questions was formulated which guided the interview on a path consistent with the purpose of the study. Follow up questions, probing questions and attention to non-verbal cues were employed to enhance the validity of the data. The 20 questions on the mailed questionnaires were also consistent with the second goal of the study which was to assess the reasons why non-aboriginal teachers leave aboriginal schools.

The role of the teacher as researcher (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), figured prominently in this study. In qualitative research the researcher is the instrument and enters into the lives of the participants. The role of the researcher is considered by many to be both a strength and a weakness. Researchers may have assumptions or expectations and it is very important for researchers to be aware of biases they may have. Through this awareness, the researcher can control for bias when collecting data. (Newman, Benz, 1998). As Lecompte and Priessle (1993) observe, qualitative research "is distinguished partly by its admission of the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame." (p.92). Because the main instrument of data collection in qualitative research is human, all observations and analysis are filtered through that human being's values and perspective. Thus, the researcher brings to the research site a construction of their own view of reality which interacts with that of the participants

being studied.

In this study the researcher is a teacher who worked with the participants for nine years. As a result, access and entry to the research site was not a problem. As was previously stated, participants identified for the study were approached and given a letter of consent which explained the purpose of the study. (Appendix C). Participants were also given a choice of where to conduct the interviews; i.e. in their homes, the school, etc. Scheduled times for the interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. With the exception of one participant who chose to conduct the interview in her home, all remaining participants chose to conduct the interviews in the school, after hours. Interviews were conducted on an individual basis with two exceptions. First, married couples were interviewed together. Secondly, two female teachers who were roommates preferred to be interviewed together. One of these two females was a single teacher, and the other teacher was married with her spouse attending school on the island. The researcher also kept a daily log/journal of teacher activities and experiences both inside and outside of the school. The journal focused mainly on staffroom conversations and gatherings at recess, lunchtime, after school, staff meetings and school functions. In terms of generalizing to other situations, where non-aboriginal teachers teach in aboriginal schools, the researcher makes no attempt to do this. This is a study of a selected group of individuals who teach aboriginal children in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If this study were to be conducted in another aboriginal community, in a different

aboriginal school, with another researcher, it is probable that similar results may not be reproduced. Different people may read the study differently and interpret the findings in their own way. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Qualitative research is highly situated. The researcher must situate his/herself in the research setting. The researcher must become totally immersed in the life and culture of the people or group under study. In doing so, the researcher is able to collect a wealth of richly descriptive data that could not be obtained by quantitative research methods. Qualitative researchers observe “multiple realities” created by human beings who live in a particular place or setting. Qualitative researchers have direct access to these versions of reality through their observations and interviews. “We are thus “closer” to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants. Most agree that when reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity is a definite strength of qualitative research.” (Merriam, 1998, p.203). Lecompte and Priessle (1993) support the validity argument by stating that by living among participants, the researcher is able to continually analyze data and refine it. Secondly, since interviews are phrased in the language of the participants, they are less abstract than other research instruments. Thirdly, since research is conducted in the natural setting of participants, the data collected more accurately reflects the experiences of participants than in a contrived setting. Finally, the qualitative research process itself is one of continual reflection, questioning and re-evaluation.

To enhance the internal validity and reliability of qualitative research,

triangulation is employed. Triangulation involves the utilization or coming together of a variety of data sources to confirm emergent findings or corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research in question. According to Lecompte and Priessle (1993), “Triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions, it enhances the scope, density and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation. It also assists in correcting biases that occur when the ethnographer is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation.” (p. 48). Marshall and Rossman (1995), further argue that by using more than one method of data collection or multiple informants, can enhance a study’s usefulness for other situations.

In this study data was collected from present non-aboriginal teachers using an in-depth interview, from former teachers using a detailed open-ended questionnaire, and a daily journal of teacher activities and comments in the research setting. The daily journal served to reinforce the information gathered in the in-depth interviews and questionnaires. The journal represented a departure from the formal interview process as teachers were observed in informal settings/situations where comments were unsolicited and spontaneous. It should also be noted that teachers were aware of the presence of the researcher recording their comments. By using these methods of data collection the researcher was able to examine emergent themes and patterns in the data as well as eliminate data which was outside of the parameters of the study. A detailed account of data analysis will be discussed later in this chapter.

Interviews

“The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena.” (Kvale, 1996, p. 30). The intent of interviewing is to capture that which is unseen. Holstein and Gubrium (1995), refer to interviewing as “ prospecting for true facts and feelings residing within .” (p. 2).

Interviewing provides the researcher with rich descriptive data that surpasses words. This type of interaction enables the researcher to describe and understand the meaning of events or situations in the lives of the respondents. The interview provides the researcher with the “opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see. This is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry.” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.65). The whole idea of the realities of the participants and the meanings they attach to them is taken one step further by Glesne and Peshkin: “ Since qualitative researchers deal with multiple, socially constructed realities or “qualities” that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables, they regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them.” (p.6)

This study seeks to understand and document the life and work experiences of non-aboriginal teachers in an aboriginal school on two fronts. First, the study examines the experiences of non-aboriginal teachers who stay in aboriginal schools and communities. To gain the perspective of this group of teachers and understand their

reasons for staying in aboriginal schools, in-depth interviewing was employed as a data collection tool. Secondly, due to time constraints and geographic distance, open-ended questionnaires were used to gain an understanding of why other non-aboriginal teachers leave aboriginal schools after a few years of experience. Hence, the study will examine the world of non-aboriginal teachers in an aboriginal school from two very different perspectives: those who stay and those who leave.

Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires is a common and widespread approach when collecting data for educational research. The questionnaire for former non-aboriginal teachers was designed with both a descriptive and explanatory purpose in mind. The twenty questions on the questionnaire asked teachers to describe their living and working conditions in the school and community and the reasons behind their decision to leave. The questions were open-ended and broadly stated to obtain a wide variety of information and viewpoints as was possible. This view is supported by Aiken (1997) who states, “ Open-ended questions are particularly valuable in exploratory research when a more detailed picture of the respondent’s attitudes, beliefs and thoughts is needed.” (p.4) The questionnaire used in this study received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education at Memorial university of Newfoundland.

In using questionnaires the researcher has to rely on the accuracy and honesty of

the respondent. The questions on the mailed questionnaire in this study were written in such a manner as not to suggest or presuppose answers. Lecompte and Priessle (1993) state; "Use questions that make sense to the respondents and elicit the data required." (p.162). The questionnaire should highlight the issues and concerns of former non-aboriginal teachers. It should enable the researcher to make a fair and accurate assessment as to why non-aboriginal teachers leave aboriginal schools after a short period of time. Finally, the questionnaire should prove to be a meaningful instrument in helping to assess problems and identify solutions to the consistent turnover of non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal schools.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data became an on going part of the research throughout this study. Analysis involved a form of "constant comparative" data analysis. The constant comparative method of data analysis involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities or differences. According to Glasser and Strauss (1967), the researcher enters the field without a hypothesis, observes and describes what happens and on the basis of observation formulates explanations about why it happens. The objective of this type of analysis is to see patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relation to one another in an effort to explain the situation under study. While it is not the intent of the researcher to develop theory, this study may open the doors to further research and discussion in the fields of teacher training and aboriginal education.

In this study, the in-depth interviews and the questionnaires, required two separate forms of data analysis. For the in-depth interviews response to the thirty-eight questions were analyzed according to the following themes: Reasons for accepting the position, Impressions of work/community, Previous knowledge of aboriginal cultures, Community life, Living arrangements, Role of the school board, Teacher training/preparation, Relevance of the curriculum, Incorporation of aboriginal in the classroom, Racial/cultural issues, Future plans and Personal reflections. Responses to the questionnaires were arranged in a similar fashion under the following headings: Role of the school board, Impressions of work/community, Previous knowledge of aboriginal culture, Community life, Living arrangements, and Reasons for leaving. This process involved taking key words and phrases from the data and linking them together based on similarities and differences.

The computer software package Ethnograph 5.0 aided in the analysis of data. The program allowed the researcher to import data files from a word processing program to the ethnograph. Designed for descriptive, qualitative research, the program requires the researcher to assign codes to participants. Once the data have been entered into the Ethnograph, a printout of the data is made, sequentially numbering the lines of data. The researcher can then analyze the lines of data separating them into blocks and code these blocks using a coding system. (Lecompte & Priessle, 1993).

In this study participants were assigned a code that would identify them as being from one of the two sample groups; present non-aboriginal teachers and former non-

aboriginal teachers. The identity of the participants could not be determined from the coding system. As the code words were entered into the Ethnograph program, the program sorted the data files according to codes and combinations of codes. Data were then displayed in the form of text segments. This aided the researcher in sorting codes and analyzing data.

Chapter Four Results and Discussion

Overview

This chapter presents the findings of in-depth interviews from nine present non-aboriginal teachers in the school under study as well as the results of twenty open - ended questions from fourteen former non-aboriginal teachers. Statements were examined and discussed as they related to a particular data category. Actual quotes from participants were used when necessary. Data were examined in raw form. The perceptions presented are those of the participants. Statements were edited for spelling and grammar only when cited in this thesis.

Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to present the stories of non-aboriginal teachers teaching in an aboriginal school in a manner that appropriately and accurately reflects their experiences. The stories of the current non-aboriginal teachers are told through the exploration of eleven data themes that emerged from repeated examination of the tapes and transcripts of the respondent's interviews. The data themes in the order presented here are: Reasons for accepting the position, Impressions of work/community, Previous knowledge of aboriginal culture, Community life, Living arrangements, Role of the school board, Teacher training/preparation, Relevance of curriculum, Incorporation of aboriginal culture in the classroom, Racial/cultural issues, Future plans, and Personal reflections. The stories of former non-aboriginal teachers are told through the

examination of six data themes. These themes are: The role of the school board, Impressions of work/community, Previous knowledge of aboriginal culture, Community life, Living arrangements, and Reasons for leaving.

Data Themes: Current Non-aboriginal Teachers

1. Reasons For Accepting the Position

Teachers were questioned as to the reasons why they accepted their current teaching assignment. Their responses focused on themes of repayment of student loans and the need for experience:

PT2: I had been looking for a job for a while and I had a student loan and I desperately needed the experience.

PT7: The need for experience, student loan, interested in a new experience. I just wanted to be independent.

PT8: I felt blessed to have a job because many of my friends in university didn't have one. The student loan was the biggest factor.

PT9: I also had a student loan to pay.

Three of the respondents had a long-standing interest in working in Labrador.

PT1: Ever since I was about 10 years old I was going to be a teacher, and I was going to teach in Labrador even though I knew nothing about it. But, it was always something I wanted to do. I applied only to the Labrador board and if I didn't get with the Labrador board I was going back to university to do a Learning Resources diploma.

PT4: I always wanted to go to Labrador. It wasn't too far from home. That was my thing. I always wanted to go to Labrador. That appealed to me.

PT9: I always had an interest in Labrador. When my friend went to Rigolet in 1988 my interest grew.

Three other respondents had very different reasons for accepting their current teaching positions.

PT3: I was the type of person, I liked to be moving around. For me it was just...I may be a wandering soul but at the time I wanted to find out and get to different places on the coast. And that's why I came here in 1983.

PT6: The main factor would have been the fact that we would both have positions in the same community. I could have had a job on the island but we wanted to go somewhere where there were two jobs and there were very few opportunities five or six years ago and even today.

PT5: We both actually would have jobs here.

The above statements demonstrate that the reasons for respondents taking their current teaching positions were varied. The need for experience and repayment of student loans were the main reasons for these teachers accepting their positions. Others limited their job search to Labrador based on personal interest and the appeal of teaching in Labrador.

2. First Impressions of Work and the Community

When questioned about their first impressions of the community, three of the respondents commented on the barren, desolate nature of the landscape:

PT3: My first impressions were pretty bare as far as the vegetation was concerned , rocky and so on. But it was also exciting in the sense that it was new and that it gave me an opportunity to do some new things.

PT5: I can remember the first day. It was a dark dull day like today. All the rocky roads and all the rocks, and how are we going to get from the airstrip to the house.

PT9: My first impressions were a rugged landscape, treeless, friendly people and lots of curious children.

Other respondents expressed fear and bewilderment over the situation they found themselves in.

PT2: Well, I can remember coming up on the plane. I didn't know the people. I knew I was coming to _____. Every time the plane stopped the pilot would never say where we were to. I was listening and eavesdropping and when I got off the plane I said, "Where the devil am I to?" "I didn't know anybody. I didn't know a soul. I got off the plane and the principal was there and he came over and introduced himself and picked me up. I got in his van which was pretty rough and falling apart and took me over. He dropped me off to the residence and the dirt was up to your eyeballs. Sand and dust and I said if I'm living here I'm not living in this dirt. So, being very aggressive, I started gutting' everything out. I went in and started gutting' everything out and throwing things out and took over. I figured I'd jump in with both feet.

PT4: My first impression probably wasn't the best. But that was circumstances too, a lot of which...Its up to the school board what they want to present in my opinion as the first impression a teacher gets. Well of course I didn't have a key, so I went to another teacher's home. I got the key from her and then I walked in my home where I live now and it was horrible. Nothing wrong with the home, but the way it was presented: some sort of cleaning agent everywhere, in the stove, in the fridge, on the floor. Flies everywhere. The toilet was disgusting and so I lost it having had a real bad experience the year before. So I called my mom who said, "My love, go to the hotel." So I spent my first night in the hotel because I wasn't going to brave that out, my first night here.

PT8: This was the first time I had ever flown on a plane and to go from a larger plane to a smaller plane...I was so sick. It was that bad, I didn't know we landed. I got off the plane and _____ was there. I remember standing by the plane and thinking, "Do we have to go any farther?" I was stunned and shocked. It snowed that day and I thought it was cold here. We went to the dock because the first boat came in. Everything was new. An overwhelming experience. We went to _____'s house for a cup of tea and I sat there and I saw wolf skins hanging off the wall and I thought, "Oh my, I'm not used to this!"

The remaining respondents remember their first impressions as being positive in nature.

PT1: I think it was exactly what I thought. Small, quaint, you know, like for the environment. The people turned out to be friendlier than I thought. Actually, it was very positive. I landed on a bright, bright sunny day.

PT7: I got off the plane with the social worker and thought, "Oh yeah, not a bad little spot!" Met one teacher, got on her four-wheeler and off we went on the bike. I really had no expectations of what I was coming to, so I thought, pretty good. My very first

impression was my house. When I walked into my house I thought, “Wow, this is very good!” I was really impressed. It was nice and cozy.

PT6: The guy that picked us up just happened to be there and gave us a ride and he became one of our best friends as it turned out.

Many respondents had similar impressions of their students on the first day of school. The shy, quiet nature of the students was the most memorable aspect for the respondents.

PT1: Some were quiet but I found some that were probably almost a bit ... They were bolder than I thought. That one thing that stands out in my mind that first day in the classroom was, “Miss when you leave can I have your rings?” And I guess it was just because they were so used to teachers coming and going, coming and going, they just presumed that I was a new teacher and I was probably only here for a short time. And that’s one thing that stands out in my mind; “Miss can I have your rings?”

PT5: My first impressions were that the kids were very quiet. The first day, but that didn’t last long.

PT6: In my case I thought the same thing. They were very quiet. For the most part that’s the way they were for me the year.

PT9: There were nine, grade two students. They were very quiet. I was nervous and struggled with the pronunciation of the different surnames.

For three of the respondents the whole idea of pronouncing surnames, became a worrisome issue.

PT8: I remember the kids sitting at tables, not desks. I remember the first day when we went to church and _____ said that you have to say their names right or they will make fun of you. So she sat me down with the list of names and broke down into syllables the way it might sound and look so I could say it with some degree of sense. I got up and called out the names and they came up to the front of the church and paraded out and went back to the school.

The same teacher expressed that her first impression of the students became a year-long problem.

PT8: My class made my life a living hell. I wasn't prepared for all those behavior problems. I felt overwhelmed many times. One student in particular was awful.

The remaining respondents expressed that no clear impression stands out about their students. One respondent commented:

PT3: I can't remember much about that first day. That was years ago. I guess they all blend in after a while.

For five of the respondents, recollections of their first impressions initiated a discussion of resignation during their first year of teaching.

PT4: I think I considered a breakdown, but I didn't see resigning as an option being a first year teacher and extremely lucky to get a job. What would happen down the road if I quit my first year? Because other people,... There's no way they would understand my living environment in a different community. So, I didn't see it as an option if I wanted to pursue a long career as a teacher. I didn't think quitting my first year would get me anywhere.

PT5: I think if it weren't for _____ I would have quit.

PT6: I had to talk to her more than once to encourage her. To give it time. At the time we were in debt for a lot of money and you can't even consider leaving.

PT8: No I wouldn't say I seriously considered resigning. I mean there were days when I said I can't take this another day, but I never considered it.

PT9: I considered resigning my position many times but was encouraged by family and friends.

For those teachers who had a stressful first year, resignation was not an option. In a tight job market, actually having a job, no matter how challenging and stressful, took precedence over unemployment.

3. Previous Knowledge of Aboriginal Culture

Responses in this category ranged from an absolute lack of knowledge of aboriginal culture to knowledge acquired from other teachers and media reports about the north Labrador coast.

PT1: The culture? I was told that they were quiet and that they probably didn't have much economically. I knew they were going to be Moravian. I knew hunting was a big part of their lifestyle and the caribou and the seal were the two big animals for clothing and what have you. I can't ever think of seeing one media report. Not like you do today. I mean I don't think the Labrador coast was exposed as much in the early 80's with the media as it is today.

PT2: I knew nothing. Not a thing. I didn't know anything other than what my family in Goose Bay had told me. I knew there was a community called _____ on the coast of Labrador. I left St. John's, came right on to Goose Bay and went right on up the coast. I was like really, really naïve about it all. That might have been a blessing in disguise.

PT3: I heard about _____ because of the base. I didn't know where it was exactly.

PT4: I knew it was Inuit culture and I knew a bit about the culture spending time in _____ which is profoundly different than here just the same. My _____ was an RCMP officer and he had a close buddy who was in _____ for a while and I heard positive things.

PT5: We spoke to a lot of people about coming here; a lot of construction workers. Not so much teachers. There was one thing I can remember seeing about the water problems, I think, on the news.

PT6: I knew there was water and sewer here. We knew what the problems were. We knew the housing situation and having to buy things before hand. I knew when we came up that we had to have those things.

PT7: I knew the students would be shy. That was basically it. I didn't watch the news until I came here.

PT8: Well, I had a good friend in university who was native, so I knew a bit about their culture. But, again, she was in university so at that level I thought you must be on the ball. I knew she valued her culture. I remember watching the news and hearing about how the secretary stabbed a student at a party after the graduation and it turned out to be the vice-principal's son. I remember thinking, "Is she going

to be at the school while I'm working there?" I also remember thinking because I saw a truck on the news report, "Well, they got one truck there."

PT9: I knew very little about the culture of my students. I can remember learning a little bit about the community in my grade five geography book. My friend, who had taught one year in Rigolet, gave me some culture information that prepared me in some ways for what I was about to encounter.

4. Community Life

In this category, each of the respondents were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the rustic, outdoor life which the north Labrador coast provides.

PT1: I love the outdoors in winter. Not the spring. Not the fall. Not freeze up and definitely not the summer with the flies!

PT3: I am an outdoor person for the most part. I always enjoy hunting and fishing. Now that I am married I can look forward to my son growing up here and taking him out with me.

PT4: I have a lot of fun with the outdoors too. Just getting off in the boat and ski-doo. In the winter-time on ski-doo you have this beautiful picture and you can escape into that beautiful picture.

PT6: We have built a cabin here in the last two years. We have a boat. So, we are into things like that. We have friends who have cabins so we visit them.

PT8: I enjoy my new ski-doo. You have a choice to go off in a boat if you enjoy that aspect of it.

PT9: I totally enjoy the winter months in _____. I like going on ski-doo, going up the bay, ice fishing, etc.

One female respondent, in particular, took an immense liking to the outdoor life the community offered. She has ventured into areas of Inuit lifestyle traditionally dominated by men.

PT2: _____ was into it and he started with five or six mutts. I enjoyed chasing them around and training them and looking after them. _____

was more laid back with it. I figured I could do a better job with it so I took on dogs too and I really enjoy it.

Quite surprisingly, this teacher's involvement with dog teams has enabled her to make inroads with people in the community.

Only one of the respondents commented on the laid back, slow pace of life, that working on the north Labrador coast provides.

PT4: I love how uncluttered life can be and how you feel more in control over your day. I found when I lived in St. John's for example, I had so many demands because there were so many opportunities there.

The respondents also acknowledged that there are drawbacks to life in an isolated, aboriginal settlement. The most common responses were; the cost of living, isolation and travel concerns, lack of essential services, and the close knit nature of the community.

4. a) Cost of Living

PT1: The cost of living here is high.

PT2: The expense of living here is crazy!

PT3: The drawbacks here would be the price of things, for example, oil and the cost of rent. It's very expensive to live here. There's no incentive at all to stay here. I'm sure a lot of people would like to stay. The cost of food and oil is a drawback.

PT8: When you go out in the summer it's expensive and you try and make up for everything you didn't do during the rest of the year. You get food coming and sometimes it's damaged.

4.b) Travel and Isolation

PT1: Access to the outside when you want to travel and the difficulty of making good connections is a problem.

PT2: The isolation. If the weather comes down you could be stuck here for weeks.

PT3: Living in an isolated community, the only way out is by boat or air. Sometimes I wish I could drive to certain places.

PT4: Isolation from family is a drawback. Just having a bad day. At least if you're in Corner Brook you can drive all night and hug your mom. You can't do that here.

PT6: You get used to the fact that living on the coast there's no verification that you'll get out. There's nothing you can do. During the first year we were upset. You get accustomed to that.

PT9: Living away from my family is a drawback.

4. c) Lack of Essential Services

PT2: I've never seen a dentist here. I saw a dentist here once and that was a real, real emergency. And I only got into to see him because I know _____. Other than that I don't know if you can get in to see a dentist up here. And doctors! Like if you had anything serious? If anything ever happened to me there's no doctors up here and if the weather comes down, it might be down for weeks.

PT4: If you fall sick you're stuck. You could be depending on the weather and even so you have a plane ride ahead of you. The inconvenience of it. Not being able to have a plum when you want it.

PT7: Medical services are just terrible! We don't have proper RCMP service! Teachers are worried because they're always a target over the summer when they leave.

4.d) Close Knit Nature of the Community

The respondent's comments on this subject were of both a positive and negative nature. This subject generated a discussion of acceptance by the community and how "teachers/outsideers", are perceived by the community.

PT2: Well, you know people. You know everybody. You know where your students are coming from. You know what kind of lifestyle they got and you know how to treat them. You what's happened the night before when they come in the next day. You know people and there's people you can rely on. But then, you can also look at that negatively because everybody knows everybody else's business. So it got its good and bad points.

Three of the respondents who "married into the community" offered unique perspectives on life in an isolated aboriginal community.

PT1: I think its like any small community. I think there are certain groups that will accept you and then others won't for various reasons. I think that teachers in this community are looked upon as being the rich elite and so there are groups of people here that show jealousy or what have you. I feel that I am a part of the community. I have been on council and I help out with the Easter races and that type of thing.

PT3: I think in some respects I am a member of the community. Being married has helped that. I'm sure there are people here who see me as a teacher. I would say for the most part, I would say people figure I am part of the community.

PT9: I feel that I am a part of the community. If I felt otherwise, I would have been seeking for employment elsewhere.

From these responses it is evident that the teachers who have married community members, feel "uncertain" about their place in the community. For teachers who have not "married into the community", animosity towards outsiders is part of their daily lives.

The six other respondents expressed similar views on community life.

PT4: The children here are extremely aware of your life outside of the school. If you have a boyfriend and that sort of thing. So, I find that things are much more familiar here. I find that you're teaching people you see outside the home all the time who come knocking on your door.

PT5: We both really enjoy it. We like the lifestyle. We realize it's not for everybody. We are content.

PT6: I say yes. We're considered part of the town by some or a number of people. I think there are some people who will always have the same idea about teachers who come in. There are a good few people who consider us part of the community.

PT7: I kind of think that they like me. I think sometimes I feel accepted and other times I don't feel accepted. Sometimes I feel like, yeah, I belong here and then something happens. It could be school related, not even directly related to you and then you definitely know you're white and you're here in this community.

PT8: I guess when you're an advocate for a cause that means something to you and you support it, especially when its not popular in the community, then you're put in your place. You're reminded very quickly who you are.

PT2: Yes...I feel I'm ...I'm not a full fledged member. I don't feel like a full fledged member. Now I know when I'm gone in a few years time they might say, "Miss _____ Who's Miss _____?" Right now I think I do have some impact.

Whether married or single, the respondents had accepted the close-knit nature of the community as a fact of life in a small town. The over riding opinion among the participants was the fact that suspicion of outsiders is a common phenomenon in any small town, no matter where you are.

5.) Living Arrangements

For all of the respondents, their living arrangements had a great impact in forming their impressions of living and working in an isolated, aboriginal community. The means by which theses living arrangements were formed appeared to be haphazard and in many cases a surprise to seven of the respondents. With the

exception of the husband/wife team, seven of the respondents lived with strangers during their first year of work.

PT1: There were four teachers living together in a four bedroom residence. We went in on the grocery order together and the meat order. And with regards to chores, cleaning house whatever, we were in pairs. Two would clean one week and two would clean the next week. Excellent actually. The building itself wasn't in good repair at all. When I pitched there, the wallpaper was all in the middle of the living room floor torn off the walls. No curtains and what have you but with regards to us actually getting along, I would have been gone out of here Christmas if it wasn't for a good living environment.

PT2: I lived with three other people for a few months and then that's the year we got our new trailers and then I lived with _____ for a little while. Everybody pitched in for chores. I think me and _____ done a lot of it. And as for groceries, I think nobody had a grocery order at that time. I had mom and dad send me up some stuff rather than go to the store.

PT3: I had roommates. There had been two other roommates but they moved out. We ordered groceries together as a group. We shared the cost of that and everything else as well: oil, food. We all shared equally.

PT4: I had a roommate. We ordered groceries together. We were at a real advantage. I was this year in comparison to _____ because I knew where I was living and with whom. We were able to meet in Nfld and order our groceries together and flip for the big room. We even did all of that before I came here. We ordered our meat together. The household chores we decided every other weekend would be our turn.

PT7: We were told to choose. We got in there (Goose Bay) and they (school board) said, where are you living? Are you guys together? And we said no. So _____ said the two of you can live together and we said O.K. I came prepared. I got here one week and the next week my stuff came on the boat. I had a year's supply of dry goods. I had my meat ordered from the Co-op. I spent the whole summer planning what I thought I could do because I had met _____ and she had taught in _____ before and I knew her from my special ed. Degree. She was always talking about _____ and her house and she was always buying toilet paper. I was thinking, "Oh my God. I'll need a lot of toilet paper when I go there." So I had everything come. We were living good when we got there. We had everything and then _____ put in a food order and we had too much.

PT8: We had met at an information session at the board office in Goose Bay and that's where we found out we were living together. I put in a \$2000.00 food order and _____ had hers. We had a lot of food.

PT9: I lived with one other teacher who was also a new teacher. There were good times but a lot of difficult times. We had different styles of living and it wasn't always easy to compromise. Our hydro and grocery bills were equally shared. The household chores were also shared but we sometimes differed in how work was done.

For three of these teachers, their living arrangements proved to be stressful. This spilled over into their professional lives, which created a difficult first year of teaching.

The discussion of living arrangements revealed the sometimes difficult and unusual aspects of life in an isolated aboriginal community. Respondents noted that ordering a year's supply of groceries, obtaining drums to buy oil and living without water and sewer was a part of life, which was very difficult to adjust to. This was certainly the case for young, single female teachers who emphasized the need for a partner/spouse to help with the challenges of living in an isolated, aboriginal community

PT7: I think you're more settled if you have a partner with you. You have a life outside of the school. There's a lot of manual labor; pumping oil, greasing the ski-doo and changing the oil in the bike, hauling oil, hauling wood. It's always something. And the first year, hauling the water. We were lucky because _____ came up and hauled our water for us. It's too hard for young women to be here like that.

PT4: It is necessary to have a partner. Absolutely ! Definitely ! Just in terms of living. For example today our furnace gave out. I don't know how you manage here without having someone else. A strong person, not necessarily a man. A strong individual who owned like, a ski-doo. I don't know how you would manage without always having to feel you were always putting someone out. And that's what I didn't like about living here when I was single. If you needed oil, what did you do? You have these big oil drums. You don't have a four wheeler. How do you get them to the gas station ? You're always dependent on someone

else and whether you pay them or not, you always feel like you're putting them out because you can't be an independent person in this community, I feel. As a young 25 year old woman from St. John's I can't be independent.

PT8: As a single person, relationships are difficult here.

Married teachers offered different perspectives.

PT3: For me it didn't really matter when I was 24 or 25. I was gone a lot of the time. If I was married at the time I think it would be very unfair to my spouse to have kids and stay at home, especially if they had a job before. If you're married and you come to a community like this I would say it would be hard for a spouse. But now I'm older and it's a little easier to have a spouse.

PT6: I personally don't think it's necessary to have a spouse/partner. In our case we were together wherever we would have went.

PT2: It helps a lot to have a partner/spouse but I think if you come up here and you're an outgoing person and can easily get along with other people, I think you can survive up here. You need friends. A close circle of friends. You can't come up here and be a loner.

PT1: I think if you're planning to make it any length of time, if you're planning to come and stay here for more than a couple of years ; yes, I think it would definitely help for the two of you. Yes, like both financially, emotionally. Just every way I think.

6.) The Role of the School Board

In discussing the role of the school board, three topics were identified. These topics were: Initial hiring Procedure, Knowledge of the Teaching Position and Knowledge of the Community

All of the respondents were unanimous in their opinions regarding the role of the school board. The manner in which the respondents were hired demonstrated no clear, well-defined hiring process. In many cases the hiring process was spur of the moment.

A) Initial Hiring Procedure

Results of this discussion proved to be very surprising. Of the nine respondents, only five had formal interviews with the school board. Three of the five respondents had extensive telephone interviews, while the other two were hired in person in St. John's. The remaining four respondents had no interview at all. Upon filling out a standard application form from the school board, the three respondents received a phone call with an offer of employment.

PT7: I had no interview. I went to an information session in St. John's and met with them. As for when I was called, I was in Quebec and they offered me a job.

PT8: I just applied and got a phone call and an offer for a job. Yes or no and that was it.

PT2: I was never interviewed. I applied for the job and someone called and asked me did I want the position and I said yes and that was it. I guess they must have been desperate for a teacher.

The fourth respondent received her offer of employment as part of an employment offer with her partner.

B) Knowledge of the Position

In this category each respondent acknowledged that they were given very little information about the position they would be assuming. For two of the

respondents their teaching assignments changed from what they had originally been told.

PT1: I was told it was going to be a grade five position possibly changing to grade three, but when I arrived in the community I found out it was a 5/6 multigrade classroom.

PT7: I was told it was a half time challenging needs, half time special ed. position and that was it. At the end of the first day I was teaching grade nine Art. At the end of the first month I was teaching Math and Language in grade seven. Everything kept getting changed and changed. By the time I was finished I was only Special ed. in grade five. So there were a lot of changes in the position.

C) Knowledge of the Community

All respondents shared similar opinions regarding what they were told about the community before they were hired. Each respondent stated that they were given very little or no information about the community they would be living in. Much of their information came from others who had taught or worked on the north Labrador coast.

PT1: I spoke with other teachers and they were quite positive about the community. I felt that I had a lot of information just from talking to people. The only thing I didn't know was how I was going to get from the airport to my residence. But everything else with regards to furnace problems and water and sewer, ...no I don't think I was quite prepared. I thought the school board had a lot more resources than I was prepared for.

PT2: I didn't know a soul who had taught on the coast. What I knew of the coast I learned from my family because I got family in Goose Bay and they don't have a good lot, good to say about it. So my impressions that I did have were a little bit negative.

PT3: I didn't even know where the place was. I didn't know anyone here.

PT4: I don't feel I was fully informed in terms of necessities. Who can afford to live in a place like this and purchase a ski-doo and a four wheeler right off the bat? That's a huge expense. Just even if you have all that, how

are you going to get the oil into your tank? You always need someone there and it would be wonderful if there was someone in the community and that was their job and you could pay them and that would be fine. So I wasn't told a lot in that regard. And even if you're told all these things that doesn't get you anywhere. I guess an awareness does. But I think there should be a service in place for teachers. Definitely for people coming into the community whereby you don't have to fend for yourself all the time. There needs to be some support here.

PT5: We spoke to a lot of people about coming here; a lot of construction workers. Not so much teachers.

PT8: I spoke with teachers who had taught in Davis Inlet. So I had an idea of what the coast was like but not actually an Inuit community. They said there were no banks, kids were a problem, had to take showers at school because there was no running water at home.

PT7: When I accepted the position they (school board) said that there was new housing and modern sewer. I never thought of asking anything except if I could take my dog and they said take anything you want. I met three teachers and they sat down with me and talked about housing and food. Nothing much really about school. I wanted to know if I needed a ski-doo and they said it was important for work and recreation.

PT9: My friend, who had taught one year in _____, gave me some culture information that prepared me in some ways for what I was about to encounter.

7.) Teacher Training/Preparation

All of the respondents completed their teacher training at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Three were primary trained, three elementary trained, one high school trained, one teacher trained in Special Education and one teacher holds a degree in Music Education. When respondents were asked if they felt that their teacher training prepared them for their current positions, they stated that in many respects they were ill prepared.

The respondents were of the opinion that their training created “the ideal environment”. Not enough emphasis was placed on the multidisciplinary nature of teaching, especially in the primary and Elementary areas. While the internship experience proved to be beneficial for the respondents, the consensus was that more emphasis needed to be directed toward the more practical aspects of teaching and less on the theoretical.

PT1: Definitely not! My teacher training did not prepare me for my position. I think anybody coming here needs many, many more reading intervention programs, more Language Arts programming, and multigrade preparation. Plus I think that some Special ed. background would be a help where kids are below average.

PT2: Not a bit! Not a bit in the world! Now what I learned in my internship, now some of that helped because I did my internship in Kindergarten. That gave me background in the knowledge to start a Kindergarten program. When I came here it was really helpful to me ...but stuff I learned in university, useless!

PT3: In some areas it did, but I can't say a lot of it did. It seems that a lot of the courses you should have done were electives. For example if you're in a teaching position and you're expected to do music, but I didn't do that course. But you do get into situations where you are responsible for it and it is very difficult, especially when you have no musical background. So, I found some courses helped and some didn't.

PT4: University creates an ideal situation, but I don't see how it could prepare you fully. We were given a lab band where children were brought in but you have twenty teachers teaching them. It's a team teaching experience and I think a lot of the courses at MUN don't translate into this environment in terms of a deep theoretical and deep historical and everything else. But in my case if I want to be a good musician I need to have a strong background in that sort of thing. But there is no direct correlation between what I learned in university and what I do on a daily basis here.

PT7: I don't know. With my first degree I was oblivious to the world. I went to Harlow and I went over there and I must say I learned nothing about the Newfoundland curriculum. Let alone where you could get a teaching job in Newfoundland. So, I didn't know anything. I had a professional year when I did my first degree. My professional year, as far as I'm concerned, didn't get into the curriculum guides like I should have. That's one thing. Another thing, everything is just theory. There's not enough practical. Like you go for this one day observation. You're just watching what's going on. Not actually doing and

learning. I mean it's only now after five years of working that I know how to handle situations. It's the experience you need.

PT8: No. In terms of the Language curriculum, no.

PT9: I felt that I received more working knowledge from my four-month internship, working with children, than completing courses at the university.

8.) Relevance of the Curriculum

All respondents followed the curriculum guidelines mandated by the provincial Department of Education. However, the challenge for these teachers was adapting the provincial curriculum to the needs of aboriginal students. The frame of reference for these students was limited to the boundaries of their small community. For example, when talking about a watermelon, students did not understand what the concept was. In this regard, teachers felt that the curriculum was more urban centered. All of the respondents felt that their students were capable of completing the provincial curriculum but stated that the reading and Language Arts programs presented difficulties.

PT1: Certain parts of it (the curriculum) are relevant. The actual readers that you use in primary and elementary school, I think, need changes. Over the years that I've been here I don't think I've hit a class that have been interested in the stories in the readers as such. So that is the one area that I do change because I do theme units instead. I just go and find things that they're interested in. With regards to the Math, that's fine. The Social Studies I find, in the lower grades, they find that quite difficult. In grade six they find the concept of Canada hard. Grade four is the world. I find that when you put up a world map and you say this is New Zealand, they find that really hard to relate to. This is they're world where they're so isolated. And that goes back to the vocabulary. You know like if you were living in Ottawa you would be exposed to so many things. Like whether it be railroads, or whatever, to be able to realize that Canada is that large. But I mean here you are on the coast just this small, and they're so proud when they say, "Miss, I've been to Goose Bay. I was born there."

PT2: I stick to the curriculum. I do what is expected. Especially when I teach grade three because in grade three you have a lot of criterion reference tests and stuff like that. So I try to do as much as possible. Overall the curriculum is relevant. I don't have a big problem with it. Now I don't like the reading program; the standard reading program that they got for grade three. I do my own reading. I do themes and I get related theme activities and I have novels that I know they can relate to. I have different little reading programs set up. I don't do Networks because that talk about different kinds of reading and weird things.

PT3: Most of the curriculum is relevant, but when it gets to Reading and Math and Science, it may not be. Although now more and more its becoming related to their culture, but I think more can be done in that sense.

PT5: I think the curriculum could be made more relevant. I say it should be more cultural for the kids. Especially, the Language Arts program would be nice if it was more culturally relevant to them since it's a weak area for them.

PT6: The Math curriculum is relevant.

PT7: I don't actually follow a curriculum, but when I'm doing things like when I have to have a plan for the students, what I try to do is develop stories and different reading materials that would be based on their own relevant life experience. That way they can better use what they know to get them to know what we want them to know. Whatever the child needs is what I follow. I look at the child's strengths and weaknesses and I can build on the strengths to help their needs.

PT8: Mostly, the curriculum is relevant when we apply the right themes. Like, the Fall where we can look at things in the environment. We can deviate a little bit and get into cultural things especially since we teach different themes.

PT9: Not all of the student's needs are met by the provincial curriculum. The provincial curriculum is very general, trying to meet all student's needs. Those students who live in isolated communities lack in experiences and their needs automatically become greater. Teachers must find ways of filling the gap between the provincial curriculum and the student's needs.

The Music teacher found herself in a unique position since a formal music program had never been taught in the school before.

PT4: I cannot say I follow the curriculum as outlined in the guide. For the younger grades I do. Now its different here. For example the grade six curriculum is based on six years of previous musical experience. Each grade builds on the one before it. So, I cannot follow the curriculum as outlined in the guide. I have to

take it from what they know and build from there. Now, the Kindergartens one's, two's and three's, are pretty well starting from the beginning so I anticipate it will take me 12 years to have my own music program fully developed. When my Kindergartens are in high school, then it will be created.

In this case the teacher found herself teaching music to a group of students whose only musical experience came from a stereo or television.

9.) Incorporation of Aboriginal Culture

Each of the respondents interviewed placed great emphasis upon incorporating aboriginal culture into the curriculum. For Primary and Elementary teachers, teaching around a theme offered many opportunities to incorporate aboriginal culture into their lessons. With the exception of the high school Math teacher who acknowledged that there is little room for cultural content in the Math curriculum, all teachers included aboriginal content as part of their daily classroom activities.

PT1: Well I guess with the Labrador Studies and using the museum here and trying to bring in their religion and lifestyle into whatever I can. Especially, if there are special days. I try to promote those days like if its young girls day or young boys day or married people's day. We try to talk about those kinds of things.

PT2: I always try to make comparisons. Like if we're doing Social Studies I'll compare whatever community they're learning about to _____. If we're doing Math and we're talking about something they are not familiar with like squash, I'll just substitute and say, red berries or candies or whatever. Just make it more relevant. More that they can understand and something they can sink their teeth into.

PT3: Yes I like to do things and relate as much as possible to the culture. They need to get as much of their culture as possible. Even when I first started teaching they didn't have pride in their culture, not as much as they do now. Even now I try to relate as much as possible to their culture.

PT4: Folk songs for sure. A little bit of dance and Inuit games to music; the Monkey Dance and that sort of thing. I guess that's it. Things come out in songs if they have an opportunity to volunteer about things they do on the weekend or in the summer.

PT5: It's easy to bring the town onto the Social Studies curriculum. But I find quite often I try to use the town and the coast of Labrador as an example just to make them more interested.

PT8: Usually the kids will talk about the experiences they have had through discussions. The kids will talk about going off and getting gulls' eggs. The children who are delayed, they will really come to life when we talk about things like that. But if we sit down and talk about or do Math, the concepts are hard for them. They show no interest.

PT9: I have to change lessons somewhat so that students can use their own experiences to understand the provincial curriculum. It is very difficult for students to understand a topic if their experiences are limited. A complete theme may be changed but the underlying objectives usually remain very similar to those in other rural and urban communities.

In addition to curriculum and cultural components, two teachers acknowledged that the home life of the students factors heavily into the learning environment of the classroom. Consequently, there are certain topics that teachers must treat delicately due to the close-knit nature of the community.

PT1: I think that there are two touchy subjects. One would be dealing with alcohol and topics about alcohol. The second thing would be child abuse because there's just so much of it.

PT2: If the students come in and I know the night before that things haven't been going well in their household...I'll make a point of like asking if they're hungry or if they're upset. If they're upset, give them a little bit of leeway. Give them a little bit of extra help and attention just to get them through the day.

10.) Racial/Cultural Issues

All of the respondents in this study were uniquely aware of their place and their status in the community. For the respondents, being an outsider and being part of the

minority was a whole new experience. Over the course of several years these teachers acknowledged that periodically, they were the recipients of verbal abuse from community members. Many of the comments were of a racial nature and not direct personal attacks. Comments such as “Kablunak (whiteman), go home”, or negative remarks about the school system were the most frequent. Respondents were also quick to note that when these verbal incidences occurred they were usually made by people who were not sober. In addition, the community rumor mill was cited as the means by which teachers were made aware of negative comments. As for their reaction to this, teachers paid little attention to the comments stating that this was not the majority opinion of the community. Teachers accepted these occurrences as a fact of life in an aboriginal community. They felt that tension would be more exacerbated due to the fact that teachers represented an institution that proved to be a negative and traumatic experience for some community members.

PT1: I think it's like any other small community. I think there are certain groups that will accept you and then others for various reasons. Teachers in this community are looked upon as being the rich elite and so there are groups of people here that show jealousy. Any negative comments that I have heard, I have heard in two ways. One, through the rumor mill, just hearing people speak. Other than that it was through alcohol speaking.

PT2: The first few years we were here we use to get a lot like, “Kablunak, outsider!,” from drunks. Never from anybody sober. In the last few years, not a thing. Now if it happens I just ignore it. I think since I had my dog team I'm a lot more accepted in the community.

PT3: I couldn't say that has happened to me but I'm sure it has happened. I can't say anyone has ever said to me go home or leave but I have heard other people say and other teachers too. It happens.

PT4: I have had the odd negative encounter. When it happens I get support from other local people who say don't mind so and so, and then you realize that this is not the voice of the majority. You have people like that wherever you go. As long

as I know in my heart that I am not mean to other people and do nothing to put them down, then I just have to take the blows. That's not always easy to do.

PT5: Negative encounters are usually based on someone drinking. If it happens I don't back down from it and I don't have any trouble after.

PT6: I think the thing is after being here for five years we know a lot of people and we socialize in the community a bit. You have to treat situations sometimes with kid gloves. It's hard to know where a person's coming from. Sometimes you don't make anything of it and other times you face it head on. Sometimes there are situations where it's just too silly to bother. Other times you say to the person this is the way it is and usually we don't have a problem.

PT7: There was one very bad incident that involved my spouse. Our personal property and we were threatened. I did consider leaving. I eventually went on and forgot about it.

PT8: If you're standing in line at the government store drunk people turn around and sly at you and call you different things. A lot of people who say mean things are drunk but it does depend on the person. You could be walking down the road and someone may say _____! Or give you the evil eye.

PT9: I have not encountered a lot of personal negative, racial reaction to my presence here. But I have noticed some negative response to white teachers in general. This sometimes frustrates me.

One respondent noted that teachers were a target of verbal abuse because of their socioeconomic status within the community. In a community where there is chronic unemployment and high social assistance rates, well paid teachers are the rich elite.

11.) Future Plans

Seven of the respondents interviewed stated that at some point in the future they will leave the community, even those who married local people. The respondents could not say how much longer they would remain in the community but a future move was inevitable. The reasons for the move were as varied as the teachers themselves; a personal

and professional change, fear of professional stagnation, exposing their children to opportunities outside of the community, plans to start a family, and closeness to immediate family. The respondents stated that the community would be a place that they would come back to for a visit, possibly spending the winter months, but not a place to retire.

PT1: I will definitely not retire here. I can see myself partially retiring here as in spending some of the winter months here. But definitely not the Spring , Summer or Fall. I can see me living here from January to April. But then again, who knows what the future will bring.

PT2: I won't retire here because I think that after so long in one place you can get into a rut. I think I just need a change. Everybody needs a change to keep their self going, to keep fresh, especially in the teaching profession. I think if you're in the same job, the same grade, in the same school for thirty years, you're definitely going to have big time burnout. I can see myself moving.

PT3: I can see myself moving out of here for my son's sake. Just to expose him to more things. _____ doesn't have a lot right now. I can see myself coming back in the Spring of the year to do some fishing and maybe when my son is grown I can see my wife and I moving back here to retire.

PT5: I can see this as a place we would always come back to.

PT6: We could be here another five years or two years or ten years and we would always have good friends here. We would not retire here or build a house here.

PT8: No!! I will not retire here!!

PT9: This community has become more than a place of work but I do not plan to spend my retirement years here.

Of the two remaining respondents, one stated that the community is her home.

However, she too, expressed the need to leave the community for holidays. This teacher had purchased a home and settled in the community.

PT4: I can see myself living here for a really long time. I will always need to leave regularly. I will always need to go for Christmas. I will always go for Summer. I will always need to get a little taste of my own environment, just as

somebody here would always need to come back here. I need to go and get a little city life as well.

The remaining teacher was unsure about her plans due to the enjoyment she received from her job.

PT7: I don't know when to go. I enjoy my job. I mean I wouldn't get a job anywhere else like I've got here. It's quite the perfect situation. It's a lot of work in terms of papers and everything but I thoroughly enjoy everything. I don't feel that _____ has the services here for us.

Reflections On Life in an Aboriginal Community

The qualities which a non-aboriginal teacher must possess to work in an aboriginal school are varied. Haughey and Murphy (1983) point out that adaptability, flexibility, diplomacy, tact, creativity and a sense of humour are essential qualities for rural teaching. An appreciation of rural life, adjusting to community norms and involvement in community affairs, also add to the teaching experience in aboriginal communities. Johnson and Amundsen (1983) add energetic, resourcefulness and dedication to the list of desirable teacher characteristics. Garman and Alkire (1993) argue that enthusiasm, personal integrity, warmth towards students, emotional adjustment, interest in teaching and knowledge of subject matter are just as important as instructional strategies and lesson plans when teaching native children. Rhodes (1994) has found in his study of Native American students, that patience, understanding, cultural sensitivity, openness and a non-judgemental attitude, can go a long way in encouraging and motivating these students. The humanitarian, rather than the cognitive philosophy, also stands out in the work of Bello and Bello (1980) in their study of teachers in rural schools

in British Columbia. At the end of the interview process respondents were asked to reflect on their life and work in the school and community under study. Their responses were a mix of the philosophical and the practical. The one common theme was a sense of personal and professional satisfaction.

PT1: Any place is what you have to make it, but you make it. If you come here with a negative attitude you're going to find it difficult to settle here and work here and even to survive here. I think you need to be well prepared. I think you need to talk to a lot of people. Not just a principal. Not just a superintendent of education. You need to talk to a variety of people. When I came here there used to be a local school committee and you were able to phone and talk to someone from the community rather than an outside teacher or the principal.

PT2: Overall I really, really enjoy my job and I think it is my job that keeps me going. I enjoy the outdoor life and that's a big factor in surviving up here. If you don't enjoy the outdoor life and if you can't occupy yourself, you're not going to make it here. Perhaps you can spend hours painting or reading, but if you can occupy yourself, you're fine.

PT3: It can be very rewarding. That's how I look at it. You have to come here with an open mind. There are things everywhere that you don't want to see and in small communities you see it more often because it's so close to you. Outside, it's different. It can be very rewarding here. You can be yourself here. If you come into a community like this and you make up your mind to get into the outdoors, you will like that I think. I know people who have been here for years and are not the outdoor type but they like it here. It's rewarding for them.

PT4: It can be wonderful. Just the simplicity of things if you choose to keep them simple. You can clutter up your life anywhere. But I have my work. I have the people who are important to me here around me. It's up to me what I want to involve myself in and that's really wonderful.

PT6: We find this life enjoyable. There are certain times when you miss things like food and going out.

PT8: If you respect the culture and the people's beliefs and try to get involved in it, then the people respond to you better. If you respect them, they will respect you.

PT9: I have lived in _____ 10 years. I married a local person and we have three children. We have our own home here. The community has become more than a place of work for me. There are good days as well as bad days.

The responses of three teachers stood out as being the most poignant and offered further insight into the longevity of these teachers in the school and community.

PT5: Teachers actually do make a big sacrifice by being here.

PT8: That reminds me, when we were at the graduation and _____ spoke. One comment he made meant so much to me and I still think of it. He said to the graduates, “Your teachers have sacrificed a lot to come here and I just want to acknowledge them.” That meant a lot to me. Beautiful words that said it all.

PT7: I think in the end people have to realize that we’re not in this for ourselves. We’re not getting any amount of money to be here that’s subsidizing anything. They have to realize that in order for us to stay here we must have some kind of dedication to the school. It’s not just about the money and people shouldn’t think it’s about the money. I mean we have a lot of things going on.

Data Themes: Former Non-aboriginal Teachers

The second part of this study examined the experiences of former non-aboriginal teachers. As was stated previously, the method of data collection for these teachers was through the use of an open-ended questionnaire. The seven themes that emerged from this part of the study were as follows:

1.) The Role of the School Board

The interview process for the fifteen teacher respondents in this part of the study was a combination of in person and telephone interviews. Nine respondents were interviewed by a school board official in person. Four respondents had interviews had interviews conducted over the phone. Two respondents had no

interview at all. They assumed teaching positions as a condition of employment with their spouse.

While the respondents felt that the interview process was straight forward, the information provided by the school board during the interview stage was lacking and less than truthful. Seven of the respondents felt that they received sparse and outdated information about the school and community.

FT1: Myself, along with other prospective teachers, were shown an outdated slide show that documented in brief, all schools and communities on the north coast. I was subjected to various opinions regarding the coast, from friends who had worked there, all of whom had a unique slant on the school and community, ranging from somewhat positive to extremely negative. The school board was honest in answering any questions that I had about the conditions in _____. Nevertheless, I believe that I was not fully informed. Maybe this was an intentional choice that the board made to keep from discouraging teachers or, perhaps, something totally unplanned. I believe a more accurate and contemporary picture should be painted by the school board. Facts and statistics should be current and readily available. As well, teacher comments should be incorporated into any new teacher orientation package. Word has spread that the current orientation is useless, therefore, many teachers simply choose to avoid it.

FT2: I was told that _____ was an Inuit community of about _____ people. That the school population was about _____ and that we would be moving into a new school in the new year. I felt that I was informed adequately about the conditions in _____. I was told about what my class would be like academically. I was also told that I had to find my own boarding accommodations, therefore I had to do most of the information gathering myself. I realize that there is only so much you can be told about a place before you get there but better information about accommodations would have been appreciated.

FT3: I was told it was an isolated community on the north coast with a population of _____ people. I was informed that I would have running water (that was a bonus), and my living arrangements. Also about the stores available, banking (or lack of), my position and things that I should bring. I was informed of my roommate and was able to meet with her and plan what we would buy/bring. I was not entirely informed. My position was not entirely clear until the second week of school, that's when I was given my teaching duties. You never know enough until you actually see it

for yourself. I think I was prepared when I took my position- I would have liked to know more about my caseload and other teaching duties, but I think that's probably an ideal situation. It's more unique when the community you are about to move to is so isolated from you.

FT4: I was told that it was a k-12 school in an isolated, northern Labrador community. I was made aware of the size of the school, the number of teachers as well as the size and ethnic make up of the community. Little information was passed on regarding the socioeconomic conditions which existed in the community at the time, nor was I made aware of the demands placed on a person living in a northern community, such as yearly purchases of food, oil, snowmobiles, etc. Also, little was explained about the cultural characteristics of the community.

FT5: I was not told a whole lot but I was unaware that there would be no running water. I knew more than most people would from having grown up in Labrador. For someone from outside it would have been more of an adjustment. I was not fully informed about my housing situation. I found that the school board had rather uncaring attitude and did not care a lot about our quality of life.

FT6: I was told where the community was and that it was isolated, but nothing else. I should have been given a job outline. I should have been given information about the community, maybe in the form of a video, told about the environment of the school, and the facts as to why other teachers leave.

FT7: At the orientation we were shown slides of all the communities along the north coast. We had a general overview of the community- its stores, recreational activities, churches, post office, etc. When I was offered the job at the end of the interview, I asked questions such as school enrollment, living accommodations, representation of churches in the community. I received a booklet including a description of the community and school. I was really not fully informed. They (the school board) made a total mess of my living arrangements, telling me one thing and that not falling through when I arrived. That made me feel frustrated and upset. The working conditions may have been clearer. They did tell me about the large class size, the challenge of working with some of the students, etc. But the picture was definitely painted prettier than what the true experience was like. I feel I should have been given a more definite answer to where I would be living, what necessities I should bring. For example, things were very expensive in _____. If I had known I could have brought a supply of things. They should have explained to me that it is common to have groceries sent in and given me a list of grocery stores to choose from.

The remaining teachers were of the opinion that they did receive adequate information about the school and community. They did acknowledge that the school board officials who conducted the interviews could offer little information as many of them had never been in the community in question.

FT14: I was hired by a gentleman who was recently reassigned to the new Labrador School Board when the eastern and western boards amalgamated. He didn't know a thing about housing on the coast and he admitted it. He said "I don't know anything about housing on the coast but I'm sure they'll fill you in on it."

FT8: I was told the size of the school, the location of the community, the facilities there, it was isolated and it was an Inuit community. I think the school board made a good attempt to inform us about _____. It is impossible to find out everything without having lived there. There were some surprises, but in some ways we were pleasantly surprised. For example, we were under the assumption that there was no store at all, there was a takeout, the plane came regularly, and there were many people to make friends with. We should have been told the names and phone numbers of other teachers, the living conditions, the expenses, necessities such as a snow machine, clothing, etc., the pat scale, vacations, how to arrange food shipping, and facilities in the community.

FT9: I was told it was an isolated, Inuit community. I was told about the facilities and the housing and that it was on the north coast.

FT10: I knew a little bit about the community before I came here and probably less about the school. I am sure I could have found out much more if I had wanted, but I guess I just wanted to learn it as I experienced it. I did know that much of the people in the community were Inuit, ski-doo was almost an essential, and travel to other communities was mostly done in a plane. I think I could have known more; maybe a pamphlet informing new residents about the community / housing would have been helpful.

FT15: She told me a whole lot actually. She told me it was a native community. The basic, primary language was English but they had Inuit courses and programming in the school. That was their second language. Size of the community, there was teacher housing provided but she didn't know exactly where it was. She didn't know if I would be living alone or sharing with other people.

FT11: I was told about the community with a population of _____. It was 90% native, located on the tree line and told about the weather conditions. I was told it was a K-12 school with approximately 180 students. I was told about the extracurricular activities in the school and community, and the number of behavioral issues of students that I was to teach. It was mostly factual, objective information. The information was given to me in a very objective form. Due to my ignorance of life in an isolated community, I didn't know what questions to ask that would have been of concern to me. Overall, I feel I was informed as well as I needed to be.

FT12: I was told that I would have running water!! I was told about the size of the community and the local culture was Inuit. I was told that the school board expects teachers to gather experience and move on. They question it when people remain longer than four years. There was a new school being built that had all the modern technology you could imagine. Actually she (school board official) was so blunt that I thought she must be joking.

Generally, all of the respondents were provided with demographic and statistical information about the school and community. However, cultural, social, and socioeconomic information could only be obtained/experienced by living in the community. Many respondents did offer solutions and recommendations to overcome the problem of insufficient information. These solutions will be discussed in the final chapter of this study.

2.) Impressions of Work and the Community

All of the respondents had vivid memories of the first time they arrived in the community. Immediately, they were struck by the rugged, barren nature of the landscape.

FT13: It's not pretty here. This year when we got off the plane, I searched the whole year for something pretty and if I could have found that I think I could have been content regardless of everything else. But I couldn't find it.

FT15: First there was the outside with not a bit of grass, just boulders, the bridge was falling apart. When I came into the house it was just ridiculous, filthy. Dog hair from one end to the other, no running water, just a hose from this house to the other house. Furnace broke the first night, almost froze, full of flies. I thought, "My God, where am I?"

FT10: As if it were yesterday...I remember everyone being very friendly and having lots of news for me. I liked the appearance of the community for boats were in the water, kids were playing games on the gravel roads. Being from a small community myself, I guess I felt at home though I was far from it. I got a laugh out of driving from the airport with a pile of teachers in the pan of the RCMP truck, one of the few vehicles in the community.

FT9: Barren looking, all roads were gravel and full of potholes. There was exposed sewer, people were friendly. The school was not in good shape.

FT8: My first impression was a barren land which looked very isolated. People seemed shy yet they all seemed to know who I was. Children were friendly and excited. I was open-minded to a new adventure.

FT11: We had a five day in-service in _____. That community was beautiful with vegetation and hospitality. Having arrived here, it appeared more sparse and isolated. Since my accommodations was empty, I felt more alone versus staying with the billetors in Makkovik.

FT12: It was not as primitive as I had imagined. However, I did find some things like mode of transportation (7 people on an ATV) a little amusing. The place was cleaner than I had anticipated. The people were friendly and helpful.

FT7: I remember arriving here on a cold, foggy, rainy day in early September. Myself, along with another whom I met on my travel, an RCMP officer and some local people climbed aboard the back of a pick up truck and drove into the community. It was cold and uncomfortable, the community was settled in mist and fog. My first impression was a sense of loneliness and a community of barren land that didn't look so attractive amidst the poor weather conditions.

FT6: It reminded me of a third world country.

FT4: My first impression was one of absolute isolation during the frigid winter. It was barren, cold, colorless, and overflowing with an abundance of socioeconomic and cultural problems.

The first impressions of the community appeared to predominate the responses in this particular section of the questionnaire. Respondents made only a brief mention

of their impressions of the children. Their one common theme was the state of the environment in which they found themselves.

FT3: Obviously very small with no trees. That was my first impression. Honestly though, I thought that it was a very poor community and my first night probably gave a person the worst impression. My roommate and I had to stay at the hotel on a Friday night and it was a very difficult night. There were several fights that night and references to white Nflders. I really don't mean to be negative but honestly and unfortunately, I was at the wrong place for my first impression. However, I did feel welcomed by the people. Everyone said hello and wanted to know who you were and what teacher you were.

FT1: Day one went something like this: Thank God I survived the flight on a "chancy" Twin Otter on board of which the door was closed with a rope and I could see through the floor: sweep the hundreds of black flies from the floor of the teacher unit which had died over the summer; figure out why most of the children who came to our door to meet us wouldn't answer my questions but only give a wide eyed stare. (I quickly discovered that raised eyebrows meant yes); get over the fact that there are hardly any trees or grass in the town. Needless to say, my first impressions were memorable. I knew that I was about to learn a lot about something exactly what, I wasn't sure. I was grateful for my strong sense of adventure. The students made my experience in this community so great. Overall, the students are friendly and enthusiastic, especially with regard to sports and extracurricular activities.

FT5: I went there fairly open minded. I knew some of the problems that I would likely encounter. I thought the people were friendly. I was not impressed with where I had to live for ten months; cold, dirty furniture, a door that blew open even when locked, mice, and no running water as soon as the first frost came. It was a definite learning experience. I enjoyed my class and the people I met.

FT2: Professionally, it was a great experience. I have learned a great deal as someone who is at the beginning of a career. I have also made good friends among the staff and the community which has made what could have been a lonely experience into an enjoyable one.

FT6: I found the students to be good from a school perspective. Yet, I had one run in with another teacher's student. This person had psychological problems and shouldn't be held accountable but the principal should never have let this student in school, especially with his problems. My school load was too much for a first year teacher to carry and the principal and other teachers added to this dilemma.

FT7: My stay in _____ was short- two months. I taught a fairly big class of grade ones. I enjoyed teaching them a lot, learning as I went along about their native way of life.

FT12: Work here was, at times, frustrating. The poor attitude most kids had towards learning wore you thin at times, especially being the Career Education teacher.

FT11: My background experience did not expose me to isolated living conditions, extreme weather conditions, native communities, nor teaching in the area of Special Ed. Thus it was all new and exciting. I felt it was an exhilarating time of learning. Professionally, there were lots of opportunities to grow and experiment.

FT8: The children were friendly and excited

FT9: It was a wonderful experience, full of challenges. Kids were friendly.

FT10: Excellent! I loved the students, staff and I made great friends, some of which I will have for life. I felt very welcomed and could not have asked for a better place to begin my teaching career.

FT14: If I didn't like the kids I wouldn't have lasted here.

The responses of these teachers speak to the old adage, "A first impression is a lasting impression." This is certainly the case if you have never taught in a northern aboriginal community. If you have no understanding of aboriginal culture and have no frame of reference to judge aboriginal culture, your first impression may be a negative one.

3.) Previous Knowledge of Aboriginal Culture

Eight of the respondents did have previous knowledge of aboriginal cultures before assuming their teaching positions. Their knowledge of aboriginal culture came from various sources. Three of the respondents acknowledged that their

information came from media reports of social problems in aboriginal communities. Three other respondents had previous work experience in Nunavut and the North West Territories. Two respondents were born and raised in Labrador and the remaining respondent had distant relatives in Labrador.

FT2: Mostly I had seen the visual stories that are shown on the evening news. They usually dealt with substance abuse, poverty, poor health conditions and other negative stories. What I found out is, there are positive and encouraging things going on, at least in the community where I stayed. Also, that these positive stories seldom receive coverage, even locally.

FT3: During my third year of university, I had taken a sociology course on native culture, but that reality did not prepare me- in actual fact, I knew quite little. Unfortunately, the news gives peoples a negative impression and you are led to believe that all native communities are the same. However, I've learned that you must live and experience something in order to be properly informed.

FT12: I knew nothing only what the CBC news portrayed of Davis Inlet. I assumed most communities were along the same lines with substance abuse, assault, prejudice, dirty, etc. Actually, they all are but on different levels of the scale. I feel _____ is one of the better ones.

FT6: I knew very little. I met a few Indians in the Yukon where the same problems exist.

FT13: Living in an Inuit culture last year we kind of got to know things there, but when we came here I figured...It's not like the culture we found last year at all. Last year it was very strong. It was in the classroom, the community, everywhere you looked it was the Inuktitut language, it was wonderful. That's all you heard in the classroom when the kids spoke to each other. This year, I know as many phrases in Inuktitut, as what some of the kids did.

FT14: Growing up in _____ I never visited the coast. Unfortunately, all I saw were the negative stories on the news. All I knew was Davis Inlet which is sad because there's a lot more to these places than that. But, no, I didn't know anything. I do remember this place getting a new school.

FT5: I was somewhat familiar with native communities since I grew up in Labrador.

FT7: I knew a little since I had distant relatives living on the coast. I knew a bit about the weather and how to dress for the harsh climate. I knew about the high cost of living. I was also aware of the standard of living in some of the native communities.

The seven remaining respondents did acknowledge that they knew nothing about the culture of the community they would be coming to. One of the seven teachers made the following comment:

FT1: I knew very little about native communities before accepting this position. As a matter of fact, despite teaching here since _____, I still believe that there is much I still do not know. While relations between native and non-natives are positive, we still live very separately, and, although I am somewhat ashamed to say this, there is a great deal that I do not want to know.

For this respondent, a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. It may improve your teaching or give you such a jaded view of aboriginal culture that it would dissuade you from knowing more and how to effectively teach in an aboriginal school.

4.) Community Life

Nine of the fifteen respondents cited their students and the people of the community as the most enjoyable aspect of their life and work in the community.

Many of the respondents went into great detail describing this positive aspect of their personal and professional lives.

FT8: In looking back on my experience I would say the students were polite and respectful to teachers at that time. This made teaching enjoyable.

FT10: The most enjoyable aspect would be the people I've met including all of my students, fellow teachers, and all the people in the community. I also enjoyed the "outdoorsy" life; the boat trips, trips to the cabin, ski-doo trips and so on. I guess it would not have meant so much if it were not for the great company.

FT6: I enjoyed getting to know some of the natives. That was a learning experience that one never receives from any other source.

FT7: I enjoyed my living arrangements, once I got settled and the generosity and kindness of my roommate; it made life more enjoyable. I enjoyed attending church and meeting new people. It was always enjoyable to learn more about the community's people and their way of life- either through your students or merely watching through the window.

FT5: I loved my students. Their affection for me was obvious and I still keep in touch with them.

FT1: Contrary to what most people not living in a native community might think, the students made my experience in this community so great. Overall, the students are friendly and enthusiastic, especially with regard to sports and extracurricular activities.

FT13: The most positive things here are the kids and the friends we have.

FT14: I like the job itself and the friends we made. Other than that there's not very much.

FT15: The most enjoyable thing was the people I met.

Five of the respondents stated that the outdoor life, especially the winter activities, as the most enjoyable aspect of their life in the community.

FT4: The most enjoyable would be hunting, fishing and taking trips into pristine wilderness areas.

FT11: The outdoor activities were the most enjoyable.

FT12: On weekends we would go off; sometimes to a friend's cabin, or to another community. Often we went hunting, fishing and enjoyed the beautiful scenery. I had two camping trips; one in winter, the other in Spring. I felt I had a great Labrador experience.

FT9: Outdoor recreation and community recreation events were enjoyable.

FT2: The most enjoyable aspects of life were the outdoor activities. The snowmobiling, the boating and the other outdoor activities like hunting and fishing were the areas where life in a community like _____ shines.

One of the respondents offered a unique perspective on what the community offered her.

FT3: Most people would probably say the Winter or going off. Myself, I would say that this community allowed me to grow as a person, appreciate life and never ever take anything for granted. I will always be grateful of receiving the position because I was fortunate to experience a culture and a people that would be unknown to me without actually having lived in it.

It is evident from this comment that this respondent not only appreciated the professional development that the position offered, but also the character and personal development it provided.

Isolation from family and friends and the uncertainty of air travel, were the predominant responses to the question of the drawbacks of community life.

Respondents expressed concern over the fact that in the event of a medical emergency or illness at home (outside of the community), they would not be able to leave the community due to the uncertain nature of air travel on the coast.

FT12: The drawbacks of life here would be alcohol; even the nicest of people became ugly and rude when drinking. The food at the government store was outdated and over priced. The isolation; when a family member became sick I couldn't afford to fly home and help out the family with her care. Sometimes you just wanted to get away and couldn't go off by yourself.

FT3: Perhaps the isolation was the most significant drawback. I was always a very social person but it is very difficult coming to a new place- a new culture- a totally new way of life. Perhaps I was a little intimidated as well, and I can be quite shy when I don't know people well. I think its also difficult that you can't just get away for a break since it's so expensive. (that expense is another major drawback). It is also a little scary knowing that if something terrible happens at home, it's not that easy to leave. I know because I experienced it at Easter and I was stuck for five days and it could have been much longer. That is definitely a major drawback for me.

Respondents also expressed a wide range of drawbacks to living in an isolated, aboriginal community which made life challenging. In particular, social problems and the ever-present threat of losing water were of great concern to the respondents.

FT10: During my second year we lost running water at our residence for over two months. That is something I did not enjoy and I actually dreaded cold days fearing that something similar might happen again.

FT5: Some of the drawbacks were the housing situation, no running water and the alcohol problems of some parents.

FT4: Drawbacks were the cost of living, the isolation and witnessing the abuses and filth of the community.

FT12: The drawbacks of life here would be alcohol; even the nicest of people became ugly and rude when drinking.

One respondent focused on a much different aspect of the drawbacks of community life;

FT1: The true tragedy of this community is watching many of these young people with all of the potential in the world, follow in the steps of those before them into the never ending tunnel of physical and substance abuse. The widespread social problems and lack of personnel to address these concerns is discouraging.

This respondent feels that the inherent social problems facing the community are not being addressed. As various studies and the media suggest, these problems are not unique to this community. Yet, teachers face a great challenge when they try to educate aboriginal children in an environment where social problems and chronic unemployment are a way of life. Consequently, they may become discouraged and begin to question themselves and even the value of education for aboriginal children.

5.) Living Arrangements

All of the respondents shared accommodations with another teacher or teachers during their time in the community. This proved to be a positive experience for some, while for others, it led to stress and turmoil. The fact that many of these teachers had no idea of who they would be living with until they arrived in the community, also proved to be a major source of stress.

FT15: The people at the school board said that there was teacher housing but that they didn't know if I would be living with anybody. I would have liked to have known my living arrangements. That didn't work out very good at the beginning. We were kind of shoved together and we didn't know each other. It would have been better if I had known before, who I was going to be living with. It would have been easier if I had been put with another single person rather than two people.

FT8: My husband and I lived with another couple. We shared all expenses. Household chores were broken up as evenly as possible. Each couple ordered in their own groceries and often cooked separately. The other couple were there a week ahead of us and they were settled in when we got there, so it never really seemed like it was "our place". I felt like a boarder at times.

FT4: I was living with my fiancé in a two bedroom mobile house provided by Torn gat Housing for teacher residence. Groceries were bought by yearly bulk orders along with our oil. Food and fuel loans were often required to make these purchases. Buying food from the local store was not a good option, since items were very expensive. Rent was very high at \$500.00 per month. This, along with community taxes, made the cost of living very high. Often we cut wood and hunted wild game in order to provide some relief from the amount of cash being spent on the necessities. This was really the only way you could put money aside to purchase the \$1600.00 plane ticket out in the summer.

FT6: I had a school supplies trailer which was shared with another person I hadn't met before. These living arrangements were adequate for the time I was there but the winter months probably brought problems. Household activities were carried on the same at home, but lacked one essential thing, a diversified, relatively cheap, fresh source of food.

FT7: I was told from people at the school board office that I would be sharing a house with a first year female teacher. We got in contact with each other and met over the phone. The day of my arrival I found out that there was no room for me there because another female teacher had moved in. Being very confused and upset about the whole situation, I moved in with the principal for a week and then moved in with a fellow teacher. I enjoyed my stay with her and we got along great, sharing the household duties.

FT10: During my four years here I have had four roommates, usually the special ed. teacher. This is a high turnover job. We shared rent which amounted to \$225.00 a month. We also shared the payments in all household bills including the basic grocery list which we ordered in bulk from the Coop in Lewisporte. Each of us divided household chores too. Things worked out well but you just never know who your roomie might be or what they might be like.

FT11: The teacher trailers were made available for two people. I arrived mid way through the school year and lived alone for almost one month. For the remainder of the year I had a male roommate. September following, I had another male roommate. The third year I rented the whole trailer myself and lived alone until December, when my boyfriend moved in for four months. I consider the rent high, \$500.00 a month, and utilities, etc. Oil had to be manually pumped into the tank. Water had to be hauled temporarily during one winter, but otherwise we had running water and sewer. The majority of my groceries were purchased outside of the community and shipped in due to the high cost.

FT12: I shared a trailer with another teacher. We had our own room and shared storage space. We had our own grocery orders and made our own meals. We took turns cleaning the house and were responsible for our own rooms. All bills were split 50:50. After Christmas my partner moved in and we then split bills 1/3 each.

FT1: My living arrangements have fluctuated from having a roommate to having my fiancé live with me. Bills have always been in my name and the cost of paying such bills is astronomical.

FT2: During my time in the community I boarded with another teacher in the village. My monthly cost included the food. I would usually help in the clean up after meals.

FT3: I was a single woman living in one of the teacher houses available from the school board. Fortunately, we had met prior to starting school in September. It was in August that we ordered our food, planned who would

take what- I must say that really helped. When we arrived, we discussed a chore schedule, cooking, etc. We settled everything early and that established everything for the year.

FT5: I lived with two other teachers at first. We shared expenses – rent, phone, heat and light. We bought our own groceries. A fourth person moved in later. This did not work out and led to a great deal of stress for the rest of us.

Five of the teachers were married and brought their spouses with them. Five other teachers were in relationships where their partner/spouse worked elsewhere. The remaining five were single teachers who were not involved in relationships. When questioned as to the necessity of having a partner/spouse with you, nine of the respondents felt that while it was not necessary, it would enhance the quality of life and help them cope with the stresses of work.

FT1: Having my spouse with me this year increased my quality of life dramatically. I was much happier and the isolation was much less foreboding. While I believed that I handled living in an isolated community for two years without my spouse just fine, it was not an ideal arrangement by any means.

FT3: This is a difficult question since I've always considered myself an independent woman; our careers require us to be apart quite often. I don't think it's necessary but I do think it would have made me happier living here. School is your life from Monday to Friday but it is quite lonely here on the weekends.

FT5: I think a partner definitely helps but it is not a necessity in any community, isolated or otherwise. I was used to isolation, but each community brings new stressors with it. A partner helps you cope with those and with job related stress as well.

FT6: It is not a necessity but it would probably help. The teaching staff had much to be desired and saw it fit to become involved in other people's lives. A good, cooperative teaching staff would have meant more to my decision on the duration of my stay.

FT7: Having a partner/spouse with you makes living in an isolated community much easier. I experienced it both ways. My first two

positions, I did not have a partner. Yes, there was school to keep you busy, and there were friends to be with. But, when I got involved with someone during my third position in an isolated community, it was a different experience. I got to meet a lot more people in the community, spent more time in the outdoors and had a life other than school. It wasn't lonely anymore.

FT8: I don't think it is necessary to have a partner but I certainly think it helps. Things can become lonely through long winters. If not a spouse, it's nice for a group of single people to live together. It certainly doesn't seem necessary to have a spouse but it's nice to have friends. I imagine this depends on the type of person you are.

FT9: I believe getting involved with the community is important.

FT10: No. I lived here for four years. I dated for a while but I enjoy being on my own. I think you have to have an outgoing personality though, because otherwise things can get lonely.

FT11: I felt friends and neighbors were more than willing to help when needed. Although, being female there were some tasks that needed a lot of physical strength. Thus it was more "convenient" to be living with a male.

Three other respondents did feel that a partner/spouse was necessary to handle living in an isolated community.

FT2: Yes, I think having a spouse is necessary especially in a community like _____ where you are a \$300.00 flight to Goose Bay. A spouse can help alleviate the feeling of being cut off from one's family and friends. The lack of my spouse being in the community is the major reason why I didn't pursue my position for another year.

FT4: Absolutely! You need someone to discuss your feelings and frustrations with. Having someone who is experiencing the same really helps. In these northern, isolated, native communities, you get to see poverty and the consequences of social, mental, physical, emotional, economical as well as cultural abuses first hand. Reality of the life in these communities is not pretty, it is such that you develop an apathy for what happens around you in order to survive. That hardening of the soul comes with a price and in order to not lose your sense of right and wrong you need to vent your thoughts, feelings and frustrations.

FT12: I feel that your partner/spouse should be with you no matter where you are in the world. You get married to be together forever, not to live

separately. However, living in an isolated community, I feel that having your partner with you adds extra comfort in an already stressful situation. For example you aren't lonely, so you can concentrate on your work.

It is clear that living arrangements had a major impact on the lives of these teachers. In addition to adjusting to a new community and profession, these teachers had the added burden of adjusting to living with strangers. Over the course of ten months in a small, isolated community with limited opportunities for travel outside, tension and conflict become inevitable. In some cases this was carried into the work place.

6.) Teacher Training/Preparation

Only one of the respondents was satisfied with the teacher training they received while in University. The rest of the respondents stated that the training they received was of little or no value to them. They also made suggestions as to how teacher training programs could improve in the future.

FT1: It would be a good idea if some or at least one university course in Native and Northern Education should be required or offered as an elective to all Education undergrads. This would add to the quality of teachers who go north as well as serve prospective teachers in making an informed decision about teaching in native towns.

FT2: No, the teacher training I received in the Education faculty was not very specific to actual classroom experiences. The internship part of the teacher training was the most valuable part of my education. The Faculty of Education should be concerned with the day to day activities of teaching, especially in the B.Ed program. The theories of education can be better covered in a Masters program.

FT3: I have to answer no, but I was not completely trained as a Special Education teacher. However, I do not feel that University trains a person to

be a teacher- teaching is your training. University provides the backbone- your students and experiences (as well as the ample advice of colleagues) is what develops the teacher inside you.

FT4: No! I fell that my teacher training both at Memorial and during my internship in no way prepared me for my experience. There is no way the philosophy of education can prepare you for your school secretary stabbing a graduate on his graduation night.

FT5: I was not prepared for teaching anywhere! Useless courses like the sociology of education and philosophy of education are an absolute waste of money! We need to learn things that are of practical use to us. If it were not for my practicum, I would have been completely overwhelmed. Also, just because your transcript says you have taken courses in teaching children how to read or to do math does not mean a thing. Some professors were teaching the same yellow notes that they had taught for the past 10-15 years. Some professors were also more suited to research and teaching us was not important to them; their lack of interest showed.

FT7: The whole idea of living in a native, isolated community was totally new. My teacher training experience could never prepare one for that. You just learn through experience.

FT8: The only part of my teacher training that prepared me for teaching in _____ was my internship which I did for three months.

FT9: No, I was trained for a job in a community that was the norm for the island, not an aboriginal community.

FT10: I think my teacher training prepared me for teaching in general, but truly you never really know what is facing you until “you get your feet wet”. Much of what I have learned I have learned with experience and the passage of time.

FT11: The theory presented in the B.Ed. and the Special Ed. Programs did not give me much practical applications. However, I knew where to get the information and support I needed to do my job well. It was a foundation upon which to build. Of course, every school and group of children are unique, so I needed to start somewhere. The more experience I have gained, the better equipped I feel to teach children.

FT12: No! I don't think university can prepare you for any teaching position. However, teaching in a place like this is a little different still. For example there are an outstanding number of children with home, social

and academic problems. I think teachers who come here need a little extra training in behavior management and dealing with FAS and ADD kids.

7.) Reasons For Leaving

The reasons why these respondents left their teaching positions in the school under study fell into two categories; personal reasons and professional reasons.

a. Professional Reasons

FT3: My first reason for leaving is that I decided to return to university to finish my second degree. I only have one term left and I felt I should complete it while I am still young. Secondly, I started my career and I know my options. I think it's important as well to be happy and content in all aspects of your life. If you are not then you can't do justice to your personal well being.

FT6: The main reasons for leaving were the principal and the teaching staff, my roommate and the strains presented by the job I had which should have been two jobs.

FT7: My teaching position came to an end when the teacher I replaced came back from her maternity leave.

FT8: My husband was offered a transfer to another community. We were interested in moving to a bigger community. I moved with him and was soon offered a position too.

FT10: I am not leaving _____ for any negative reasons. I just want to experience teaching in another area. The analogy I used with the Board was that if I were a ship, I am not stopping the journey, I am only changing direction. I really liked the treatment I received from the school board, the staff and the community. I guess to go means to grow in many ways.

FT15: I am leaving to take a teaching position on the island.

One respondent in particular, had an extremely bad year and made it abundantly clear as to her reasons for leaving.

FT13: Well, I mean despite the fact that we met a lot of nice people and made some good friends, the only way I would come back here is if they paid me 60 million a year. Because the school board, as far as I'm concerned, has no people skills. Their administration here has no people skills, they haven't got the slightest idea of how to treat people. I called the union at least 8-10 times this year with complaints and that's 8-10 times too many. You call people in the board office and they say, "Well, you have to expect that living on the coast." That's crap! As long as they have that mentality they will not do anything and they just figure those people up there, we'll just leave them and they'll work it out and things will not get better and they will not improve.

Her spouse expressed a similar comment.

FT14: For some reason or other I was really bothered by the lack of guidance in the school and I don't mean a guidance counselor. That's an issue in itself. There's no leadership in the school and everybody's doing their own thing.

These respondents expressed great concern and dissatisfaction with the role played by the school board. They felt they had received little or no support from the board office and as for the problems they faced, they just had to "deal with it". They also felt that these problems were exacerbated by the fact that they received little support or encouragement from the school, administration.

b. Personal Reasons

Respondents expressed various personal reasons for their departure from the school and community.

FT1: My major reasons for leaving are as follows; isolation, lack of adequate housing, high cost of living, social concerns and the lack of opportunity for spouse to find employment.

FT2: The major reason for leaving was the fact that my spouse was in Goose Bay. This is a long term relationship and we both felt that one year apart was enough even if it caused some economic hardship in the future.

FT4: The major reasons for leaving are the high cost of living, the abuses witnessed in the community, lack of educational/professional support from the school administration.

FT5: The major reasons for leaving were; the housing, even though better housing was promised for next year. Also the relationship I was in was important to me and I did not want to be apart.

FT11: The major reason I left my teaching position was personal long term plans could not have been comfortably pursued in an isolated community.

FT12: My reasons for leaving are; I want to be with my family on the island, I haven't saved a cent by working here. All my money is sucked up with food and travel.

Chapter Five Summary and Implications

This chapter is organized around the major data themes found in chapter four. Responses of both present and former teachers will be discussed together as similar themes emerged from both parts of the study. Each theme will be discussed to identify whether it supports or contradicts the literature, whether it is a new finding not previously found in the literature and whether there are implications for professional practice or future research.

1.) Reasons For Accepting the Position

Haughey and Murphy (1983) stated that the need for experience was one of the most important reasons why new teachers started their careers in small rural schools. These young teachers are anxious to establish themselves professionally and put their university training to work. McCracken & Miller (1988) found new teachers feel that teaching in a small, rural school will give them the opportunity to develop good student-teacher rapport, have a sense of control over what and how they teach and create an environment that would be conducive to the best teaching and learning. The present study found this to be the case with three of the respondents. Next to experience, the need to repay student loans was the second major reason for accepting their teaching positions.

Four of the teachers in this study stated that they had always had an interest in teaching in Labrador. The small town, close knit nature of the community appealed to them. It is interesting to note that three of these respondents came from small

communities while the fourth came from a large city. McCracken & Miller (1988) identified similar factors in their study of rural teachers. They found that the friendly population slow pace of life, respect for teachers, community help and freedom in teaching, figured prominently in teacher's reasons to work in small, rural schools. Cross, Leahy & Murphy (1989) state, "Individuals who teach in rural schools must want to teach in a rural setting" (p.89). Hatton, Watson, Squires & Soliman (1991) found in their study of teacher mobility in New South Wales schools, that teachers are more likely to stay in "hard to fill" teaching jobs if they grew up around that area or a similar one.

The final two teachers in this part of the study were married. The offer of two jobs in the same community provided the impetus for their move to the community. Martinez (1994) found this to be the case in her study of four beginning teachers in an aboriginal school in Australia. She reported that one of the four teachers in her study was able to negotiate a position for his spouse in the same school. This went a long way to alleviate his reluctance to teach in an aboriginal school. The personal stability of having a partner/spouse with you contributed significantly to the longevity of the respondents in this study as well as the Martinez study.

2.) First Impressions of the Community and Work

"Teaching in a northern community is a challenge unlike that of most rural areas, and the newcomer to the field will soon find a variety of extenuating circumstances" Friesen (1984, p.2).

In the literature the term “culture shock” is used to refer to the debilitating experience that newly hired teachers go through when they enter a northern, aboriginal community. Another explanation for what these teachers encounter is the removal of the familiar elements of home and the substitution of unfamiliar elements (Hall, 1959, in Grubis, 1985). Cross, Leahy & Murphy (1989) support this viewpoint; “The emotional state of cultural shock frequently arises when an individual becomes a resident of a community with which they are unfamiliar. The greater the differences between the new community and the individual’s former place of residence, the greater will be the culture shock” (p.92).

In her study of four new teachers in an aboriginal school in Australia, Martinez (1994) travelled to the school herself to get a first hand account of these teacher’s lives. Her description of the community is very reminiscent of the teacher’s description of the community in this study. “...As we drove from the airport to the school and I subsequently walked around the streets of the community, it was the ugliness, squalor and sense of hopelessness of the community that overshadowed its physical beauty. Houses...were extremely run down, often with large holes in external walls. Frequently, in the vacant spaces between houses, were camp fire sites obviously in regular use. Many car wrecks lay abandoned in yards. Litter was sprinkled liberally, all around the streets, especially empty alcohol containers” (p.163).

McAlpine and Crago (1995) document a similar experience in their study of a young, female, first year teacher in an aboriginal school. In this case the community was connected by gravel road. “After turning off a provincial highway, she travelled along a

gravel road for a number of kilometres and arrived in a community of about 300 nestled next to a large lake... the village is a 2 hour drive from medical and dental help, as well as stores, banks, post office, newspaper and so forth. As there is no bus or taxi service, a car is necessary to get in and out of the town. The language of the community is an aboriginal one. Many people still live partly in the bush, and regularly use the fish in the lake as a source of food” (pp.405-406).

The literature does support the feelings of confusion, uncertainty, and anxiety that the teachers in this study felt on their first day in the community. Grubis (1985) has put forward his own explanation of what beginning teachers encounter in northern aboriginal schools. He draws upon the work of Guthrie (1975) who employs the term “cultural fatigue” to describe the phenomenon. Grubis examines “cultural fatigue” according to three stages that new teachers go through. Stage One is Enthusiasm/Apprehension. In this stage young teachers are excited about their new positions. However, feelings of uncertainty and apprehension are present as they enter a world where the social environment is new to them. Not only do they worry about their performance on the job, but also, how the community will perceive them. McAlpine and Crago (1995) term this stage the “honeymoon”; a time of enthusiasm and hope. For teachers in this study, thoughts such as “Where in the devil am I to? “I was stunned and shocked.” and “Oh my God! I’m not used to this!” clearly express feelings of nervousness and a sense of foreboding.

Stage two of the cultural fatigue model is characterized by ambivalence. In this stage teachers will associate or socialize with those in the community who are culturally

compatible. These people may be fellow teachers, nurses, or social workers. The people and the community are viewed in negative, stereotypical terms as teachers feel that they are being taken advantage of. This is also the stage where environmental concerns come to the forefront. The long winters, weather conditions, and close living arrangements, contribute heavily to the stress of new teachers. Thoughts of resignation and leaving the community are common. This stage emerges after three to six months in the community. The findings of the current study support the work of Grubis (1985). Teachers in this study reported feeling trapped with no way to escape. Extreme weather conditions with no school cancellations were difficult for new teachers to understand. Conversations regarding weather and the reluctance of the administration to cancel school dominated staff room discussions. Teachers were disgruntled and angry which sometimes resulted in verbal confrontations between teachers and the administration in the staff room. It was not uncommon to hear of teachers “praying” for a weather day.

Friction at home was a common concern. Respondents commented that “the least little thing” would trigger an argument. This was certainly the case where two strangers were living together for the first time. Daily activities such as cleaning and cooking fell to the wayside as the year progressed. Stresses at work were brought into the home which served to deteriorate living arrangements further. For two teachers in the current study, the stress proved to be too much. One teacher moved out of the home midway through the year to live with a local family. The other teacher cited problems with his roommate as one of his reasons for leaving. Unfortunately, the stress of the living arrangements resulted in physical violence for the teachers involved.

The final stage of the Grubis (1985) model is Reconciliation/ Transcendence. Two situations may arise in this stage. First, the teacher tolerates the school and community in the hope of financial gain and a better position elsewhere. They “hang in there” and eagerly await the first plane at the end of the school year in June and leave. Secondly, begin to understand the community and culture and the negative and positive aspects of community life balance out. Hence “transcendence”. Some teachers are unable to make it to this final stage. This may be due to the fact that they are unable to maintain their enthusiasm and commitment to a job that they feel is not valued by the community. Grubis (1985) states, “Teachers have, as all people do, conditional responses which were formed by the societies in which they matured. These static responses and understandings determine the rules, maps and plans which constitute their world view. This ethnocentrically influenced world view is an inhibiting insulator in developing cross cultural understandings and transcending the ambivalence stage of cultural fatigue” (p.15). For the former teachers in the current study, transcendence was difficult to achieve. While they were grateful for their positions and the time they spent in the community, they were unable to come to grips with the unique cultural challenges of living in an isolated, aboriginal community. When questioned as to whether he would work in another aboriginal school again, one teacher stated emphatically, “No! I want to maintain some part of my sanity as well as my humanity” (FT4 interview, 1999). Five of these teachers did go on to teach in aboriginal schools. The remaining nine are working as teachers in non-aboriginal schools in Newfoundland.

The sense of anxiety and anticipation carried over into the first meeting between teacher and students. In the current study, the respondents commented on the quiet, shy nature of the students. The respondents expressed that they felt a sense of embarrassment as they attempted to pronounce the names of the children in their classes. However, as the year progressed, the quietness was soon replaced by back-talking, disobedience and defiance of school rules. Respondents at the Junior and Senior high school level experienced this more often than the Primary and Elementary respondents.

Martinez (1994) observed similar results in her study. One teacher in the study stated, "It's really difficult to get children to volunteer. They are reserved. It is difficult to find any spontaneity in kids" (p.167). The teacher in the McAlpine & Crago (1995) encountered the same quiet, shy nature of the students. The teacher referred to the students as having "this great gift of silence" (p.407). As with teachers in this current study, the teacher in the McAlpine & Crago (1995) study felt frustration with her students at the end of the year. She stated that she was more knowledgeable about her students and their needs. Clearly, the first meetings between teacher and students were awkward and nervous, but by the end of the year a different reality existed for all teachers.

3.) Previous Knowledge of Aboriginal Cultures

Finney & Orr (1995) state that the lack of knowledge and experience that non-aboriginal teachers have concerning aboriginal peoples, is a result of the society in which they live and the education they received. Their study of students in a cross cultural

education course confirmed what many educators and sociologists believe to be true in today's society; dominant groups socialize very rarely with minorities and current school curricula do not adequately reflect the history and culture of aboriginal peoples and the issues they face in today's society. One teacher in the study acknowledged, "I am ignorant of native culture, for I was never taught about them in school or anywhere else" (p.328). Another student commented, "I have been fortunate because I have never had to worry about things like money, acceptance or my future. My protected world did not include poverty, frustration, rejections, doubt, or fears" (p328).

Chisholm (1994) attributes non-aboriginal misinformation and ignorance of aboriginal culture to hundreds of years of assimilation and oppression. The ethnocentric views of governments and government organizations have served to marginalize the needs and rights of aboriginal peoples. The present day result of this has led to prejudice and misunderstandings that exist between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.

As for teachers in the current study, their knowledge of aboriginal culture came from two sources; the media and former teachers and friends. The media has played a significant role in the perpetuation of misinformation and misunderstanding regarding aboriginal people. A case in point is Davis Inlet, Labrador. Beginning in February of 1992, with the report of a house fire that claimed the lives of six Innu children, Davis Inlet has literally become the "poster child" for aboriginal communities across Canada. Pictures of dilapidated houses, partially clothed children, roaming dogs, RCMP stations written up with graffiti, raw sewage dumped in the middle of town and groups of children wandering the streets with bags of gasoline have become synonymous with Davis Inlet.

The federal government's reaction to this situation was to set aside 83 million dollars to relocate the community to nearby Sango Bay. Essentially, this was a monetary solution to deeply rooted cultural and social problems. Reaction from the general public was mixed. Aboriginal people and aboriginal organizations across the country applauded the government's decision to relocate the community. Others, especially the white, non-aboriginal majority questioned the value of such a move at taxpayer's expense. It was the opinion of many that the problems would be transferred from one location to another. More than anything the Davis Inlet situation forced all Canadians to re-examine their opinions regarding aboriginal people. Some people took the opportunity to travel to the community to provide help. For others, Davis Inlet provided further evidence that aboriginal people are nothing more than lazy, drunken, welfare recipients living off the tax dollars of working Canadians. For the federal and provincial governments, it marked the beginning of a period of re-examination of aboriginal policies and agreements culminating in the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996.

Another source of information which came from former teachers and friends and family, painted a negative and bleak picture of aboriginal communities. The emphasis on social problems, poor student performance, and working conditions at schools, weighed heavily on the minds of the teachers as they began their careers. For the respondents who had no knowledge of the Inuit culture, they were grateful they had come to the community with a clean slate. They felt that coming to their new positions with preconceived notions would cloud their judgement and hinder their ability to effectively teach their students. As one former teacher stated after five years of teaching in the

community, “There is still a great deal I do not want to know” (FT1 interview, 1999). For this teacher and the others, a little bit of knowledge may have been a dangerous thing.

4.) Community Life

“Individuals who teach in rural schools must want to work in a rural setting. Anyone who does not have a positive attitude towards teaching in remote areas will not survive. Teachers who cannot adjust to being highly visible members of a community, who fail to take into consideration local views and values before commenting on issues, who do not establish a good rapport with community leaders and who do not become involved with community activities, usually find teaching in a rural setting an extremely lonely and burdensome experience” (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989. p. 89).

This statement does have merit. This researcher has found that not all people easily adapt to teaching in an isolated, aboriginal community. More specifically, the researcher has discovered that the qualities of community life that entice some teachers to stay for extended periods of time are the very same qualities which prompt others to leave after only a year or two of work. The opportunity to participate in outdoor activities was cited by many of the respondents as a positive and enjoyable aspect of community life. For these teachers it was a chance to escape from the community and the stresses of the job. In doing so they were able to interact with members of the community and gain a greater appreciation and understanding of Inuit culture. This was certainly the case for the female teacher in this current study that started a dog team. McAlpine & Crago (1995) discovered similar results. The teacher in their study gained a greater understanding of the

people and the community by travelling into the bush with the people during the fall and the winter.

A) Close Knit Nature of the Community

The small, close-knit nature of the community was a pleasure for some but a source of contention for others. Many of the respondents interviewed felt that they were on display and were very aware of the fact that they were living in a fishbowl. In their study of the impact of a teacher's work life on their personal life, Blasé & Pajak (1986) reported similar findings. In this study teachers expressed concern about living in small communities where their personal lives were under the watchful eye of "Big Brother". They did not like the fact that they were "subject to the constant scrutiny of parents and students" (p.313).

Teachers in the current study also felt alienated because of their "unique" place in the community. The respondents agreed that these feelings stemmed from two areas; economics and cultural background. All of the respondents reported that at one time or another they encountered both parents and students who considered them to be the "rich elite". These people viewed teaching as a rich profession. However, when respondents attempted to explain their economic situation, it fell upon deaf ears. For the researcher and the respondents, these attitudes are quite easy to understand. The community suffers from chronic unemployment and a high degree of reliance on social assistance. People in the community supplement their income through traditional means such as hunting and fishing. There are craftspeople and artists who sell their work to earn a living also. More

often than not, teachers, RCMP officers, nurses and social workers tend to be the primary customers for these people. Thus, anyone with permanent, full-time, year-round employment is considered “rich”. This is not unique to this particular community. Other researchers studying education in aboriginal communities have encountered similar socioeconomic situations. (Friesen, 1984, Chisholm, 1994, Grubis, 1984, Haughey & Murphy, 1983, Cross, Leahy & Murphy, 1989, McIpine & Crago, 1995, and Hutton, Watson, Squires & Soliman, 1991).

B) Racial/Cultural Issues

From a cultural standpoint, respondents in the current study felt ostracized. The respondents were very much aware of their minority status within the community. At one time or another, during their time in the community, respondents reported negative reaction to their presence in the community. These encounters took one of two forms; direct personal encounters or “through the grapevine”. Respondents were quick to point out that people who were not sober made verbal attacks. While these occurrences made the respondents feel nervous and uneasy, they were quick to dismiss them. Respondents were of the opinion that the views of a few did not reflect the majority of the community. When questioned as to how they dealt with these encounters, respondents said that politely excused themselves from the situation and went about their business. Reasoning with a drunken individual was futile. This tactic worked best for the respondents and very few subsequent incidents were reported.

Chisholm (1994) has studied the impact of education on the aboriginal peoples of northern Canada. She reports such feelings of anger and resentment against non-aboriginals can be traced back to the history of the education of aboriginal people. For many years aboriginal people were educated through the institution of the Residential or Boarding school. The Inuit of the north coast of Labrador were no exception. Many of these people received their formal high school education in the Northwest River School. Being separated from their families and communities for months at a time and forced to conform to a rigid education system where the use of the Inuktitut language was discouraged, are experiences that many Inuit people carry with them today. Chisholm states, "Today the natives who spent their childhoods within that educational system testify to the horrifying effects on their emotional, intellectual, and physical well being. The subsequent collapse of families and communities makes clear the far reaching implications of this system" (p.30). Friesen (1984) discovered similar findings in his study of non-aboriginal teachers in Fort Chipewyan. He reported that self-respect among the Cree people is lacking and the adoption of non-aboriginal ways has resulted in the demise of bush culture. This is the educational and cultural climate that many non-aboriginal teachers encounter in aboriginal communities. For aboriginal people, non-aboriginal teachers represent the continual erosion of traditional culture. In an age where aboriginal people are reclaiming their identity and traditional way of life and asserting their unique status within the Canadian confederation, the presence of non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal communities may represent a threat to the gains they have made. Aboriginal people do believe in the value of education, but cannot help but be reminded

of their own educational experiences.

Despite their dubious place in the community, respondents in this study all took part in community events at one time or another. These events allowed the respondents to interact with parents and students outside of the school. For the respondents it was a way of letting the community know that they were human and they cared. The respondents also commented that they were constantly reminded of their profession. Community members, from the very young to the very old, referred to them as “Miss”, or “Mr.” Very rarely were they addressed on a first name basis. This proved to be a source of pride for the respondents. The work of Blasé & Pajak (1986) supports these findings. In the Martinez (1994) study, the subject Brian commented, “As soon as I arrived and was just starting to circulate in the community, go to the supermart and go to the school, wherever I would see anyone, they would say “goodday sir!”. The white fellow must be a teacher, must have a lot of money, must have power, and must be correctly addressed” (p170).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some of the respondents commented that the community came to rely upon the expertise of teachers too much. There was the expectation that if an event would occur, the teachers would plan and organize it. Events planned to foster communication between staff, students and parents, turned out to be community events where everyone in town attended. Respondents reported felling a sense of anger and disgust at the situation. Brian in the Martinez (1994) study discovered this to be the case when helping with the school barbecue. “It turned into a soup kitchen. We ran a barbecue, gave out food, and everyone poured in, with and without kids. I was really offended because I was put in the position of just doling out food...people were coming

in and taking advantage of it, and it was not at all what we intended it to be” (p.171).

C) Work Issues

Genuine compassion for the students motivated the respondents in their professional lives. At times the respondents expressed anger and frustration with students and became discouraged at their lack of motivation. This was the dominant concern expressed by junior and senior high school teachers. Teachers at this level reported high rates of absenteeism, a lack of interest in school, a pervasive feeling of apathy and discipline problems in the form of verbal “bouts” with students both in and out of the classroom. Respondents associated this behaviour with factors outside of the school. These factors included; lack of support for school in the home, seasonal factors such as “freeze up” and spring “break up” when families would leave the community for hunting and fishing trips, the influence of drop-outs in the community, justice/court issues, and learning disabilities. These factors resulted in feelings of hopelessness and futility among high school teachers. Stenlund (1995) concurs with this and states, “Teachers appear to attach fairly significant importance to individual student growth and development and the bonds that develop between the teacher and student as precursory conditions through which the teacher gains enthusiasm for his or her work life” (p.156). Primary and Elementary teachers reported fewer discipline problems but stated that they took on more of a parental role with their students. At this level of schooling, issues of neglect, poor hygiene, hunger and students falling asleep in class were dominant concerns. Teachers did make accommodations for these students and if certain behaviours were observed,

teachers would question students and send them to the vice-principal who would tend to their needs. Some respondents reported having snacks in their desks for students who needed them.

Primary and Elementary teachers reported working in close association with the Special Education teacher as there were a large number of students who required remedial help. In this respect, lesson planning became a challenge as teachers attempted to address the various needs of students in their classes. Since teachers were using “Thematic Teaching” at this level, they reported that a great deal of time was spent in theme preparation as well. For teachers who assumed the added responsibility of extracurricular activities such as Sports and Drama, the workload increased. Finding time for practice, organizing trips outside of the community and fundraising, became an all-consuming effort. The respondents stated that they ignored their own personal well-being and interests to prepare for upcoming events. When questioned as to why they assumed these added responsibilities, they remarked that if “I don’t do it, nobody else will”. Blasé and Pajak (1986) support these findings.

Collegial relations were reported as less than perfect at times. New teachers noted that senior teachers had their established cliques and provided little help and guidance during their first year in the school. Social divisions among staff sometimes created an uneasy atmosphere in the staffroom. Discussions of weekend activities or community happenings found their way into the staffroom which sometimes led to verbal exchanges between staff. Teachers were always aware of their place within the community and were careful to keep their social lives private as much as possible. In a small, isolated

community this was sometimes difficult. Due to the varied personal interests of teachers, there was very little social interaction among the staff as a whole, after school hours. Aboriginal staff members rarely socialized with non-aboriginal staff members outside of the school. According to Blasé & Pajak (1986), "Feelings of anger, hostility and guilt were expressed with regard to the behaviour of colleagues" (p.35). In a study conducted by Watson et.al. (1991), poor staff relations and poor morale were cited as major factors in teacher mobility in Australia. Watson reports, "A school is not likely to be improved if there is a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction amongst the teaching staff" (p.69).

Respondents also expressed the need for the school administration to play a more active role in fostering improved staff relations as well as providing more support and guidance for new teachers. Several respondents commented on the inadequacy of the administration in dealing with staff issues. The school was characterized as a small community within itself where teachers closed their doors and dealt with their own issues. Communication between administration and staff was lacking and teachers felt disconnected from the school as a whole. There was no feeling of unity or cohesiveness. New teachers felt very much alone. They reported that the senior staff and administration offered very little help or showed no interest in helping at all. When they did seek advice, they were made to feel like they were a nuisance or told to ask someone else. For the most part, these new teachers struggled through their first year relying on their peers for support and guidance. This is unfortunate since studies have shown that the school principal plays a major role in "creating school climate and shaping attitudes, as well as influencing teacher satisfaction" (Hatton et. al. 1991, p.290).

D) Slow Pace of Life

Both groups of respondents appreciated the slow pace of life that the community offered. Respondents were quick to note how scheduled and fast paced their lives would be if they were in a large urban centre. After living in the community they came to live their lives by their own personal schedule and not by the clock. McAlpine and Crago (1995) confer with these findings. On the contrary, such a laid back relaxed pace of life did not work well within the school. All respondents reported frustration with students who were habitually late or having to schedule school events around community events.

E) Lack of Essential Services

Isolation and lack of essential services were always a prominent concern for teachers in the current study. All of the respondents expressed the fear of not being able to get to their families in the event of a serious illness or death at home. For two respondents in this study, this fear became a reality. More than anything the respondents felt a sense of hopelessness. They were at the mercy of the weather; something which they could not control. A simple task such as making travel plans became a major emotional endeavour. Respondents expressed a combination of fear, apprehension, anger and frustration at the primitive nature of air travel along the coast of Labrador. In his study of teachers in Fort Chipewyan, Friesen (1984) observed, "Many teachers, even those raised in a rural community find adjustments in isolated areas beyond their imaginations. Simply having to spend months at a time removed from friends and family and the amenities so often

taken for granted by more urban Albertans is an unexpected hardship” (p.6).

Respondents cited inadequate medical services as another worry. The respondents regarded waiting months or weeks at a time to see a doctor or a dentist as unacceptable. The community has a modern health care facility with living quarters for medical personnel. The respondents could not understand why a doctor or dentist could not be stationed in the community on a year round basis.

All of the respondents expressed the common fear of losing water during the winter months. Keeping track of freezing temperatures and wind chill values became a daily ritual. Discussions regarding water and weather conditions were a common occurrence in the staffroom between the months of January to April. Respondents stated that they could cope without restaurants, shopping facilities, and movie theatres, but the prospect of no running water was absolutely terrifying to them. This was especially the case for new, young, female teachers with no ski-doo. The senior teachers who had lived through these events offered suggestions to new teachers as to how they might “haul” water and conserve water. Once again, respondents questioned how such events could occur in Canada in the 21st century.

Haughey & Murphy (1983) offer the following insights on life in rural, aboriginal communities; “Living in a rural community means some degree of isolation from cultural activities, shopping, social events, and professional opportunities. Anyone who teaches in a rural setting accepts this and offsets any dissatisfaction by taking advantage of and enjoying the special social, cultural and recreational activities offered by a small community” (p.9).

5.) Teacher Training

All but one of the respondents completed teacher training at Memorial their University of Newfoundland. The remaining respondent completed her training at the University of British Columbia. Each of the respondents acknowledged that their university education did very little for the challenges they faced in their teaching positions. One respondent was particularly outspoken in her criticisms of the teacher education program and the professors she studied under. Yet, the respondents agreed that their internship provided them with the first practical experience of what it means to be a teacher. However, they stated that these experiences were controlled; teachers chose their placement and worked under the guidance and direction of an experienced teacher in an urban school. These respondents had no training or preparation for teaching in the aboriginal classroom. The true reality of teaching came into play when they accepted their first teaching positions. They all agreed that the school and the students was he true test of a person's ability to teach.

The literature on teacher training programs is extensive but it contains one common theme; "Scholars in multicultural education contend teachers now need attitudes, knowledge, skills and experience that are different from the knowledge bases of traditional teacher education programs. Students are leaving their undergraduate experience knowing they need additional training beyond what has been provided" (Dinsmore & Hess, 1999, pp.19-23). Respondents in the current study concur with this statement.

Nordhoff & Kleinfeld (1993) have researched various teacher education programs and have found the “Teachers for Alaska Program” to be one of the more effective Preservice teacher education programs for preparing teachers to work in rural native schools. The program serves both native and non-native teachers in preparation for small, remote schools in Alaska. Lasting 10 months in duration, the program replaces the course driven approach with a holistic program combining practical experience with theory and research. A set of assumptions guides the basic premise of the course. First, experience teaching culturally diverse students is necessary before Preservice teachers can comprehend the theories and methods which university course work offers. Second, educational theory should be presented in terms of actual teaching problems. Third, teacher candidates should also learn how to pose educational problems as well as deal with them. Fourth, teacher education programs should focus on teaching subject matter to diverse students rather than general instructional methods.

The program emphasizes the importance of teachers learning from their students and their families. To facilitate this, Preservice teachers are encouraged to become involved in community activities outside of the school. This may involve supervising extracurricular activities, becoming involved in community groups or organizations or visiting people on a social basis. Add to this the student internship, seminars and collaborations with master teachers, and the program is proving to be a success.

One of the defining elements of this program is its emphasis on teacher reflection. Preservice teachers “develop the capacity to reason about teaching” (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, p. 36, 1993). Teachers come to consider their students, the subject matter, the

learning process and the context in which schooling takes place. Preservice teachers come to recognize the importance of examining their own personal histories and educational background and how this may inhibit their effectiveness in teaching native and minority students.

The Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal People (1996) acknowledges that there still continues to be a significant number of non-aboriginal teachers teaching aboriginal students. A major recommendation from this report emphasizes the need for all teacher education programs to contain a component on aboriginal culture and issues. Such a component would target non-aboriginal preservice teachers. The history and culture of aboriginal peoples and nations, the role of treaties and the contribution of aboriginal people to the development of Canada, would form part of such a teacher education program. It is hoped that such a teacher education program would dispel myths and assumptions and stereotypes that still exist in the minds of many non-aboriginal people. This report echoes the concerns of other researchers who have studied teacher education programs. Martinez (1994) emphasizes the need for teacher education programs to be culturally responsive. In addition to courses on the sociology and psychology of teaching, teacher education programs should contain studies based in small, isolated or rural communities. These studies would provide a critical analysis of contemporary issues facing teachers in aboriginal schools. Lipman (1996) argues that any restructuring of teacher education programs should include the voices and experiences of teachers in the field. In the current study, teachers felt that someone in the field could only communicate a true and accurate portrayal of teaching in an aboriginal school. Tippeconnic (1983)

takes this idea one step further and suggests using community resources such as elders and parents in designing teacher education programs.

The findings of this current study support the literature on teacher education programs. The need for culturally sensitive, contemporary courses and programs focusing on aboriginal education and aboriginal issues cannot be overemphasized. Respondents in the study were of the opinion that it would have greatly enhanced their undergraduate education experience and provided them with a more thorough understanding of aboriginal people and issues.

5.) Curriculum

One of the major concerns expressed by teachers in the current study was the mismatch between the provincial curriculum and the needs of Inuit students. All respondents agreed that their students were capable of learning and mastering the prescribed curriculum, but felt that the curriculum was not relevant to them. Teachers reported supplementing and modifying their programs and courses in an effort to capture student interest and make the learning experience more meaningful to them. The subject area of Language Arts proved to be the most challenging part of the curriculum for the teachers. This was a common experience reported by teachers at all levels of the school system; Primary to Senior High School level. Teachers experienced frustration in stressing the importance of parents and children reading together at home. At the Primary

level, programs such as Reading Recovery helped to screen students experiencing reading difficulties and provided remediation. School wide reading initiatives were implemented in an effort to spark interest in reading among the students.

This experience is not unique to the teachers in this current study. Whyte (1986) states that aboriginal student's difficulties with learning the English language stem from a number of factors including phonemic patterns of traditional aboriginal languages, grammatical rules of aboriginal languages, and word and sentence formations of aboriginal languages which do not correspond to the English language. In addition, in Language Arts programs speech, reading and writing are all learned at the same time. This means that students must learn new ways of listening, repeating and memorizing. Finally, the learning environment of the school is different. Aboriginal students may find it less friendly and supportive than their home environment. When combined, these factors may contribute to the difficulties which aboriginal students face in Language Arts programs.

One positive aspect of the curriculum for the respondents was the Labrador Studies program that supplements the Social Studies curriculum in grades Kindergarten to Nine. Respondents stated that this was a great vehicle for bringing Inuit culture into the classroom. Guest speakers, field trips around the community and class projects focusing on Inuit culture, history, and values, excited students about learning. Those students who were quiet and shy and those who experienced academic difficulties were very open and willing to talk about things from their culture that interested them. Respondents reported

that students would spontaneously bring in items from home for Social Studies classes and actively participate in class discussions on hunting, fishing, and winter activities. Teachers took full advantage of these opportunities and channelled them into Language Arts activities. Students experienced a sense of pride and accomplishment when their stories were displayed in pictorial and written form around the classroom. The teacher's use of thematic teaching in the Primary and Elementary grades also provided the opportunity for students to express themselves culturally and creatively. Themes such as Arctic Animals, the seasons, and special holidays, focused on Inuit culture and community celebrations. Bringing local people into the school to teach traditional skills constitute the school's Life Skills program. Students from grades three to eight learn from local people skills such as cooking, sewing, beadwork, komatik making and survival on the land. Teachers in the current study considered the program a vital part of the student's education. Through the program students gain respect and self-esteem as well as realizing that not all learning takes place within the classroom.

The idea of students writing and talking about what they know best is not only limited to the Primary and Elementary school years. Students in Junior and Senior high school programs have much to share in Language Arts programs. As soon as these children are able, they help their parents. At an early age they are caring for younger siblings, berry picking, and hunting and fishing with their parents. By the time they reach their teen years they have a wealth of information to share regarding outdoor camping, wildlife, hunting, and fishing. Thus it should not be surprising that the content of many reading series appear boring and uninteresting and do little to motivate students. Whyte

(1986) supports the idea of gearing the reading and writing curriculum around the cultural experiences of students and the community.

Ogbu (1992) expresses similar sentiments; “What the children bring to the school – their communities’, cultural models or understandings of “social realities” and the educational strategies that they, their families and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as in school factors” (p.5).

6.) The Role of the School Board

Respondents in the current study were ambivalent about the role of the school board. Some teachers felt that they were well informed by the school board regarding their positions and life in the community. Since many of the school board officials had not actually spent any amount of time in the school and community, teachers felt that they were as fully informed as they could be. Other respondents expressed a different view. These respondents felt that the school board misled them in terms of their job description and the conditions they faced in the school and community. They were of the opinion that the school board had a condescending attitude towards teachers on the coast and their indifferent treatment of coastal teachers was disrespectful and neglectful. It should be noted that both former and present teachers expressed these negative views of the school board. The general consensus from all teachers surveyed was, if the school board were truly concerned about teacher stability, then they would present realistic and accurate information to prospective teaching candidates. Pesek (1993) states, “ If a realistic job

preview is given, turnover may be reduced by allowing job candidates to reject offers that would not meet their needs and by lowering expectations about job conditions and increasing their ability to deal with unpleasant demands” (p.26). McIntosh (1989) in Bainer (1993) suggests that school boards could enhance recruitment and retention efforts if prospective teachers were informed of the positive and negative aspects of the teaching position, the school district and the community. The concerns expressed in the current study would necessitate the need for the school board to implement a standardized selection and recruitment program. Such a program would ensure that all teaching candidates receive fair treatment and most importantly, that the best possible person is being hired (Wollman, 1991). Increasing student achievement can only be accomplished by hiring the best possible teachers. An effective recruitment process can aid in this process.

Many of the respondents in the current study did admit that the school was not their first choice for employment. They acknowledged that they sent their resumes to various school boards across the country and the province of Newfoundland. For some respondents, the offer to teach in the school under study came only a few days before the start of the school year or very late in the summer. Fear of unemployment and a large student debt load was the motivation for other respondents in accepting their positions. Still, other respondents stated, this was the only offer they received. Hence, some of the respondents entered into their positions by default. This is not uncommon in educational literature. Kailin (1994) in her study of white teachers of children of colour argues that those teachers who are unable to secure employment in larger centres may not be the

most suitable teachers for minority children. They may lack the necessary enthusiasm, motivation and encouragement, which minority children need. Watson, Hatton, Squires & Soliman (1991) state, "The teacher who goes to an appointment reluctantly, who is poorly prepared for the special demands of that place, who finds the living conditions difficult, the children with unexpected problems, professional contacts narrow and work satisfaction low, is not likely to teach well even though he or she may stay there for the compulsory two or three years" (p.64).

Another issue which arose during the course of the study, especially among first year teachers new to the profession, was the feeling of helplessness they experienced. Both present and former teachers experienced a sense of isolation and trepidation during their first year. When they had questions concerning policies and school practices or when problems arose with students, first year teachers approached the administration and colleagues for assistance. However, at times, the first year teachers were made to feel that they were imposing or bothering those whom they approached for help. Essentially they felt that they were on their own facing, at times, insurmountable obstacles. Respondents stated that they went through a "trial by fire" during their first year of teaching. The researcher can certainly identify with this analogy.

Feelings of desperation, loneliness, fear and isolation are common among first year teachers. Educational research has shown that effective mentoring programs can help alleviate the stresses which new teachers encounter as they make the transition from student to teacher. Hersh, Stroot & Snyder (1995) state that effective mentoring programs improve teaching performance, promote the professional and personal well-being of first

year teachers and most importantly, aid in the retention of these new teachers. These findings are also supported by the work of Green, Roebuck and Futrell (1994) and the work of Luft (1992). Several components have been identified in implementing an effective mentoring program. These include; initial meetings before the start of the school year with the school board staff and school administration, disseminating literature to first year teachers on policies and procedures and the assignment of a “buddy” teacher to the first year teacher. In aboriginal schools using community members or elders in mentoring programs can go a long way in making new teachers feel accepted and supported. In selecting a mentor, Hersh, Stroot and Snyder (1995) advise caution; “On occasion, it is the disgruntled, cynical teacher wishing to pass on his/her cynicism who becomes a mentor teacher rather than the experienced, master teacher who wishes to pass on the best practices” (p.32). Thus, the selection of mentors to assist first year teachers requires much thought and consideration on the part of the school administration.

The issue of salary and remuneration was an inevitable topic of discussion in this study. All respondents stated that they did not experience any great financial gain in assuming their positions. In fact, most respondents reported living from pay cheque to pay cheque to cover the costs of living in the community. Expenses such as rent, food, heating oil and transportation costs, consumed most of what these teachers earned. Add to this monthly student loan payments and the result for some teachers was a zero balance in their bank accounts. Respondents were angered by their colleagues and family and friends on the island who assumed that Labrador teachers were receiving an attractive remuneration package for teaching in an isolated, aboriginal community. The respondents

were quick to inform their colleagues and others of the financial realities of teaching on the north coast of Labrador. Given the current economic climate of the province and the money allotted for school boards, respondents suggested that at the very minimum rent could be subsidized to offset the high cost of living on the north Labrador coast. Luft (1992) states that attractive starting salaries and benefit packages attract new teachers to rural areas and provide the incentive for them to stay.

Conclusions

All of the teachers in this study had various reasons for coming to the north coast of Labrador to teach. Whether it is the need for experience or to repay student debt, they all shared a deep and genuine concern for their students. This concern enabled them to enter their classrooms each day and work with the students despite the stresses and frustrations which were inherent in their jobs. This held true for teachers who had worked in the school for upwards of ten years to those who had worked only one year. No one clear picture emerged from this study of what makes a teacher leave aboriginal schools or what encourages them to stay. Each of these teachers demonstrated enthusiasm, dedication, patience and understanding when working with their students. These are desirable qualities that all teachers should possess no matter where they teach. In the questionnaires, the teachers who had left reflected on their experience in the school and community. While some of them had a less than perfect experience, they all agreed that their time spent in the community with the students and parents was a definite learning

experience. The personal and professional growth they achieved would have a lasting impact on their future teaching endeavours. The fact that they left was in no way an indication of cultural insensitivity or an inability to adjust to a new culture. On the contrary, the decision to leave was, for some, a painful one, arrived at through much thought and debate. It represented the inability to achieve long standing personal and professional goals that could not be realized in the community. Whether you spend one year or ten years teaching in an aboriginal community, you cannot leave and not take the experience with you.

The mobility of teachers has negative consequences for both the students left behind and the community. The consequences take on an even greater significance when the community is aboriginal. At the basic level, a greater strain is placed on school boards and the school principal to find new teachers to replace those who have left. At the present time while the supply of teachers is fairly substantial, school boards are acutely aware of the difficulties of staffing aboriginal schools. Due to high staff mobility, many aboriginal schools have been characterized by professionally immature teachers, principals with limited knowledge and experience in how to manage a school and substandard academic performance (Murphy & Angelski, 1997). To counteract this, school boards should question the commitment to aboriginal education and the willingness of new teachers to live and participate in the aboriginal community, to ensure that they are hiring good quality teachers.

When non-aboriginal teachers leave an aboriginal school they leave behind “a classroom of bewildered children and a community sense of betrayal, distrust for

education and for the profession of teaching” (Williams & Cross in Murphy & Angelski, p. ,1997). From a community standpoint, the unwillingness of non-aboriginal teachers to remain in aboriginal schools and communities may be interpreted as a rejection of that community. For students, their education is harmed. In aboriginal communities where socioeconomic disadvantages and geographic isolation are facets of everyday life, teacher mobility negatively impacts the school experience (Hatton, Watson, Squires and Soliman, 1991). As students become accustomed to the teaching style and mannerisms of one teacher, they are abandoned and forced to adapt to a new situation every year or every two years. If these children come from homes where there is an unstable environment the children may react adversely to change. Discipline and behaviour problems and refusal to do work can become a reality for new teachers.

No one single profile of a typical non-aboriginal teacher in an aboriginal school can be found. Non-aboriginal teachers in aboriginal schools come from a wide variety of geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Haughey and Murphy (1983), in their study of teachers in rural British Columbia, observed that non-aboriginal teachers were usually female, just starting their teaching careers, had little or no teaching experience and could not find employment in a larger, urban school. The average age for these teachers was approximately 24.

Some researchers have attempted to develop a profile of a non-aboriginal teacher teaching in an aboriginal school. Gerald McBeath (1983) studied non-aboriginal teachers on native Alaskan reserves and discovered that these teachers were predominantly white females, new to the profession and the region. Their average age was 33 and they had less

than 20 years teaching experience. Johnson and Amundsen (1983) also studied teachers of native Alaskan students and reported similar findings. They also noted that these teachers stay in the school and community for an average of two years and then leave.

The decision to teach in an aboriginal school can be purely economic or personally motivated. Even though the literature cannot conclusively agree on a typical profile of a non-aboriginal teacher in an aboriginal school, one thing is clear; “Individuals who teach in rural schools must want to work on a rural setting. Anyone who does not have a positive attitude towards teaching in remote areas will not survive. Teachers who cannot adjust to being highly visible members of a community, who fail to take into consideration local views and values before commenting on issues, who do not establish a good rapport with community leaders and who do not become involved in community activities, usually find teaching in a rural setting an extremely lonely and burdensome experience” (Cross, Leahy & Murphy, p.89, 1989).

Not every teacher who teaches in a rural or isolated aboriginal community chooses to leave after one or two years of teaching experience. While the literature on these teachers is not as abundant as it may be for those who leave, some interesting information can be obtained regarding their life and work experiences. Bello and Bello (1980) conducted a study of teachers who worked in the small, rural schools of British Columbia and reported interesting insights into their life and experiences. Generally, teachers described their life and work as a happy experience. One teacher expressed his thoughts poetically. “ What can compare to the changing moods of the sea, an eagle in flight, the

smell and sounds of the forest and the sight of a doe with her fawn or a bear with her cubs” (p.5).

Teachers in the community took part in a wide variety of community and personal recreational activities. Teachers expressed that they were well liked and respected by the community. The small size of the school proved to be a great source of job satisfaction for teachers as they were able to individually work with students and get to know their parents personally. Some teachers did suggest that they were accepted more for their position and the job they performed in the community. One teacher remarked that teachers were set apart from the rest of the community and enjoyed the same status as the priest in town. The only negative responses concerned community gossip. Teachers felt that this was to be expected in a small town and commented that it was no great impediment to their life and work in the community

While these teachers may enjoy life in the community they all did feel the need to occasionally leave the community for a break. Teachers felt that this was necessary to break the monotony of rural living and to gain a broader perspective. When they did travel, teachers stated it would be for medical reasons, vacation or school break or professional development reasons.

For those teachers who have stayed in the school and community, their work continues today. They enter their classrooms each day and teach from a humanitarian perspective. For these teachers ensuring that their students are safe and secure is just as important as instructional strategies or lesson plans. They interact and share with their

students on a daily basis in a manner that cannot be achieved in a larger school or community. It is more than just a job. It is truly a way of life. One of the present teachers in this study expressed the sentiment best when she stated; "They (people) should realize that in order for us to stay here we must have some kind of dedication to the school. It's not just about the money and people shouldn't think it's about the money!" (PT7,1997).

Recommendations/Implications

1. The Labrador School Board needs to re-evaluate recruitment and hiring policies. A standardized policy would not only serve as an instrument of control for the school board but also ensure that the best possible teachers are hired. Recruitment of new teachers should be a year long process so as to ensure a “bank” of qualified candidates is available as teaching vacancies occur.
2. During recruitment and hiring the school board should include representatives of local school councils as well as senior teachers to be part of the interview and selection process.
3. School board officials, in conjunction with local school councils, should prepare current, up to date information on each of the coastal communities both in print and video form. This information should be updated on a yearly basis before recruitment of new teachers begins.
4. The Labrador School Board should provide new teachers with a detailed break down of living expenses in coastal communities. This information would include a cost analysis of groceries from major grocery chains on the island of Newfoundland and Labrador, rent costs for school board housing (if provided), cost of home heating fuel, the necessity of personal transportation (i.e. ski-doo, etc.), prices of food at local stores, etc.
5. The Labrador School Board should newly hired teachers with the names and telephone numbers of the principal and teachers who teach in the school

in which the new teacher is hired for. In addition, providing the names of other new teachers will give these teachers the opportunity to discuss living arrangements before they enter the community.

6. The Labrador School Board should implement a Teacher Induction program for new teachers who go to coastal communities. This program would orient teachers to the unique challenges and opportunities of teaching in an isolated, north coast community. It would be mandatory for all new teachers and begin one week before the start of the school year. Initial meetings would be held in Goose Bay with school board officials. At these meetings new teachers would become acquainted with school board staff and the services the school board provides. The next phase of the program would take place within the coastal community. At this point the new teachers would meet with the principal to become familiar with school policies and procedures, to obtain class lists and information regarding timetables and school schedules, and a description of their teaching duties. This would also provide teachers the opportunity to become familiar with the culture of the town as well as lesson plan. Local community members would also be part of this induction program.
7. The Labrador School Board should provide cultural awareness training to newly hired teachers. This training would involve members of aboriginal, coastal communities.

8. The Labrador School Board, with the school administration, should hold monthly teleconferences or meetings with new teachers to discuss or address concerns and help ease adjustment difficulties. This would help to prevent teacher problems or resignations mid way through the school year.
9. The Labrador School Board should hire a designated maintenance person in each coastal community to handle maintenance and housing concerns for teachers. This person would be a school board employee other than the school janitor.
10. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association should consider the creation of a separate bargaining unit to address the concerns of coastal Labrador teachers.
11. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers union should undertake a qualitative study to examine issues relevant to teaching on the north Labrador coast.
12. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association should consider establishing a field office in Happy Valley- Goose Bay, Labrador. This office would be staffed by union officials who would deal directly with issues pertaining to Labrador teachers.
13. New teachers considering working on the north Labrador coast need to research the cultural and economic backgrounds of these communities before their interviews. In doing so they are able to ask well informed questions during the interview process. In addition they should be provided

with the names and telephone numbers of both present and former teachers who would be more likely to provide honest and accurate information regarding teaching in aboriginal communities on the north Labrador coast.

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Appendix A
Former Non-Aboriginal Teacher Questionnaire

Code: FT __

1.) What was your former teaching assignment in Hopedale ?

2.) Was your initial interview conducted over the telephone or in person?

3.) What circumstances led you to accept the teaching position in Hopedale? (long term unemployment, student loan, etc.). Elaborate.

4.) What were you told about the school and community before you were hired?

5.) Can you describe your first impressions of the community?

6.) Could you describe your living arrangements during your time in the community?
(single, roommate, paying bills, groceries, household chores, etc.).

7.) Did you bring a partner/spouse with you? Why/why not?

8.) Do you think that having a partner/spouse with you is necessary to handle living in an isolated community? Explain.

9.) Did you ever live in an isolated community before you accepted the Hopedale position? _____

17.) What do you think you should have been told before you accepted your position?

18.) What were your major reasons for leaving your teaching position?

19.) Would you consider teaching in another native school again? Why/why not?

20.) Are you currently employed as a teacher? Full time, replacement or substitute?

Appendix B

Interview Questions For Non-Aboriginal Teachers Currently Working in Aboriginal Schools

The questions below will serve as a general guide. Participant's responses will guide and direct the course of the interview.

- 1.) What is your present teaching assignment?
- 2.) How many courses/subjects do you teach?
- 3.) When were you hired by the school board?
- 4.) Was your interview conducted over the phone or in person?
- 5.) What were you told about the position when you were hired?
- 6.) Did you speak with other teachers who had previously taught on the Labrador coast?
- 7.) Did you apply for any other teaching positions besides your current position?
- 8.) What factors led you to accept this teaching position? (Long term unemployment, student loan, interest in native culture, etc.)
- 9.) Can you describe your first impressions of the community?
- 10.) Can you tell me about the first day of school when you met the students?
- 11.) If you needed help during your first year who did you look to most often?
- 12.) Did you live alone or with others during your first year in the community?
- 13.) Could you describe your living arrangements during your first year in the community? (paying bills, groceries, household chores)
- 14.) Did you bring a partner/spouse with you?
- 15.) Do you think that having a partner/spouse with you is necessary to handle living in an isolated community?
- 16.) Did you ever foresee teaching in an isolated, native community?
- 17.) Have you ever lived in a small, isolated community before taking this position?
- 18.) How would you describe your first year living and working in the community?
- 19.) Where did you complete your teacher training?
- 20.) Do you think your teacher training prepared you for your present position?
- 21.) During your first year, at any time, did you consider resigning?
- 22.) Have you developed friendships with local people?
- 23.) Do you think that these friendships have helped you to adjust to life in the community?
- 24.) Are you involved with any community groups or organizations outside of the school? What are they?
- 25.) How do you think the community perceives you?
- 26.) Do you feel you are a part of the community?
- 27.) Have you encountered any negative racial reaction to your presence in town? How do you deal with it?

- 28.) What do you enjoy most about life in the community?
- 29.) What do you consider to be drawbacks if any?
- 30.) When you accepted this position, what did you know about the culture of your students?
- 31.) Were you influenced by stories and media reports about social problems in native communities?
- 32.) Do you have any underlying principles or a philosophy regarding the way you teach native students?
- 33.) How do you incorporate the culture of your students into the curriculum you teach?
- 34.) By and large, do you stick to the provincial mandated curriculum?
- 35.) Do you feel that the provincial curriculum is relevant to your student's needs?
- 36.) Do you consider this community to be your home or your place of work?
- 37.) Now that you have lived here for a number of years, can you describe for me your thoughts on life in an isolated, native community?
- 38.) What are your future plans?

Appendix C

Sample Letter to Former Non-Native Teachers

Box 113
Hopedale, Labrador, Nfld.
AOP 1GO

December 1, 1998

Dear _____,

My name is Norma Denney. For the past eight years I have been employed as a senior high school Art and Social Studies teacher with the Labrador School Board. I am currently working on the research component of my thesis as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my work is to examine the life and work experiences of non-native teachers in native schools. My research will be qualitative in nature.

I am writing to you to request your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire. Participant observation, in-depth interviews, mailed questionnaires and document analysis will constitute the main methods of data collection. Participation will include: one ninety minute interview with each of the twelve current non-native teaching staff; daily observations of teacher activities and conversations both in the school and in social settings; mailed questionnaires will be sent to each of the twenty-one former non-native teaching staff along with letters of consent.

Recording devices for data include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have participation is complete. Participants also have the right to refuse that their interviews not be tape recorded. Mailed questionnaires will also be destroyed once they have been analyzed and coded. Transcripts, questionnaires and recordings will not be disclosed to any persons other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk of any kind, at any time during this study. All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and will only be identified through the use of a number code. Participation is completely voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and/or refrain from answering upon completion.

This study has received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland; the Director of Education for the

Labrador School Board; the principal of (school name); and the Education Advisor for the Labrador Inuit Association. If you agree to participate in this study, please read and sign the *Participant Consent* form attached below, complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the stamped envelope provided. I will contact you at a later date to ensure that you have received the questionnaire and answer any questions you may have regarding its completion.

If you would like further information regarding this study please contact me at (709) 933-3702 or (709) 726-7634. You may also wish to contact one of the following members of my supervisory committee; Dr. Amarjit Singh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8008; Dr. Ishmael Baksh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8621, or Mrs. Paula Corbett, Coordinator, Native and Northern and French Programmes, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7626. As a third party who is not involved in the research, you may contact Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8588.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Norma L. Denney
B.A., B.Ed.

Participant Consent Form

I, _____, declare that I understand the study outlined above and hereunder signify my willingness to voluntarily participate in the study as described.

I understand that I have the right to refuse such permission to participate in the study without prejudice of any kind. I understand and agree that my identity will remain confidential. I give permission to be anonymously quoted in any research article produced. It is also understood that the results of this study will be available, upon request, at the conclusion of the study to teachers who participated, the school principal, the Director of Education for the school board and the Labrador Inuit Association.

Date: _____, 199_ **Signature:** _____

Appendix D

Sample Letter to Current Non-Native Teachers

Box 113
Hopedale, Labrador, Nfld.
AOP 1GO

January 5, 1999

Dear Colleague:

My name is Norma Denney. As you are aware I have been employed as a senior high school Art and Social Studies teacher with the Labrador School Board for the past eight years. I am currently working on the research component of my thesis as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my research is to examine the life and work experiences of non-native teachers in native schools. My research will be qualitative in nature.

Participant observation, in-depth interviews, mailed questionnaires and document analysis constitute the main methods of data collection. All of these methods are non-evaluative in nature. Participation will include; one ninety minute interview with each of the twelve current non-native teaching staff; daily observations of teacher activities and conversations both in the school and social settings; mailed questionnaires will be sent to each of the twenty-one former non-native teaching staff along with letters of consent.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have the right to request that their interviews be erased and transcripts destroyed, once their participation is complete. Participants also have the right to refuse to have their interviews tape recorded. In this instance the researcher will use field notes to record interviews. Transcripts and recordings will not be disclosed to any persons other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk of any kind, at any time, during this study. All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and will only be identified through the use of a number code. Participation is completely voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and/or refrain from answering questions which he/she prefers to omit. A copy of the study can be made available to you upon completion.

This study has received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland; the Director of Education for the Labrador School Board; the principal of (school name); and the Education Advisor for the Labrador Inuit Association. If you agree to participate in this study, please read and

sign the *Teacher Consent Form* attached below. Please detach the form and return it at your earliest possible convenience.

If you would like further information regarding this study please contact me at (709) 933-3702. You may also wish to contact one of the following members of my supervisory committee; Dr. Amarjit Singh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8008; Dr. Ishmael Baksh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8621; or Mrs. Paula Corbett, Coordinator, Native and Northern and French Programmes, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7626. As a third party who is not involved in the research you may contact Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 727-8588.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Norma L. Denney
B.A., B.Ed.

Teacher Consent Form

I, _____, declare that I understand the study outlined above and hereunder signify my willingness to voluntarily participate in the study as described.

I understand that I have the right to refuse such permission to participate in the study without prejudice of any kind. I understand and agree that my identity will remain confidential. I give permission to be anonymously quoted in any research article produced after I have had the opportunity to review the text. It is also understood that the results of the study will be available, upon request, at the conclusion of the study to teachers who participated, the school principal, the Labrador Inuit Association and the school board.

Date: _____, 199_ **Signature:** _____

Appendix E

Sample Letter to School Principal

Box 113
Hopedale, Labrador, Nfld.
AOP 1GO

November 23, 1998

Mr. Rick Plowman
Principal: Amos Comenius Memorial School
Box 105
Hopedale, Labrador, Nfld.
AOP IGO

Dear Mr. Plowman:

My name is Norma Denney. As you are aware, I have been employed as a senior high school Art and Social Studies teacher with the Labrador School Board for the past eight years. I am currently working on the research component of my thesis as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my research is to examine the life and work experiences of non-native teachers in native schools. My research will be qualitative in nature.

My purpose in writing to you is to request your permission to conduct research at your school. If your approval is given twelve of the school's current non-native teachers, the school principal and twenty-one former non-native teachers will be selected to participate in this study. A letter given to participants will outline background information regarding the study, procedures, confidentiality information, and will include a consent form that must be signed by teachers. The letter will also notify them that prior approval to conduct the study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and that permission to conduct the study has been obtained from you.

Participant observation, in-depth interviews, mailed questionnaires and document analysis constitute the main methods of data collection. Participation will include; one ninety minute interview with each of the twelve current non-native teaching staff; daily observations of teacher activities and conversations both in the school and in social settings; mailed questionnaires will be sent to each of the twenty-one former non-native teaching staff along with letters of consent.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have the right to request that their interviews be erased and transcripts be destroyed once their participation is complete. Participants also have the right to refuse to have their interviews tape recorded. In this instance the researcher will use field notes to record the interviews. Transcripts and recordings will not be disclosed to any persons other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk of any kind, at any time, during this study. All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and will only be identified through the use of a number code. Participation is completely voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions which he/she prefers to omit. A copy of the study can be made available to you, the teachers involved, the school board and the Labrador Inuit Association upon completion.

This study has received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education. If you agree to allow your school's teachers to participate in this study, please read and sign the *School Consent Form* attached below. Please detach the form and return it at your earliest possible convenience.

If you would like further information regarding this study contact me at (709) 726-7634 or (709) 933-3702. You may also wish to contact one of the following members of my supervisory committee; Dr. Amarjit Singh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8008; Dr. Ishmael Baksh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8621 or Mrs. Paula Corbett, Coordinator, Native and Northern and French Programmes, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7626. As a third party who is not involved in the research you may contact Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8588.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Norma L. Denney
B.A., B.Ed.

I, _____, on behalf of Amos Comenius Memorial School, declare that I understand the study outlined above and hereunder signify my willingness to permit teachers at the aforementioned school to voluntarily participate in the study as described.

I understand that I have the right to refuse such permission to participate in the study or to withdraw our school from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind. It is also understood that teachers may refuse to participate without prejudice of any kind. I understand and agree that any information collected as a result of this study and the identity of the participants who gave it will remain confidential. It is also understood that the results of this study will be available, upon request, at the conclusion of the study to myself, teachers who participated and the Director of Education.

Date: _____, **199**_ **Signature:** _____

Appendix F

Sample Letter to Director of Education

Box 113
Hopedale, Labrador, Nfld.
A0P 1G0

November 23, 1998

Mr. Calvin Patey
Director of Education, Labrador School Board
P.O.Box 1810, Station "B"
Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, Nfld.
A0P 1E0

Dear Mr. Patey:

My name is Norma Denney. As you are aware, I have been employed as a senior high school Art and Social Studies teacher with the Labrador School Board for the past eight years. I am currently working on the research component of my thesis as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my research is to examine the life and work experiences of non-native teachers in native schools. My research will be qualitative in nature.

My purpose in writing to you is to request your permission to conduct research at Amos Comenius Memorial School within the jurisdiction of the Labrador School Board. If your approval is given, twelve of the school's current non-native teachers, the school principal and twenty-one former non-native teaching staff will be selected to participate in this study. A letter given to participants will outline background information regarding the study, procedures, confidentiality information and will include a consent form that must be signed by teachers. The letter will also notify them that prior approval to conduct this study has been approved by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and that permission to conduct this study in this district has been obtained from you.

Participant observation, in depth interviews, mailed questionnaires and document analysis constitute the main methods of data collection for this study. Participation will include: one ninety minute interview with each of the twelve current non-native teaching staff; daily observations of teacher activities and conversations both in the school and in social

settings; mailed questionnaires will be sent to each of the twenty-one former non-native teaching staff along with letters of consent.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have the right to request that their interviews be erased and transcripts be destroyed, once their participation is complete. Participants also have the right to refuse to be tape recorded. In this instance the researcher will field notes to record interviews. Transcripts and recordings will not be disclosed to any persons other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk of any kind, at any time, during this study. All information gathered in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and will only be identified through the use of a number code. Participation is completely voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions which he/she prefers to omit. A copy of the study can be made available to you, the school principal, the Labrador Inuit Association, and teachers involved upon request.

This study has received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education. If you agree to grant permission for teachers to participate in this study, please read and sign the *District Consent Form* attached below. Please detach the form and return it at your earliest possible convenience in the stamped envelope provided.

If you would like further information regarding this study please contact me at (709) 933-3702 or (709) 726-7634. You may also wish to contact one of the following members of my supervisory committee: Dr. Amarjit Singh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8008; Dr. Ishmael Baksh, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8621; or Mrs. Paula Corbett, Coordinator, Native and Northern and French Programmes, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737- 7626. As a third party who is not involved in the research, you may contact Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-8588.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Norma L. Denney
B.A., B.Ed.

District Consent Form

I, _____, on behalf of the Labrador School Board, declare that I understand the study outlined above and hereunder signify my willingness to permit teachers to voluntarily participate in the study as described.

I understand that I have the right to refuse such permission to participate in the study or to withdraw our school from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind. It is also understood that teachers may refuse to participate without prejudice of any kind. I understand and agree that any information collected as a result of this study and the identity of the participants who gave it will remain confidential. It is also understood that the results of this study will be available upon request, at the conclusion of the study to teachers who participated, the school principal, the Labrador Inuit Association and the school board .

Date: _____, 199_ **Signature:** _____



