

PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS AND DROPOUTS  
TOWARD LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY IN  
BAND-OPERATED ONTARIO NATIVE SCHOOLS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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BOBBY DENNIS HANCOTT







PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS AND DROPOUTS  
TOWARD LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY IN  
BAND-OPERATED ONTARIO NATIVE SCHOOLS.

by

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PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS AND DROPOUTS  
TOWARD LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY IN  
NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO NATIVE SCHOOLS.

BOBBY DENNIS HANCOTT  
1996

## Abstract

This study had a dual purpose. The first was to compare the perceptions of educators with those of dropouts with respect to the following variables; school work and attendance, parental support, school life, career plans and guidance, belonging to school, school rules and regulations, relevance of school curriculum, and other possible reasons for dropping out. The second was to ascertain from educators and dropouts initiatives that could help students stay in school and/or return to school and complete their high school diploma. From this research several recommendations are made to the various Local Education Authorities and School Boards that could potentially help increase the success rate of Native students in school.

A review of the literature indicated that many of the problems associated with dropping out dealt with the student's family backgrounds, personal characteristics and attitudes, and academic characteristics. However, Native youth face other barriers (irrelevant school curriculum, lack of parental support, insufficient career counselling and homesickness,

etc) that influence them to drop out of school. Data were gathered by means of two questionnaires based on a review of the literature: one for educators; and one for dropouts.

On the basis of this study, it was concluded that differences in perceptions of educators and dropouts toward early school leavers were overall statistically significant at the .05 level. It revealed that educators perceived school work and attendance as important factors in contributing to Native youth dropping out of school. With the exception of skipping school and classes, dropouts believed that school work and attendance did not affect their leaving decisions.

Educators strongly agreed that insufficient career plans and guidance contributed to students decisions to drop out of school whereas dropouts did not consider this area contributed to the problem but long term planning was seen as somewhat of a factor.

Educators felt that having a curriculum developed and taught by non-Natives was a factor in students deciding to terminate schooling. Dropouts felt that lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities and the fact that the

development and teaching of the curriculum by non-Natives was somewhat of a factor in their decision to drop out of school.

Dropouts were more neutral in their opinion about the lack of sufficient communication with parents and the community whereas educators felt that parents and teachers did not communicate enough and this contributed to dropping out.

Both groups of respondents felt that student/staff relations was not an issue in contributing to student decisions to terminate schooling. Educators believed that a lack of parental interest and encouragement contributed to dropping out whereas dropouts did not consider this area contributed in their leaving decision.

With respect to the relevance of the school curriculum, dropouts considered that this, somewhat, contributed to their leaving decisions whereas educators were more in agreement that it did.

Overall, dropouts did not consider the listed reasons for other possible reasons for dropping out contributed in their leaving decisions, with, perhaps, the exception of having many friends who had dropped out of school. Educators agreed that

little educational material in the home, having many friends who had dropped out, and living away from home while attending school influenced students to drop out.

Educators indicated that parental support and encouragement was needed to help increase the success rate of Native students in school. They also stressed the need for better guidance services and more Native teachers. Approximately the same number of educators as dropouts suggested having a high school on the Reserve and more involvement in extra-curricular activities would help increase graduation rates.

The findings of this study may have implications for all stakeholders involved in the education of Native children. Recommendations were made with respect to helping students develop career plans; establish effective communication between school personnel/parents and students; assisting students in residential situations; improving guidance applications within schools; addressing the use of culturally relevant material; increasing extra-curricular participation; and establishing a monitoring system for "at risk" students.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a key role in native plans for the future, both in enhancing respect for traditional cultures and in providing the knowledge essential for future economic success (Allen D. McMillan, 1988, p. 300).

Education, in many cultures, is perceived as a means to an improved lifestyle; it is seen as an avenue that allows citizens in society to attain their career goals and develop to their full potential. Through education, individuals gain the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values which will enable them to function effectively and efficiently in an ever changing and complex world. Consequently, lack of education, potentially, leaves the individual with limited life choices, fewer job opportunities, the likelihood of increased criminal activity, and more often than not, dependent on government assistance (employment insurance (EI), and social assistance) in order to survive. The greatest loss of all is in human talent and the contribution this creativity can make toward the provincial, national and global economies.

Unfortunately, the young people leaving school, prematurely, are the ones who are less prepared to meet the complexities of modern social, political, and economic life. This philosophy is expoused in both non-native and native cultures. Both groups acknowledge and understand that lack of education leads to unnecessary and avoidable loss of social and economic benefits, both to Canada and to the Native people themselves.

In January 1991, a Canadian Senate committee studying child poverty, outlined several negative economic effects of the greater high school drop-out rates experienced by children from poor families. In fact, the Senate committee concluded that if the current rates of poverty-induced dropping out persist over the next 20 years, Canada will be in a poor economic situation. It painted a bleak picture by outlining the financial burden and likely economic cost of: loss of income and productivity (\$23 billion); foregone income and sales taxes (\$8.4 billion); increased government transfer benefits, such as employment insurance and social assistance (\$1.4 billion); reduced contributions to EI (\$220 million); and higher unemployment rates. Poverty-induced dropping out

permanently adds 0.2 percentage points to these national rates (Canada Parliament Senate, 1991).

If this bleak economic picture is not enough to convince Canadians of the need to improve our schools and decrease the dropout rate, the finding by Ross (1991), in *Education as an Investment for Indians on Reserves: The causes of Their Poor Educational Levels and the Economic Benefits of Improving Them*, should. He observed that:

Countries with high levels of human capital, acquired through investment in education, will be the economic leaders in the world stage. Consequently, if Canada wishes to compete on the world stage and remain internationally competitive it must squeeze all it can from its scarce human capital. It must drastically reduce its average 30% high-school dropout rate; it must encourage former drop-outs to return to school; and it must encourage more students to continue their studies beyond the secondary school level (p. 2).

In addition to investing in education for the purpose of retaining or increasing Canada's international competitiveness Ross also noted that:

Around the year 2020, it is estimated that for the first time in Canada's recorded history, there will be a larger proportion of the population over 65 years of age than under 20 years. This inversion of the population pyramid will place great pressure on Canada to maximize the use of its shrinking labour force. If it does not, the

social, educational and health standards that Canadians have grown to accept and enjoy will be placed in jeopardy simply because we will not be able to afford them (p. 2).

As Canadians approach the 21st century they will be forced to debate and solve many difficult and perplexing problems. Issues concerning the revamping of our social programs and the criminal justice system are being discussed at this time. The final outcome of these policies is directly linked to the success of the education system including the retention of youth through to high school graduation. Without the latter, youth lack, according to Gilbert, et al. (1993), "the necessary education required to receive even a basic standard of living and are restricted to a lower quality of life" (p. 57).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

If Canadians are to begin improving education levels they could find no better place to start than among the Native population. According to Mercedi (1990) the dropout rate among registered Indians is around 70%. Although this statistic may seem excessive, other researchers have drawn

similar conclusions. For example, Peng and Takai (1983), in studying the dropout rate among American Indians, found it to be 29.2%; Hill (1991), reported that the American Indian high school dropout rate exceeded 65% nationally; and Chavers (1991) reported that the dropout rate of American Indians was 50% or above.

A closer examination by Ross (1991) of dropout statistics for native people in Canada revealed the following:

For 1990, it is estimated that around 69,000 young adults on reserves between the ages of 15-34 had left school before completing high school. Almost one-half of these (33,000) had not even completed grade nine and were considered functionally illiterate (p. 3).

Furthermore, Ross compared the educational levels of various groups in Canada (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1

A Comparison of the Education Levels of Indians On-Reserve with Other Population Groups 15-43 Years of Age, 1986.

Education Level	On-Reserve Indians	MIN-Aboriginal*	Non-Aboriginal Canadians
0-8 years	30.3	11.0	4.5
9-13 years	46.1	40.8	31.6
Completed high school	5.0	12.1	16.3
Incomplete post-secondary	10.4	16.5	19.3
Completed trade or college	7.6	15.8	18.6
University Graduate	0.7	3.8	9.7
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

\* In this and subsequent tables, this population group includes Métis, Inuit and non-status Indians, but excludes status Indians living off-reserve.

(From Ross, 1991, p. 4)

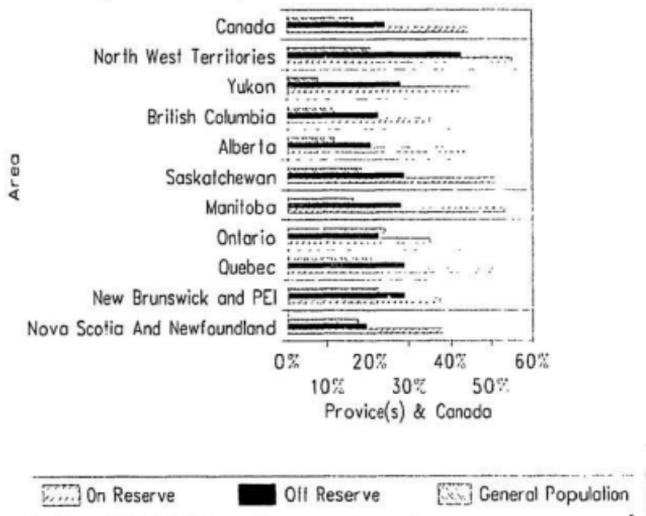
The information shows two significant statistics. First, over 75% of reserve Indians aged 15-34 have not finished high-school and less than 10% have a trade certificate or university degree as compared to 36.1% of non-aboriginal

Canadians. The second, is the fact that almost three times as many reserve Indians as non-aboriginal Canadians have not completed grade nine and are, therefore, considered functionally illiterate.

Data from a 1986 census had also illustrated the gap in educational attainment between the aboriginal population and the overall Canadian population. Figure 1 shows that, "on average, 45% of the on-reserve and 24% of the off-reserve adult Indian population have less than a grade nine education. This compares to 17% of the non-Indian population" (Economic Council of Canada, 1992, p. 6).

Figure 1

## Aboriginal Peoples Grade 9 Achievement



(From Economic Council, 1992)

The consequences of dropping out of school at such an early age is devastating; at best it leads to low paying jobs, and at worst, reliance on government assistance. Kaplan and Luck (1977) noted that youth who drop out are more likely to become burdens on society and require public assistance. Dropping out of school often leads to unemployment, or to underemployment in low-paid, often part-time jobs (Polk, 1984; Glibert, et al., 1993).

According to a report by Employment and Immigration entitled, *Tackling The Dropout Problem* (1991), dropouts make less money, have lower lifetime earnings, have problems finding and keeping a job, are unemployed more often and for longer times, and marry at early ages. Female dropouts are more likely than female graduates to be in occupations characterized as a female-job ghetto. Ross (1990) reported that this poor educational level puts dropouts at a serious disadvantage in the competition for jobs with better educated workers. Sinclair (1983) had voiced similar concerns when he stated that:

Regrettably, without a grade 12 education, many doors of opportunity remain closed. Many of our young people,

lacking skill training and basic literacy, are non-competitive in the present job market. Each year more of our people - our young people - are added to the total of those who remain behind closed doors (p. 11).

Spain and Sharpe (1990), in their study, *Youth Transition into the Labour Market*, based on youth in Newfoundland schools, concurred with the conclusions by Ross (1990) and Sinclair (1983). They noted that:

Dropping-out, that is, leaving an educational program before its completion, is a major choice pattern of concern, because in general, it is regarded to be too early a departure from a pattern that leads to the attainment of the higher order employment goals. At a minimum, early program leaving threatens the ability of the person leaving to adapt to the labour market (p. 12).

Irwin (1988) painted a bleak assessment of the environment that Inuit youth encounter as they grow into adulthood. He indicated that:

the present economic prospect for the Inuit may well be one of the worst in Canada marked as it is by poor levels of education and high unemployment. If current trends continue, most of the Inuit living in the Arctic in the year 2025 will be second generation wards of the State whose society, economy and culture may have more in common with an urban slum than with life their grandparents knew (p. 40).

Woods and Griffiths (1995) concurred with Irwin and observed that in "several communities in the Baffin Region, the rates of Social Assistance approach 80% and many of the employment positions are government related" (p. 10).

Working at jobs that pay the minimum wage or relying on government assistance, can and often does, cause an individual or their family to live in poverty. Ross (1991) outlined this fact (see Table 2) by observing that Indians residing on reserves have incomes much below either MIN (Métis, Inuit, Non-status) aboriginal peoples or non-aboriginal Canadians.

Table 2

Median Incomes of Indians On-Reserves and Other Population Groups, Age 15-34, 1990.

Level	On-reserve Indians	MIN Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal Canadians
Income	\$ 5,873	\$ 11,028	\$ 14,226
% of non- aboriginal median	41.3%	77.5%	100.0%

\* Total incomes, from all sources for 1985 as reported in the 1985 Census, adjusted for inflation to 1990 levels. The data only include who reported some income during the year.

(From Ross, 1991, p .7)

From further analysis of the information in Table 2, it is obvious that Indians residing on reserves had the lowest incomes of the groups being studied.

The low incomes shown in Table 2 also help explain the bleak picture displayed in Table 3. The information reveals that in 1986 close to one-half (48%) of Indian families on reserves were living below the poverty line. In addition, the poverty rate for Indians on reserves was three times greater than it was for non-native families, and over twice as great as that for mixed aboriginal families. Secondly, the data reveals that the poverty rate for children on reserves is 2.6 times the rate for non-aboriginal children.

Table 3

Rates of Family Poverty for Indian and Other Population Groups  
by Selected Characteristics, 1986.

Characteristic	Mixed Aboriginal	Non Aboriginal	Aboriginal
All Families	44%	22%	16%
On-Reserve	48%	-	-
Off-Reserve	43%	22%	16%
All Children	51%	27%	20%
On-reserve	52%	-	-
Off-reserve	50%	27%	20%

Aboriginal people living on reserves are Indians.

(From Ross, 1991, p. 8)

Living in poverty has a negative effect on families and consequently children who want to complete their schooling. For example, the Canada Parliament Senate report (1991) clearly showed that the drop-out rate of children from poor families was twice that of children from non-poor families. In addition, in poor families the expenses incurred with sending children to school are difficult to meet. For example, the cost of school materials, clothes and extra-curricular athletic and social activities can strain poverty

incomes. Likewise, attending school rather than working and contributing to family income may be regarded as a luxury in many poor families. Consequently, once the compulsory age of schooling has been attained, there is a strong financial incentive to leave school.

Another income related factor that leads to Indian children dropping out of school is associated with students on reserves who are required to leave their homes to attend high school. This creates several problems for families with low incomes. Firstly, when a child gets homesick or a parent needs to know how their child is adjusting, expensive phone bills and travel may be necessary. Secondly, Native children who attend high school are subjected to a foreign environment with non-Indian peers from higher-income families who can often afford the extra costs of attending school. Consequently, their feelings of being disadvantaged are constantly made evident to them. In such an environment, whether Indian or not, adolescent students find it difficult to maintain their self-esteem among their "better-off" peers. This can lead to a strong desire to drop out.

Until this vicious cycle of low education levels leading to low paying jobs, and low paying jobs leading to poverty, and poverty causing low educational levels can be reversed, the dismal situation on many reserves will remain the same. Information policies and programs that can help break into this cycle, especially with respect to retaining students in school until high school graduation, could help reverse such trends.

The overall intent of this study was to compare the perceptions of selected school personnel in Native schools with those of Native students who had dropped out of school with respect to several variables related to attrition and retention. More specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Is there a difference between the perceptions of school personnel and students who have dropped out of school with respect to:

- a) school work and attendance;
- b) career plans and guidance;
- c) belonging to school;
- d) home/school communication;

- e) student/staff relations;
  - f) parental support;
  - g) relevance of the school curriculum and;
  - h) other possible reasons for dropping out.
2. What other factors do educators and the students who have dropped out of school consider contribute to dropping out?
3. What specific factors do school personnel and the students who have dropped out of school consider would have helped them:
- (a) stay in school; and
  - (b) return to school and complete their high school diploma?.
4. What affect did living away from home have on a student's decision to drop out?

#### **Significance of the study**

A review of the literature indicates that a real need exists to conduct research in the area of perceptions related to Native student dropouts. Individuals perceive events and circumstances and then act on their perceptions. For example, if individuals perceive school as challenging and

interesting they are more likely to attend regularly and try their best. On the other hand, if students perceive school as irrelevant or boring they are more likely to skip classes and not work to their potential. Consequently, from analyzing the perceptions of educators concerning reasons Native students drop out of school, and comparing them to the perceptions of Native dropouts, a number of insights may emerge. These insights could lead to policy and operating procedure changes within Native schools that will reduce the attrition rate and increase the chances of graduation. Also, the results of this research may help school personnel understand schooling from a Native student perspective, design more relevant curricula, establish more effective methodologies when teaching Native children, and create, overall, a better learning environment.

In essence, the findings from the proposed research may permit teachers, school administrators, and local education authorities to improve their schools and encourage Native children to continue with education through to successful high school completion.

This study will also add to the findings of other research in this area, particularly that of Mackey and Myles (1990) whose study on Native dropouts in Ontario public secondary schools was fairly extensive. However, the latter work did not specifically examine the critical issue of students who dropped out of Band operated schools located on Reserves. Such schools have some of the most serious attrition problems in Canada and are the central focus of this research.

#### **Limitations**

Conclusions and interpretations arising from the results of this study will have to be considered with regard to the following limitations:

1. Since the study is confined to dropouts on isolated reserves in Ontario, the results may not be generalizable to other areas of the province, or the province in general.
2. Dropouts contacted will be restricted to those available within the area at the given time of the study.

3. The study will not overcome the perceptions that dropouts may have about themselves or the last school attended.
4. Reasons given by students for withdrawal may not reveal the actual causes.

#### **Definition of Terms**

To clarify the meaning of terms used in this study, the following definitions are presented:

**INDIAN:** a person who pursuant to the Indian Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian. This registration may be on Band lists or on the general lists of non-reserve resident Indians.

**GRADUATION:** indicates the Indian student's completion of grade 12.

**BAND:** a group of Natives who share the use and benefit of Reserve Lands.

**BAND/LOCAL CONTROL:** the control of Native education by the local people who are members of Indian Bands and Nations, in the Ontario Region of the Department of Indian Affairs.

**DISTRICT:** the area in which a number of Bands live within the Ontario Region of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs.

**DROPOUT:** a term used to describe any student who left school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of the grade 12 program of studies in Ontario.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

An analysis of the literature concerning the dropout phenomenon reveals that it is a very complex subject and is replete with descriptions of predictors of high risk students. This creates a problem to the extent that it becomes difficult to view the concern as a whole; it makes it hard to distinguish the myths from the realities about dropouts, especially for Native people. Despite this problem however, the majority of the information presents a fairly clear picture of a dropout. Hoyt (1962), for example, typified the dropout as follows:

He is more likely to be a boy than a girl, to be below average in intellectual ability and even lower, relatively speaking, in academic achievement. He will not have participated in many school activities and will have his closest friend outside of the school population. He comes from a relatively large town and is attending a relatively large high school. His parents are likely to be from a lower social stratum and his father employed in a lower class occupation. Neither his parents nor any of his brothers or sisters are apt to have distinguished themselves in terms of educational attainment. While he may or may not express an active like or dislike for

school, he is apt to be absent rather frequently and in other ways to demonstrate the attitude that he really does not belong in the school building (p. 516).

More recent studies, support the findings of Hoyt, but disagree in terms of intellectual ability. For example, Deblois (1989) stated that "most dropouts do not have low IQ's, are often two years behind their peers in reading and math skills, possess a very low sense of self-esteem and by the time they reach the seventh grade they have been kept back for one or more years" (p. 28).

Further, students who have been delayed in their schooling or who are behind their age group, tend to experience higher rates of withdrawal. Such delays are frequently the result of being held back because of linguistic difficulties, learning disorders, or academic failure (Hoffer, 1986). Similarly, students who have intact families (two parents) are more likely to continue their schooling than those who are from single family homes (Rumberger, 1987). The typical dropout, as described in the literature, experiences difficulties in learning from primary school on up, and often has repeated failures (Bachman, 1971; Spain & Sharpe, 1990).

Finally, Young and Reich (1974) believed that dropouts were students who exhibited poor attitudes toward school, had poor attendance, were failing in subjects, lacked credits and were among the oldest in their grade level.

The description of the dropout by Bowker (1992) incorporates the work of the previous findings. He described dropouts as:

coming from a distinct ethnic group; they are often from low-income families; they frequently come from one-parent homes; the educational levels of their parents and older siblings often stop short of high school completion; they have experienced repeated failure in school; they may be the products of dysfunctional families and physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; they may come from homes where a language other than English is spoken; they may come from a family where drug and alcohol abuse is a problem; they may become pregnant during their adolescent years; and they may have experienced a variety of forms of racism, stereotyping, or discrimination from early childhood (p. 7).

Such descriptions present a fairly clear view of a school dropout. However, to gain a greater understanding and appreciation as to why individuals drop out of school, the literature on various predictors and characteristics will be discussed in more detail.

### **Family Background**

The variables and factors discussed under family background are subdivided into seven categories which include socio-economic status, parents' occupation and income level, number of natural parents, family size, parents' educational level, educational material in the home, and sibling dropouts.

#### **Socio-economic Status**

With the exception of one study (Watson, 1976), all the literature analyzed noted the importance of socio-economic status as a variable in the dynamics of dropping out. The most universal finding in dropout research literature is that children from families of low socio-economic status are more likely to dropout than children from a family of high socio-economic status.

Mackey and Myles (1990) reported that "Métis and off-reserve dropouts were more likely than on-reserve dropouts to agree that they left school because of financial hardships at home and most economically disadvantaged students reported themselves or were reported by others as dropping out to earn

their own money" (p. 64). In an earlier study completed by Larter and Eason (1978), it was concluded that 57.4% of dropouts fell in the lowest socio-economic background category. Frieson (1976), found that 57.7% of the group he studied came from a low socio-economic background, whereas only 7.1% came from a high socio-economic background. In addition, the research performed by Ekstrom et al. (1986) using the "High School and Beyond" study noted that the two background characteristics most strongly related to dropping out were socio-economic status and race/ethnicity. Similarly, the work done by Rumberger (1987) supported the finding of Larter and Eason (1978), Frieson (1976), and Ekstrom et al. (1986) by observing that "dropout rates are higher for students from families of low socio-economic status, no matter what particular factors are used to measure socio-economic status" ( p. 110). Likewise, Ross (1991), from analyzing the Senate report, concluded that "the dropout rate of children from poor families was twice that of children from non-poor families" (p .9).

**Parents' Occupation and Income**

An analysis of the literature, reveals that students from families with lower incomes had much higher drop out rates. This finding is supported by Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978), and Ross (1991). Watson (1976), on the other hand, found that the occupational status of the fathers' of dropouts was not significantly different from the general Ontario male population of the same age. Although the median family income among the dropouts was lower than the provincial average (\$11,500 versus \$14,000), he concluded that this does not reflect severe economic hardships.

**Number of Natural Parents**

The family situation appears to directly affect the decision of a child to remain or terminate schooling. The implications seems to be that children from single parent families are likely to be under greater economic pressure to contribute to the family income or the children are incapable of dealing with their home environment. Whatever the reasons, it is evident that children from single parent families drop

out of school at a greater rate than those students who live with both parents. For example, several researchers noted that dropouts were found to be more likely to have separated parents than non-dropouts (Hamreus, 1963; Livingston, 1958; Lloyd, 1968; Tuel, 1966). Similarly, Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) found that "only 54% of dropouts were living with both parents compared to 90% of non-dropouts" (p. 307). Steinberg et al. (1984) noted that single parenthood is consistently seen to be a variable related to high dropout rates. Likewise, Ekstrom et al. (1986), found that "the mothers of dropouts were more likely to be working and that dropouts were less likely to have both natural parents living at home" (p. 358). In addition, Hodgkinson (1990) reported that "31% of dropouts came from single-parent homes" (p. 7).

### **Family Size**

Another factor that has a bearing on dropouts is family size. As Watson (1976), Ekstrom et al. (1986) and Steinberg et al. (1984) noted, dropouts often come from large families. Although Schwager (1974) does not investigate family size as

an independent variable associated with dropping out, he estimated the family size of his Métis and non-status population to be four. Bowman and Matthew (1960) found in their research that dropouts often came from families with five or more children, while graduates came from families with four or less. Similarly, Larter and Eason (1978), in their study of dropouts, noted that dropouts came from large families with the average number of children being 4.7.

#### **Parents Education Level**

Rumberger (1987) concluded that "low educational attainment levels of parents is one of the family-related factors related to dropping out" (p. 110). The general finding is that parents of children who decided to terminate their schooling were themselves dropouts. For example, Mink and Barker (1968) described the dropout as "coming from a family that does not value education highly and has a history of low educational attainment" (p. 17). Likewise, Tseng (1972) supported this view by noting "dropouts as a group had parents of lower educational levels and fathers whose

occupation could be characterized by lower levels of difficulty, responsibility, and prestige" (p. 462).

Duncan (1973) found that the parents of potential dropouts had less formal education than parents of potential persisters (p. 104-106). Similarly, Zamanazdeh and Prince (1978) found that the parents of dropouts were almost always themselves dropouts. The Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study, which included Métis and Indian students as a sub-population, found that 75% of the dropouts interviewed had parents who were dropouts. Similarly, in the Bass and Tonjes (1970) study, 20% of the parents of both dropouts and graduates had no formal schooling and only one parent in seven was a high school dropout. Gillespie (1979), in similarly findings, concluded that the value placed on education by parents, as measured by the amount of encouragement they gave, or by positive and negative attitudes towards education, was usually a factor related to a student's decision to drop out of school.

### **Educational Material in the Home.**

A comprehensive review of the literature, revealed that little research has been done in this area. However, several studies have shown that the absence of learning material in the home is one of the family-related factors associated with dropping out. For example, Rumberger (1987) and Ekstrom et al. (1986) noted that dropouts were found, generally, to come from families with a weaker educational support system; they had fewer study aids in the home and less opportunity for learning outside the school environment.

### **Sibling Dropouts**

Several authors have addressed the fact that the likelihood of an individual dropping out increases when another member of the family has dropped out of school. For example, Zamanazdeh and Prince (1978) suggested that some students may drop out because it is a "family tradition" (p. 314). Similarly, Watson (1976) found that among the dropouts in her sample, "half had a brother or sister who had dropped out" (p. 69). The Northern Alberta Development Council (1984)

found that most school leavers had other family members in addition to their parents, who had left school. Finally, a report by Employment and Immigration entitled, *Tackling The Dropout Problem* (1991) listed older brothers or sisters who have dropped out as a family-related risk factor.

#### **Personal Characteristics and Attitudes**

There are three variables and factors discussed under personal characteristics and attitudes of student dropouts. They include age, gender, and peer relationships.

##### **Age**

Zellar (1966) reported that one of the primary factors which may cause a student to drop out was "grade-placement two or more years below age level" (p. 20). In similar findings, Gilbert and Ellis (1972) reported that while 47% of the students who withdrew from Vancouver schools were in grades 10 or 11, where the normal ages for students would be 15 and 16 years respectively, the median age of the school dropouts was 17 years, and 7 months. Walter and Kranzler (1970) concluded

that age could be used consistently to predict potential drop outs.

Spain and Sharpe (1990), in their survey of early school leavers, concluded that "the average age of the school leaver was 17.7 years and the range of age was 14-23 years old. Seven point six percent were well below the legal school leaving age of 16, yet 14% were 19 years or older, which is beyond the age that people normally remain in school" (p. 47). The *Northern Alberta Development Council* study (1984) found that students leaving school before the age of 16 tended to be from the rural areas and that while Native students leave at approximately the same age as non-natives, they tended to complete fewer grades. However, the *Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout* (ICD) study (Saskatchewan Education, 1985), found that almost 40% of the Indian dropouts and 30% of the Métis and non-Status Indians left school before the age of 16 in comparison to 17% of non-native dropouts.

**Gender**

The classic dropout finding is that more males drop out than do females. While males are more likely to cite school-related or economic reasons for dropping out, females more often report personal reasons including pregnancy or marriage (Northern Alberta Development Council, 1984; Rumberger, 1987; Spain and Sharpe, 1990; and Watson 1976). Guest (1968) reported that 52.6% of the total leavers in 1964-65 in Winnipeg were males. Similarly, Fleming (1973) found that, approximately 61.5% leaving in Windsor, Ontario, in 1971-72 were male.

The Saskatchewan ICD (1985) study found that "80% of 13 year old dropouts were female, but the male/female ratio balanced out by age 15. The majority of status Indian dropouts from all grades were females; in contrast, males outnumbered females among Métis/non-status and among non-Native dropouts" (p. 30-31).

### **Peer Relationships**

According to Rumberger (1987), "although it is known that many dropouts have friends who are also dropouts and who share many of the same educational aspirations and attitudes toward school, it is not clear to what extent and in which ways peers influence the decision to leave school" (p. 110). Ekstrom et al. (1986) found that dropouts were less likely to feel that they were popular at school, were more likely to feel that they were regarded as trouble makers, and their chosen friends appeared to be more alienated from the school environment than were friends of those who persisted through schooling.

Similarly, Mackey and Myles (1990) noted that more than half of all respondents agreed either that dropouts tended to have friends who had already dropped out or they believed this to have contributed to their eventual withdrawal. Spain and Sharpe (1990), on the other hand, found that only 1.1% of students gave this as a reason for dropping out.

Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) found that dropouts were either more isolated from their peers or were excessively involved with friends. Similarly, when asked what things they

liked best about school, 60% of the dropouts in the Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study mentioned the presence of friends as compared to only 25% of those who remained in school.

In the *Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout* (Saskatchewan Education, 1985) study Native students reported being made to feel unwelcome by other students. They also experienced a high level of social isolation at school, and were the target of name calling and insults.

#### **Academic Characteristics**

Under academic characteristics, six variables and factors were discussed. They included grade retention/failure, disinterest/dissatisfaction with school, attendance, discipline, homework, and involvement in extra curricular activities.

**Grade Retention/Failure**

In the Report of the *Royal Commission on Education and Youth*, Warren (1968) stated that very few students benefit from non-promotion. He qualified his view by stating: "there is no doubt that repetition of grades, especially at the elementary level, is a major reason for withdrawal from school... those forced to repeat often become frustrated and drop out" (p. 39). Similarly, Ducan (1973), in his study of potential dropouts in a Newfoundland school district, showed that grade repetition for students who were potential dropouts was quite high. Crocker and Riggs (1979), in a *Task Force on Education*, stated that "the dropout tended to be a low achiever and failed at least one grade prior to leaving school" (p. 25). In similar findings, Zamanzadeh and Prince's data (1978) revealed that, "59% of dropouts failed two or more subjects compared to only 17% of non-dropouts" (p. 309). Mackey and Myles (1990) concurred with these earlier studies by concluding that getting poor grades in tests and exams or failing courses is characteristic of students who drop out. The Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study also

supports these findings with almost one-half of the dropouts scoring below 50% in various subjects (p. 17).

Numerous other studies have documented the poor academic achievement of dropouts as measured by grades, test scores, and grade retention, (Ekstrom et al. 1986; Rumberger, 1987; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Two Canadian studies support the idea that grade retention has an effect on dropping out. The Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study found that while Native and Caucasian students leave school at about the same ages, Native students usually complete fewer grades before dropping out. Similarly, the *Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout* (Saskatchewan Education, 1985) study found that "81% of non-Native, 73.9% of Métis/non-status, and 63% of non-Native students were far behind the grade level for their age" (p. 32).

The only study to contradict the findings that poor academic achievement, and the repetition of grades contribute to a student dropping out, was that of Watson (1976). She found that only 28% of the dropouts were failing according to her criteria, and concluded that "dropping out is not

primarily a response to failing school marks and eliminating failure will not eliminate dropouts" (p. 265).

#### **Disinterest/Dissatisfaction with school.**

Disinterest or dissatisfaction has been considered as an indicator of alienation from school life. Mackey and Myles (1990) concluded that 40% of dropouts quit school because of boredom or lack of interest in school subjects. Kennedy (1966) and Gillespie (1979) noted that the chief reason for students dropping out of school was because of a lack of interest. In similar findings, Cervantes (1969) found that dropouts had more than twice as many items that they disliked about school when compared with graduates. Likewise, Ekstrom et al. (1986) found that dropouts were less interested in school (60% versus 79%) and less satisfied with the way their education was going (45% versus 69%) than students who stayed in school. These findings were echoed by the research of Spain and Sharpe (1990) who reported that "41.1% of the sample complained that the programs were dull and uninteresting" (p. 39). Zamanzadeh and Prince (1986) also found that dropouts

reported that they paid less attention in class (8% versus 74%) than did non-dropouts.

This recurrent theme emerges in the work by the authors of the *Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout* (Saskatchewan Education, 1985) study and the Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study. In both cases, Native and Métis students cited lack of interest in the content of education and general alienation from the school environment for dropping out. In the *Saskatchewan Inner City Dropout* study, the reason most often given by students for dropping out was that school was deemed to be irrelevant, that students were disinterested, or that they preferred work to continuing in school. In the Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study, lack of interest and dissatisfaction with the school atmosphere were the attitudes most frequently expressed by dropouts.

### **Attendance**

Most of the investigations considering attendance found that the dropouts were absent from school significantly more

often than non-dropouts (Ekstrom et al, 1986; Hamreus, 1963; Hopkins, 1964; Howard, 1972; Livingston, 1958; Lloyd, 1968; Mackey & Myles, 1990; Rumberger, 1987; Stroup & Robins, 1972; Tuel, 1966; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986; Zellar, 1966).

Greene (1966), Silberman (1970), and Tuel (1966) all reported that the frequency of absence increased as the dropout progressed through school. Howard (1972) discovered that in their last full year of school nearly 23% of the dropouts missed 25 days, while for non-dropouts only 0.5% were absent that often. Truancy was also an important discriminating factor in Zamanzadeh and Prince's (1978) study. They reported that "97% of dropouts skipped school regularly compared to 7% of non-dropouts" (p. 308). Mackey and Myles (1990) noted that absenteeism was the variable most clearly associated with dropping out.

### **Homework**

Not completing homework may be associated with, or contribute to a student dropping out of school. For example, Mackey and Myles (1990) reported failure to do homework as a

key factor among Native dropouts. The same researchers noted that "the low educational attainment of many Native parents results in parents who are unfamiliar with the education system, especially homework, and find themselves at a loss to provide their children with assistance in completing homework and assignments" (p. 25). Similarly, Ekstrom et al. (1986) had found that dropouts, not surprisingly, reported doing less homework (2.2 hours per week versus 4 hours) than those who stayed in school. Earlier research of Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) revealed similar findings. However, it should be noted that such research didn't outline how not doing homework affected a student's decision to drop out of school.

### **Discipline**

According to Sharpe and Spain (1990) "10.8% of the students in their sample dropped out because of discipline problems" (p. 40). Wehlage and Rutter (1986) found that the existence of discipline problems was a good discriminator of dropouts, stay-ins, and college-bound students. Ekstrom et al. (1986) also found that dropouts tended to be disciplined

more for behaviour problems such as being late, cutting classes, being suspended or being placed on probation. The same researchers further indicated that dropouts were more likely to have serious problems with the law. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) found that "dropouts had problems with teachers in elementary school and that these difficulties increased in secondary school (p. 308). Similarly, the Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study found that almost three quarters of the dropouts had discipline problems. Finally, Mackey and Myles (1990) concluded that persistent truancy and lateness set the stage for conflicts between educators and students and contributed to dropping out.

#### **Extra Curricular Activities**

Student involvement in extra-curricular activities also appears to have an impact on the decision to remain in, or drop out of, school. Mackey and Myles (1990) noted that "almost all educators in the schools felt that participation in extra curricular activities improved a student's chances of remaining in school and Native dropouts rarely got involved in

after-school activities" (p. 63). Similarly, Bell (1967) had observed that 68% of the dropouts were non-participants as compared to only 4% of the non-dropouts. Dentler and Warshauer (1968) echoed the same results in terms of extra-curricular activities. Ekstrom et al. (1986) had also found that dropouts had lower levels of participation in most extra-curricular activities. Likewise, a report by Employment and Immigration entitled, *Tackling The Dropout Problem*, (1991) listed little or no participation in extracurricular activities as a school-related risk factor. In contrast, the Northern Alberta Development Council (1984) study had found that "44% of dropouts mentioned sports as one of the things they liked best about school" (p. 18).

#### **The Impact of Other Factors on Education**

The variables discussed under other factors affecting educational attainment are subdivided into eight categories which include residential schools, school curriculum, home environment, poor health, progressive retardation, cultural alienation, alcohol and drugs, and low self-esteem.

### **Residential schools**

In addition to the various family and personal variables previously discussed, other conditions hinder the educational progress of Indian children on reserves. For instance, many Native students were forced to attend residential schools. The existence of these schools had, and continues to have, a devastating effect on the lives of Indian people. Ovide Mercredi described the affects of such places in the following statement: "the impact of that policy of assimilation is the demise of our people" (1994, p .2).

In collecting statements from individuals who experienced life in residential schools Bull (1991), found that all students recalled the homesickness, the lack of family contact, the unfamiliarity of the new environment, the lack of personal freedom, the "cold" atmosphere, the "distance" (social distance) placed between educators and Native children, and the fear, initially of the unknown, but later the fear that was instilled in their hearts and minds as children. Students residing at these schools were "not allowed to speak their own language, practice their own

religion, were physically and sexually abused and had to endure long durations of time away from family and friends. In fact, 20% of those interviewed in a 1972 survey claimed they had been punished for using their native language at school" (Adams, 1989 p. 133).

The consequences of such schools was clearly outlined in various articles in *The Wawatay News*. For example, in one entitled "In an Open Letter to the Grand Chief About the Residential School Syndrome", it was revealed that:

For many years our people have kept silent about the pain and suffering they experienced as a result of their abuse at residential schools, whether it was emotional, physical or sexual abuse..... I know many of our people continue to suffer from abuse they experienced from residential school days... There is no wonder why we have so many social problems; suicides, family breakups, violence, alcohol substance abuse and more (1992, p .4).

Likewise, Bergman (1967), reporting from his experience, had previously stated that:

Among the young adults, who are the first generation... whom went to school, there are many problems... I have encountered many others who take the attitude that they should not be burdened with their children... some other institution should care for them. It seems a reasonable hypothesis that having been placed by their parents in an impersonal institution contributes to such attitudes, and it is noticeable that the boarding schools provide

children and adolescents with little or no opportunity to take care of other children or even themselves (p. 14).

For many parents, their traumatic experiences at residential schools have left them with a bitter legacy that has turned them against non-Native education and schools.

Dispite these traumatic experiences outlined above, several positive expeirences are described in the literature. For example, Lingman (1991), in her book entitled, *Sammy Goes to Residential School* described life at a residential school in the following manner: "Santa was to come this night. Each child hung one of their socks on their beds, and went to bed, but sleep was a long time coming... All over the dorm boys were opening their presents and there was paper aii over the floor" (p. 74). Similarly, Bull (1991) outlined comments from Natives who experienced life in residential schools. They included the following: "all students were in total agreement that learning was one experience that they all enjoyed. In addition, others stated that they made friends with other children from other reserves" (p. 40).

### **School Curriculum**

Another factor affecting educational attainment of Native children is the educational curricula that exist in Band operated schools. According to Ross (1990), this curricula is "decided, imposed, and taught by non-Indians and do not encourage Indian children to develop pride in their race" (p. 14). Consequently, for many students it would seem irrelevant, and uninspiring. Mackey and Myles (1990) observed "that dropouts tended to be interested in one or two subjects which they thought relevant, but that they were uninterested in many subjects, especially those which had no clearly perceived practical application in their daily lives" (p. 50). Similarly, Coladarci (1983) noted that the lack of relevance of the school curriculum, both in terms of future employment and Native culture, was the number one reason given why Native children terminated their schooling. In addition, Deyhle (1989) concluded that, "A culturally non-responsive curriculum is a greater threat to those whose own cultural identity is insecure" (p. 28).

In spite of the fact that most schools in Ontario are locally controlled or band-operated, many students must still leave the reserve for schooling beyond the elementary level. In these cases, the development of curricula is dominated by non-Indians. The absence of high schools on most reserves means that many children have to fly out of their communities or be bussed to "white schools". Often they have to leave their homes for varying durations. According to Ross (1991), in 1990, "between 9% and 20% of reserve Indian children were living this experience" (p .21). The exposure to outside schools, with what may seem like rather foreign and hostile environments, is not likely to be conducive to staying in school.

#### **Home Environment**

The home environment that a child endures has an affect on the quality of education they receive. The living conditions of many houses located on remote and isolated reserves are below standard. For example, approximately 60% of Indian homes lack running water, sewage disposal or indoor

plumbing facilities; 38% of dwellings are without central heating (compared to 5% nationally); and the number of reserve dwellings considered overcrowded was 11 times that of homes in neighbouring communities (Mercredi, 1990). McMillan (1988) similarly expressed the concerns of Mercredi by observing "Almost half of all the housing fails to meet basic physical standards, and more than one-third is seriously overcrowded or lacks basic amenities such as running water" (p .300).

A United States Census of Population study (U.S. Bureau, 1980) mirrored the findings of both Mercredi (1990) and McMillan (1988) and described living conditions on various Indian reserves as follows: 15.9% of the housing units on several reserves were without electric lighting, 47.1% on the Hopi reservation; 16.6% of households did not have a refrigerator, 46.9% on the Navajo reservation; overall 20.8% of homes on several Reserves had an outhouse or privy, 55.5% on the Hopi and 53.5% on the Papago reservations; and 38.8% of households had more than 1.01 persons per room, 65% of the Navajo and 58.8% for the Hopi reservation. (U.S. Bureau, p. 12).

### **The Impact of Poor Health on Education**

The condition of one's health affects educational attainment. The Canada Parliament Senate (1991) report documents how poor health contributes to dropping out among Canadian children. According to Ross (1991) one potentially debilitating result of poor nutrition is that of babies born with a low birth weight. Low birth weight is significantly associated with a range of health problems; it is more likely to lead to lower IQ's, learning disabilities, developmental delays and cerebral palsy (p. 10). Ross summarized the consequences of poor health on education as having a fairly predictable path. For instance, he believed that some childhood and birth diseases impair mental functioning and others such as pneumonia, bronchitis and gastrointestinal disorders force students to take extended and recurrent absences from school. Also, inadequate diets often lead to students not paying attention in class and cause an inability to concentrate. These problems make learning difficult and cause children to fall behind in their studies hence

generating feelings of frustration, shame and anger. As a result students with poor health often become disinterested and drop out of school.

#### **Progressive retardation**

Maclean and Jameson (1972) defined Progressive Retardation or Cumulative Learning Deficit as "the gradual "falling behind" of Indian children in the schools as their comprehension fails to keep pace with the increasing complexity of knowledge demanded of them" (p. 26). According to Havighurst (1970) "linguistic problems are often the basis of this, since the dropout rates are highest in the eighth grade, just after Indian children are often transferred to public schools and are made aware of their deficiencies in competing with Anglo children and the point at which they can often no longer cope" (as cited in Kersey, et al., 1971, p. 3-7).

**Cultural alienation**

Another factor often cited is alienation from the school. According to Maclean and Jameson (1972) "most schools operate under a white middle-class value system, and these values are often contrary to traditional Indian values" (p. 19). Similarly, Bryde (1967) attributed a high dropout rate to a value conflict. For example, in a two year study of Oglala Sioux children, "he found that Indian children achieved above national norms until about the seventh grade, then suddenly fell behind. He suggested that psychological turmoil at adolescence compounded with a cultural value conflict in school produced a significant degree of alienation which retarded school achievement" (p. 20). Similarly, the work done by Phinney, Lochner, and Murphy (1990) echoed the findings of Bryde (1967) and Maclean and Jameson (1972) by noting that "minority youth encounter problems associated with the fact that their ethnic and racial status are subject to the pervasive negative stereotypes projected by the majority culture and they often find conflicts between their ethnic values and those of the mainstream culture" (p .53). The

inability to deal with this value conflict influences students to terminate their schooling. Until recently, many schools failed to recognize these differences and adjust teaching and curriculum to address them.

#### **Alcohol and drugs**

Lin (1985) noted that alcohol was a major factor in the high dropout rates among Native males in Montana. Similarly, Clawson (1990) reported that 33% of juveniles were regular drinkers and drinking was listed as the main reason why one in every two Native students quit school. According to Coladarci (1983) one-third of dropouts reported the use of drugs and alcohol as a factor in their decision to drop out of school. Likewise, Mackey and Myles (1990) concluded that the abuse of alcohol and drugs by family members or by students contributes to dropping out.

#### **Low self-esteem**

Low self-esteem has frequently been attributed to the failure of Native students in school. For example, Bahr et al.

(1972) observed that "Indian students feel despair, disillusionment, alienation, frustration, hopelessness, powerlessness, rejection, and estrangement, all elements of negative views of oneself" (p. 140). Similarly, Clifton (1975) and Halpin & Whiddon (1981) found that Indian students have lower scores on conventional tests of self-esteem than Caucasian students.

It is evident that widespread alcohol abuse and low self esteem among Natives on some reserves contributes to unsuccessful schooling.

#### Summary

The literature concerning the dropout phenomenon is extensive and complex. Many students terminate their schooling before the completion of a high school diploma for one or more reasons: they experience academic problems; have poor health; find school boring; do not feel that they belong to the school; fail to complete assigned work; are absent from school on a regular basis; do not get along with teachers; come from broken homes; their families are poor; they live in

an environment where education is perceived as being unimportant; have received little encouragement from parents to complete school; have overcrowded homes; experience peer pressure; endure personal problems; are involved in drugs and alcohol; become pregnant; or they find work.

It is also evident from the literature that Native students may drop out of school because of forced attendance at residential schools which resulted in their learning to speak another language and forgetting their culture. Others may have terminated their schooling prematurely because of irrelevant curricula in schools, loneliness, homesickness and alienation from their culture.

### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODOLOGY

In this Chapter the theoretical framework and research design is outlined. The study sample, instrumentation, instrumentation validity, procedures and data analysis are described in detail.

In order to investigate the perceptions of dropouts and educators regarding the reasons why Native students drop out of school, the learning environment in which this occurs must be investigated. Since educators are one of the primary groups in this environment, their attitudes and opinions of why Native students terminate their schooling are essential. It is also important to assess the perceptions of the dropouts themselves. Where areas of agreement and/or disagreement between the two groups could be identified, the information could serve to aid in the creation of policy and operating procedures within Native schools, to help school personnel understand schooling from a Native perspective, and to, potentially, create a better learning environment for Native students.

### Study Sample

The sample for the study consisted of all the teachers, administrators, teacher aides, education directors and dropouts on isolated reserves of Kingfisher Lake, Wunnum Lake, Wapekaka Lake, Bearskin Lake, Sachigo Lake and Cat Lake in Northern Ontario. The majority of teachers and administrators were non-Native and from southern locations; while the teacher aides, education directors and dropouts were Native and from the north. These communities are accessible by plane all year around and by "winter road" in January and February.

Since many of the school personnel did not indicate their position when completing the questionnaire they were grouped as "educators". There were 55 educators identified in the six schools being studied and 52 completed the questionnaire.

The study also identified 62 individuals who had terminated their schooling between September 1990 and March 1995. This represented a convenient sample of students who could be located on the reserves that were part of the study.

The exact number of individuals who dropped out of school in the 1990-1995 period is unknown and could not be determined from available school records. The students who completed the questionnaires ranged in age from 15 years to 23 years and were living at home on their reserve. Forty-one completed the questionnaire. The population was evenly distributed by gender; the individuals that completed the questionnaire consisted of 21 males and 20 females.

#### **Design of the Study**

In order to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of educators and dropouts about reasons why Native students terminate their schooling early, two similar questionnaires were used, copies of which are included in Appendix A and B. These questionnaires were adapted from the Ontario Native Student Study (1990) by Mackey and Myles. Three additional questions were added to the original questionnaire. Open-ended questions were also modified to fit the groups (educators and dropouts located on isolated reserves) being studied.

The questionnaires were administered at two different intervals. The majority of educators completed their questionnaire in February 1995 at an annual educators conference held in Thunder Bay. The dropouts completed the student questionnaire in April of 1995 in their home communities. The questionnaire items were computer analyzed at Memorial University of Newfoundland using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSX).

#### **Hypotheses and Research Questions of the study.**

The following hypotheses and research questions were formulated to help identify factors associated with dropping out of school as perceived by students and school personnel in selected Native schools in Northern Ontario.

#### **Hypotheses**

- 1(a). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to school work and attendance.

- 1(b). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to career plans and guidance.
- 1(c). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to belonging to school.
- 1(d). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to home/school communication.
- 1(e). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to student/staff relationships.
- 1(f). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to parental support.
- 1(g). There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to relevance of the school curriculum.

- 1(h) . There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect specific reasons for dropping out.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What other factors do educators and the students who have dropped out of school consider contribute to dropping out?
2. What specific factors do school personnel and the students who have dropped out of school consider would:
  - (a) have helped students stay in school; and
  - (b) return to school and complete their high school diploma.
3. What effect did living away from home have on a student's decision to drop out?

#### **Instrumentation**

A total of two questionnaires were used: one for students and one for educators. These questionnaires were adapted from the study by Mackay and Myles (1970) on Native dropouts in

Ontario schools. They were used to ascertain the perceptions of educators and dropouts regarding possible reasons for students terminating their schooling prematurely. Both questionnaires included items in the seven major areas, as identified by the research literature, that may potentially influence a student to drop out of school. Three additional questions were added to the original questionnaire to address other reasons for dropping out of school; factors that would have helped them stay in school or return to school to complete their high school diploma; and more specifically, how living away from home influenced decisions to drop out.

The open-ended questions were modified to fit the groups (educators and dropouts located on isolated reserves) being studied and because of the difference in objectives between the author's and the Mackey and Myles (1991) study. Participants were asked to respond to the statements using the following scale: strongly agree (1), agree (2), uncertain (3), disagree (4), strongly disagree (5). This five point Likert scale was used to allow for ease in the statistical analysis of the data.

### **Validity**

In order to ensure a valid investigation could be carried out an extensive review of the literature was undertaken. From this, seven major areas of concern regarding possible reasons for students dropping out of school were identified. They included school work, student staff relationships, belonging too school, career plans and guidance, home school communication, relevance of school curriculum and possible reasons for dropping out. In order to ensure each of the statements concerning the seven constructs were categorized properly, the statements based on the Mackey & Myles study were submitted to three professionals having experience with dropouts. These experts were asked to indicate in which of the seven constructs the statements should be placed. A final decision was made by the researcher to group the statements based on the consensus of the experts.

### **Procedures**

The data was gathered in two stages. First, principals, social counsellors, teachers, teacher aides and education

directors were asked to complete the school personnel questionnaire. This information was gathered in early spring of 1995 at an annual educators conference in Thunder Bay. The educators were employed by the Shibogama First Nation Council and were from the communities of Kingfisher Lake, Wunnimum Lake, and Wepekaka Lake and the Windigo Tribal council encompassing the communities of Bearskin Lake, Sachigo Lake, and Cat Lake. When each educator registered for the conference they were informed about the study and asked if they would like to participate. Those who agreed were asked to return the completed questionnaire during the conference, or by mail in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.

The second round of data gathering involved a number of stages. First a letter of intent/permission (see Appendix 3) was sent to each chief and educational director concerning the purpose of the research.

This letter was followed with a telephone call to each chief and education director to further explain and clarify the study. Once permission was obtained, a letter (see Appendix 4) was sent to each principal of the schools in the

study asking for the names of students who had dropped out from September of 1990 to February 1995. A total of 62 dropouts were identified from the six communities. All parents whose child was under the age of 16 years were asked to complete a permission letter (see Appendix 5) which was translated in Obj-Cree because many of the parents cannot speak or understand English. Once this information was received, the student questionnaire was used to collect the required information in March, 1995. Most of the questionnaires were delivered by the researcher to the dropouts and collected after one week. However, when this was not possible due to travel requirements, colleagues at the school(s) in question were contacted to help collect the data. They delivered the questionnaires to the individuals who had dropped out and collected the completed questionnaires after one week.

Once they were completed the colleague returned the questionnaires to the researcher in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

### **Data analysis**

All data was computer analyzed using programs contained within the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSSX). Using this package, descriptive and other statistics on the responses to the questionnaires were generated. An analysis of variance was conducted on each of the variables and clusters of variables, and similarities between the two groups were investigated. Tests were carried out to ascertain whether the indicated difference was significant. The results of these analyses are reported in Chapter 4. Alpha Reliability coefficients were also calculated and reported on each of the clusters.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of Data

#### Introduction

In this chapter the findings of the study are communicated. Factors that influence or encourage Native students to dropout of Ontario schools are discussed in terms of the constructs drawn from the review of previous dropout studies. Each of these constructs is made up of between two and eleven items. Tabulated descriptive statistics for each group of respondents (educators and dropouts) are included as are the F values which indicated the extent which the respondent's perceptions are statistically significant. Additional stringent analyses were performed in order to more fully examine the relationships between the educators and dropouts and to provide further information concerning the validity and reliability of the instruments. These consisted of alpha reliability measurements, and an overall one-way analysis of variance on each construct.

A total of 117 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 55 were distributed to the educators, 52 or 95% were returned, and 62 were distributed to dropouts, 41 or 66% were returned. Although the author realized that the responses of more dropouts would have been more desirable, this was not possible because many had moved away from their reserves and others refused to participate in the study.

For each statement respondents were given five choices from which to choose; Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. These selections were given values ranging from 1 to 5; Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Uncertain (3), Disagree (4), Strongly Disagree (5). It was decided that a significance level of .05 would be appropriate to test the null hypothesis for differences between dropout and school personnel responses.

#### **Test of Hypothesis 1(a).**

**Hypothesis 1(a):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to school work and attendance.

Ten items were used to test this hypothesis. They are listed in Table 4 along with the results for the two groups. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they considered each item contributed to dropping out of school. Column 1 lists the items that make up the construct. Column 2 shows the percents, means and standard deviations for the educators; and column 3 reveals the percents, means and standard deviations of the drop-outs. Column 4 lists the F scores and the significance levels of these scores and indicates whether differences in the manner in which the two groups responded to the questionnaire items were statistically significant. Note that strongly agree and agree categories and the disagree and strongly disagree categories were each combined into one category in Table 3 for discussion purposes.

Column 4 of Table 4 shows that the only statement on which there was no significant difference between educators and dropouts at the .05 level was item 34, "much of the work done in class was pointless". Means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that although both groups reacted negatively to the statement, suggesting that the work done in class was

worthwhile, teachers felt slightly more strongly than did the dropouts about this. For example, only 11.3% of educators and 17.1% of dropouts agreed that work done in class was pointless; and 58.5% of educators and 48.8% of dropouts disagreed with the item statement. This suggests that both educators and students viewed work done in class as important and, in the perception of both, has no real influence on a pupil's decision to terminate his or her schooling.

The other nine statements concerning school work and attendance revealed significant differences at the .05 level between educator and Native dropout perceptions. In each case, educators agreed to a greater extent that each of the items listed contributed to Native students dropping out of school.

About 67% of the educators and 37.5% of Native dropouts agreed that inadequate English language skills contributed to a Native student's decision to terminate his or her schooling (see item 1). In comparison, 15.3% of educators and 42.5% of students disagreed. While the majority of educators viewed difficulty with English as a contributing factor, a large

number of dropouts did not, as indicated by the 42.5%. Therefore, the majority of educators and over one third of the dropouts surveyed, believed that difficulty with English Language skills influences many Natives to discontinue their schooling. However, many Native dropouts did not agree with the statement and likely dropped out of school for reasons other than difficulty with English Language skills.

The data reveals that over one half, 52.8% of educators, compared to only 4.9% of students agreed with item 2, that students obtaining poor grades in exams influenced them to drop out. By contrast, 22.7% of educators, compared to 60.9% of dropouts, disagreed with the item statement indicating that, in their opinion, receiving poor grades was not a contributing factor in the decision to drop out of school.

Item 3 which investigated whether being kept back one or more grades in school influences a student to drop out revealed that over one third, 34% of the educators compared to only 12.2% of dropouts, agreed with the item statement. By contrast, 28.3% of educators disagreed with the item statement compared to about one half, 53.6% of dropouts. Also, about

one-third of each group were undecided on this issue. Overall, significantly more of the educators considered this to be a contributing factor to not staying in school.

Similarly, there was a considerable difference in the opinions of educators and dropouts concerning item 4, the failing of one or more courses. The means in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators reacted positively to the item whereas dropouts reacted negatively. For example, 58.4% of the educators agreed that failing one or more courses contributes to a Native youth's decision to drop out of school compared to only 26.8% of dropouts. Of the educators surveyed 28.5% disagreed with the item statement compared to 41.5% of dropouts. This indicates that students place significantly less emphasis on this as a reason for dropping out.

Responses to item 5 revealed that 58.5% of the educators agreed that getting behind with homework was a contributing factor in a Native students's decision to terminate schooling compared to only 14.6% of dropouts. By contrast, 15.1% of the educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 56.1% of dropouts. Again, this suggests that falling behind with

homework was a significant factor for teachers but not for students.

The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators reacted positively to item 6, "students often did not pay attention in class", whereas dropouts reacted negatively. About 40% of the educators agreed with the item statement as compared to only 22% of dropouts; and 24.5% of the educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 41.5% of dropouts. About one-third of each group were undecided about this. The findings suggest that not paying attention in class is significantly more of a contributing factor from the perspective of educators but not from that of dropouts.

Item 7 which investigated the importance that educators and dropouts place on student ability to complete teacher assigned work revealed that 34.7% of the educators agreed with the item statement as compared to only 4.9% of dropouts. By contrast, over one third, 36.8% of educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 61% of dropouts. This finding suggests that while an equal number of educators felt strongly

that student ability to complete assigned work does or does not influence them to drop out, the majority of students felt this was not the case.

Item 39 which addressed truancy revealed that about three quarters (73.6%) of educators agreed that poor attendance was a factor that influenced students to drop out of school as compared to (51.2%) of dropouts. Fewer dropouts (39.0%) disagreed with the item statement as compared to only 3.8% of educators. This suggests that while the majority of educators and the largest portion of dropouts believed that poor attendance was a major contributing factor that influenced pupils to drop out of school about one-third of dropouts did not see it as such. Educators and dropout perceptions on this were significant at the 0.01 level.

Item 22 asked respondents about their perception of interest in school subjects. Forty-one point five percent of educators agreed "most subjects were of no interest to students" compared to only 12.2% of dropouts; and about 49% of dropouts disagreed with the item statement compared to 22.7% of educators. Also, over one-third of each group were

undecided. Student perceptions of school subjects were therefore significantly more positive than that of the educators.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was relatively good at 0.8037; and an analysis of variance on all items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to school work and attendance. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4

## Perceptions of Educators and Dropouts Toward School Work and Attendance.

Items	Educators (n=52)				Dropouts (n=42)				Values	
	A	U	D	Mean S.D	A	U	D	Mean S.D	F	Sig.F
1. Difficulty With English Skills.	67.3	17.3	15.3	2.3 1.1	37.5	20.0	42.5	3.3 1.2	16.8	.000
2. Getting poor grades in exams.	52.8	24.5	22.7	2.6 .99	4.9	34.1	60.9	3.7 .78	33.4	.000
3. Kept back one or more grades.	34.0	37.7	28.3	3.0 .90	12.2	34.1	53.6	3.5 1.1	6.8	.011
4. Failing one or more courses.	58.4	13.2	28.3	2.6 1.0	26.8	31.7	41.5	3.3 1.1	8.8	.004
5. Behind in homework.	58.5	26.4	15.1	2.4 1.0	14.6	29.3	56.1	3.6 .97	34.6	.000
6. Often did not pay attention.	39.6	35.8	24.5	2.7 .97	22.0	36.6	41.5	3.4 1.1	9.7	.002
7. Difficulty with assigned work.	34.7	28.6	36.8	3.0 .96	4.9	34.1	61.0	3.6 .89	9.2	.003
34. Class work was pointless.	11.3	30.2	58.5	3.5 .87	17.1	34.1	48.8	3.3 .98	1.8	.086

(continued)

Table 4 continued.

Items	Educators						Dropouts				Values			
	A		D		Mean S.D		A		U		Mean S.D		F	Sig. F
	U	D	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D			
39. Skipped School and Classes,	73.6	22.6	3.8		2.1	.85	51.2	9.8	39.0	2.9	1.4	13.2	.001	
22. Most subjects were of no interest.	41.5	35.8	22.7		2.7	.96	12.2	39.0	48.8	3.4	.77	13.6	.000	

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on School Work & Attendance items: 0.8037

Analysis of Variance on all School & Attendance items: F= 36.4; P< .01

### Test of Hypothesis 1(b)

**Hypothesis 1(b):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to career plans and guidance.

Six items on both the student and educator questionnaires were used to test the validity of this hypothesis (see Table 5).

Column 4 of Table 5 reveals that the only statements on which there was no significant difference between the two groups at the .05 level were: item 30, "no guidance counsellor students felt comfortable with"; and item 31, "no professional guidance counsellor at school". The other four statements concerning career plans and guidance showed significant differences at the .05 level between educator and Native dropout perceptions. From analyzing the means of the two groups it is evident that educators agreed to a greater extent that each of the items listed contributed to Native students dropping out of school.

Table 5

Perceptions of Educators and Dropouts Regarding Career Plans and Guidance.

Items	Educators (n=52)						Dropouts (n=42)						Values	
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D		A	U	D	Mean	S.D		F	Sig.F
19. Did not expect to finish school.	54.7	28.3	17	2.6	0.9		24.4	43.9	32	3.2	1		11.1	.010
20. Did not care if they finished school.	47.1	30.2	23	2.7	1.1		12.2	43.9	44	3.5	1.1		12.3	.010
21. No life plans after school.	75.4	17	7.5	2.1	0.8		43.9	36.6	20	2.7	1		9.3	.030
30. No guidance counselor they felt comfortable with.	51.9	25	23	2.7	1.1		40	17.5	43	3	1.3		2	.160
31. No professional guidance counselor.	39.6	37.7	23	2.7	1.7		31.8	29.3	39	3	1.3		0.64	.430
32. Received little career counselling.	56.6	32.1	11	2.4	0.9		36.6	34.1	29	2.9	1.1		4.5	.040

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Career Plans & Guidance items: 0.6815

Analysis of Variance on all Career Plans & Guidance items: F= 14.7; P<.01

Item 19, "students did not expect to finish school" investigated the importance that educators and dropouts place on high school graduation. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators reacted positively whereas the dropouts reacted negatively. Responses from each group revealed that over one half, 54.7% of the educators agreed that students did not expect to finish high school compared to only 24.4% of dropouts. Similarly, of the educators surveyed only 17% disagreed with the item statement compared to 31.7% of dropouts. This suggests that the majority of educators believed that students have low expectations with respect to graduating from school. However, a large number of dropouts disagreed, believing that they did expect to finish school. Many though, were in the "undecided" category.

Similarly, there was a considerable difference in the opinions of educators and dropouts concerning item 20, "did not care if they finished school". Means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that dropouts reacted negatively whereas the educators reacted positively. The data revealed that 47.1% of educators compared to 12.2% of dropouts, agreed that students

did not care if they finished school and that this attitude contributed to students dropping out. Many more dropouts (44% compared to 22.7% of educators) disagreed with the statement suggesting a more positive attitude and concern about finishing school. An equal number, however, were undecided about this issue.

Item 21 addressed the importance that educators and dropouts place on students's plans about life after school. The means of the two groups of respondents revealed that both educators and dropouts reacted positive to the item statement but educators reacted much more strongly than did dropouts. The data revealed that 75.4% of the educators compared to 43.9% of the dropouts agreed with the item statement; while only 7.5% of educators and 19.5% of the dropouts disagreed. This suggests that the majority of educators and dropouts believe that not having plans about life after school influences students to terminate their schooling prematurely, although dropouts were less certain about this.

The data reveals that over one half, 51.9% of educators and 40.0% of dropouts agree with item 30, "there was no

guidance counsellor at school students felt comfortable with"; and 23.1% of educators and 42.5% of dropouts disagreed with the item. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that dropouts reacted negatively to the item statement compared to the educators. Dropouts therefore placed less emphasis on this as a reason for dropping out than did educators. Differences between the perceptions of each group were not, however, significant at the .05 level.

Like item 30, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of educators and dropouts concerning the existence of a professional guidance counsellor at school (see item 31). The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that dropouts reacted more negatively to the item statement. The data showed that 39.6% of educators and 31.8% of the dropouts agreed with the item statement and 22.7% of educators compared to 39.1% of dropouts disagreed. About one-third of each group were undecided about this. Overall, the tendency was for educators to perceive the availability of guidance personnel to be a little more important in helping to retain students in school.

The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicate that educators reacted positively to item 32 whereas dropouts took a more neutral stance. For example, over half (56.6%) of educators compared to only 36.6% of dropouts agreed that students received insufficient career counselling. By contrast only 11.3% of the educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 29.3% of dropouts. This suggests that while the majority of educators and dropouts believe that students receiving insufficient career counselling contributes to dropping out of school, dropouts were significantly less certain of this.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was acceptable at 0.6815; and an analysis of variance on all items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to career plans and guidance. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

### Test of hypothesis 1(c)

**Hypothesis 1(c):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to belonging to school.

Eleven items were used to test this hypothesis (see Table 6). Column 4 of Table 6 shows that the only statements on which there was no significant difference between educators and dropouts at the .05 level were item 24, "seldom took part in extra curricular activities"; item 26, "had to be bussed a long way to school"; and item 33, "school did not care about Native students". The other eight statements concerning belonging to school revealed significant differences at the .05 level between educator and Native dropout perceptions.

The data revealed that only 28.3% of educators and 24.4% of dropouts agreed with item 18 that dropouts "had few or no friends at school". However, many more dropouts (56.1% versus 35.9% of educators) disagreed with the statement; and only 19.5% of dropouts were undecided about this item. Overall, most respondents, but especially the dropouts themselves,

considered they did have friends in school and indicated this did not particularly contribute to leaving school.

Table 6

## Perception of Educators and Students Views Concerning Belonging to School.

Items	Educators (n=52)					Students (n=42)					Values	
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F.	Sig.F
	18. Had few or no friends at school	28	35.8	35.9	3	1	24.4	19.5	56.1	2.6	1.3	3.4
23. School was of little importance.	64	15.1	20.8	2.4	1	39.1	31.7	23.9	3	1.2	6	0.03
24. Seldom took part in extra curricular activities.	42	20.8	37.7	2.9	1	53.6	24.4	22	2.8	1.2	0.2	0.85
25. School was big and impersonal.	23	45.3	32.1	3.1	1	7.3	36.6	56.1	3.6	0.8	9.1	0
26. Bussed a long distance.	16	35.3	49	3.5	1	15.4	25.6	59	3.6	1.1	0.73	0.39
28. Teachers failed to engage their interest.	45	32.1	22.6	2.7	1	14.6	56.1	19.3	3.2	0.8	7	0.01
33. School did not care about Native students.	13	28.3	58.5	3.6	1	19.5	29.3	51.2	3.4	1.2	0.5	0.48
37. non-Native students made them feel unwelcome.	38	38	24	2.8	1	15.4	25.6	58.9	3.7	1.1	10.9	0

(continued)

Table 6 continued.

Item	Educators (n=52)						Dropouts (n=42)						Values	
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D		A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F.	Sig. F	
38. Discriminated against by others.	47	30.2	22.6	2.7	1		4.9	29.3	59.6	3	0.8	24.4	0	
41. Curriculum developed and taught by non-Natives.	81	11.3	7.5	1.9	1		51.3	22	26.9	2.6	1.3	8.1	0.01	
29. Too many school rules.	36	26.4	37.8	3	1		17	19.5	63.4	3.6	1	8.5	0	

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Belonging to School items: 0.7598;

Analysis of Variance on all Belonging to School items:  $F= 18.5; P<.01$

The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators reacted more positively to item 23, "school was of little importance to life", than did dropouts. From the data almost two thirds, 64.2% of the educators agreed that school was of little importance to students's lives compared to 39.1% of dropouts. Also, of the educators surveyed, 20.8% disagreed with the item statement compared to 29.3% of dropouts. This suggests that while the majority of educators and dropouts agreed that school was of little importance to students, a fair number of students were undecided or agreed, suggesting it was an issue that may contribute to a feeling of not belonging to the school.

Item 24 which investigated whether lack of involvement in extra curricular activities influences a student to drop out, revealed that 41.5% of the educators and over one half, 53.6% of dropouts agreed with the item statement. However, 37.7% of educators and 22.0% of dropouts disagreed. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicate that although both groups reacted positively to the item statement, dropouts felt slightly more negatively about the issue than did the educators.

Item 25 addressed school size and atmosphere and revealed that 22.7% of educators compared to only 7.3% of dropouts agreed that the school that Natives attended was too big and impersonal and this influenced them to drop out. In addition, 32.1% of educators and 56.1% of dropouts disagreed with the item, hence not seeing the size of the school or its atmosphere as a contributing factor in their decision to drop out. Responses to this item indicated that although both groups reacted negatively to the statement, dropouts felt more strongly that did the educators. Differences were significant at the 0.01 level.

Item 26 asked respondents about their perceptions on bussing. The data showed that only 15.7% of educators and 15.4% of dropouts agreed that being bussed a long distance influenced students's decision to drop out. Likewise, almost one half, 49% of the educators and 59.0% of dropouts disagreed with this item. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 were not significantly different at the .05 level. Responses to this item suggest that both educators and dropouts believe that being bussed a long distance to and from school had

little or no effect on students's decision to terminate schooling.

Item 28 which investigated teacher effectiveness found that the majority, 45.3% of the educators compared to only 14.6% of dropouts believed that teachers were unable to engage students interest and participation and this contributed to them dropping out of school. In addition, 22.6% of educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 29.3% of dropouts. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that dropouts reacted negatively to the item statement compared to educators. Student perception of teacher effectiveness was therefore significantly more positive than that of the educators. However, over half (56.1%) of dropouts expressed indecision on this issue.

The data reveals that only 13.2% of the educators and 19.5% of dropouts agreed with item 33, that "the school did not care about Native students". By contrast, over one half of the dropouts and educators disagreed with this statement. This finding suggests that both educators and dropouts generally perceived school as a caring place and is hence not a factor that influences many pupils to drop out.

Item 37 which investigated perceptions about the interaction between Native and non-Native students and its influence on Native pupils to drop out of school revealed that 38% of the educators compared to only 15.4% of dropouts agreed; and that 24.0% of educators disagreed with the item statement compared to 58.9% of dropouts. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that dropouts reacted negatively to the item statement and felt significantly more strongly about it than did educators. This suggests that educators were more likely to believe that non-Native pupils made Native students feel unwelcome at school and thus placed a greater significance on it as a contributing factor to Native students dropping out.

Item 38 which investigated whether being discriminated against by others at school influences a student to drop out revealed that the majority of educators (47.2% compared to only 4.9% of dropouts) agreed with the item statement. However, the majority of students (65.9% compared to 22.6% of educators) disagreed, believing that they were not discriminated against at school. Again, this suggests that

being discriminated against by others at school is perceived as a significant factor for teachers but not by students.

Item 41 asked respondents about their opinions on school curriculum development and implementation. The data revealed that over 80% of the educators and over one half (51.3%) of the dropouts agreed that curriculum developed in Native schools and taught by non-Natives contributed to dropping out. Only 7.5% of educators compared to 26.9% of dropouts disagreed. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that both groups reacted positively, but educators felt significantly more strongly about it than did dropouts.

Responses to item 29, "there were too many school rules that Native students could not see the point off", revealed that twice as many educators (35.9%) compared to only (17.0%) of dropouts agreed with the item statement. However 37.8% of educators and 63.4% dropouts disagreed. The means presented in column 2 and 3 reveal that although both groups reacted negatively to the item statement, dropouts felt significantly more strongly about it than did educators and thus placed much less emphasis on school rules as a contributing factor in terminating their schooling.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was relatively good at 0.7598; and an analysis of variance on all items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to belonging to school. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

#### **Test of hypothesis 1(d)**

**Hypothesis 1(d):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to home/school communication.

Three items were used to test this hypothesis (see Table 7). All three statements concerning home and school issues revealed significant differences at the .05 level between educator and Native dropout perceptions. In each case educators agreed to a greater extent that each of the items listed contributed to Native students dropping out of school.

Table 7

Perceptions of Educators and Students toward Home/School Communication.

Items	Educators (n=52)				Dropouts (n=42)				Values			
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F	Sig. F
15. Parents and teachers did not communicate enough.	70.0	17.0	13.2	2.1	1.1	41.4	29.3	29.3	2.9	1.1	12.2	.000
16. Little communication between school and community.	77.4	11.3	11.3	2.0	1.0	31.7	39.0	29.5	2.9	1.2	17.1	.000
40. Parents view school as a white school.	38.5	48.1	13.5	2.6	.91	7.7	43.6	48.7	3.7	.96	29.5	.000

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Home/School Communication items: 0.6433;

Analysis of Variance on all Home/School Communication items: F= 30.6; P<.01

The findings revealed that over two thirds (70.0%) of the educators and 41.4% of dropouts agreed with item 15, that "parents and teachers did not communicate enough". However, only 13.2% of educators compared to 29.3% of dropouts disagreed. While the majority of educators and dropouts viewed lack of communication between parents and teachers as a contributing factor in a student's decision to terminate schooling, many dropouts did not agree with, or were undecided about the statement.

Item 16, which addressed lack of communication between the school that the students were attending and their home communities, revealed that 77.4% of educators compared to only 31.7% of dropouts agreed, and only 11.3% of educators compared to 29.5% of dropouts disagreed with the item statement. This reveals that the issue was of significantly more concern to educators than dropouts, although many of the latter (39%) were again undecided on its impact concerning dropping out decisions.

The data reveals that 38.5% of educators compared to only 7.7% of dropouts agreed with item 40, that parents view the school as Non-Native; while only 13.5% of educators compared

to 48.7% of dropouts disagreed with the item statement. Again, this suggests that educators placed a far greater significance, than did dropouts, on this issue as a factor that contributes to Natives dropping out of school.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was acceptable at 0.6433; and an analysis of variance on all items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to home and school communication. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

#### **Test of hypothesis 1(e)**

**Hypothesis 1(e):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to student/staff relationships.

Five items were used to test this hypothesis (see Table 8). Column 4 of Table 8 indicated the only statements on which there were significant difference between the two groups at the .05 level, were on item 8, "students were getting into trouble with school staff" and item 12, "teachers treated students unjustly". In each case, dropouts felt more strongly

and disagreed to a greater extent that each of the items listed contributed to Native students dropping out of school.

Item 8 which investigated whether or not getting into trouble with the teacher or principal at school influenced students to drop out showed that the majority of educators (42.3%) and dropouts (70.7%) disagreed with the item statement. Similarly, 23.0% of educators agreed that students were getting into trouble with school staff and this influenced them to drop out of school compared to only 9.7% of dropouts. This finding suggests that both groups of respondents but especially dropouts, believed that getting into trouble with teachers or the principal is not a contributing factor that influences a student to dropout of school.

Item 12 which addressed teacher treatment of students revealed that 21.8% of educators compared to only 7.3% of dropouts agreed that teachers treated students unjustly. However, 46.1% of educators and over two thirds, 68.3% of dropouts, disagreed with the item statement. This suggests that while the majority of educators and dropouts disagreed that teachers often treated students unjustly, significantly

more students felt this was not a contributing factor that influenced them to terminate their schooling before graduation.

The other three items concerning student and staff relations did not reveal any significant differences at the .05 level between the two groups of respondents; and although overall both groups reacted negatively on items 9 and 11, dropouts felt more strongly that did the educators. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 were identical for both groups for item 10 suggesting that overall both groups placed equal weight on it as a contributing factor in influencing students to drop out of school, that is, both groups tended to disagree that teachers did not encourage students to complete school.

Item 9 asked respondents about their perceptions of teachers failing to understand students. Forty-four point two percent of educators believed that teachers did not understand students compared to only 19.5% of dropouts. Around the same number of educators (32.7%) as dropouts (36.6%) disagreed with this statement suggesting that they felt that teachers understood their students and this had little or no effect on

their decision to drop out. The largest group of the dropout respondents were undecided about this issue.

Item 11, which investigated whether a use of teacher praise influences a student to drop out of school revealed that 30.1% of educators and 24.4% of dropouts agreed that "teachers seldom praised students for their efforts". However, the larger proportion of both educators (45.3%) and dropouts (41.4%) disagreed. This suggests that while a fair number of respondents from both groups agreed with the item statement, the largest percentage of educators and dropouts felt that teachers praised students for their work and effort, and in the perception of both, this issue has little impact on influencing students to drop out of school.

The data reveals that only 20.0% of educators and 26.9% of dropouts agreed with item 10, that teachers did not encourage students to stay in school. However the majority of educators, 46.0% and 48.8% of dropouts disagreed. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that both groups of respondents reacted similarly, suggesting that while a number of respondents from both groups agreed with the statement, almost half of educators and dropouts felt that teachers

encouraged students to stay in school, and in the perception of both, felt it had little impact on influencing students to drop out of school.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was acceptable at 0.6884; and an analysis of variance on all items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to student staff relations. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 8

## Perceptions of Educators and Dropouts Toward Student/Staff Relations

Items	Educators (n=52)						Students (n=42)						Values			
	A		U		D		A		U		D		Mean	S.D	F.	Sig.F
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D				
8. Getting into trouble with staff.	23.0	34.6	42.8	3.2	.98	9.7	19.5	70.7	4.0	1.1	12.3	.001				
9. Teachers did not understand students.	44.2	23.1	32.7	2.8	1.3	19.5	43.9	36.6	3.3	1.0	3.4	.071				
10. Teachers did not encourage students to complete school.	20.0	34.0	46.0	3.3	1.1	26.9	24.1	48.8	3.3	1.2	.12	.732				
11. Teachers seldom praised students.	30.1	24.5	45.3	3.2	1.2	24.4	34.1	41.4	3.3	1.1	.07	.800				
12. Teachers treated students unjustly.	21.8	28.8	46.1	3.3	1.0	7.3	24.4	68.3	4.0	1.1	8.1	.006				

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Student/Staff Relation items: 0.6884;

Analysis of Variance on all Student/Staff Relation items: F= 6.6; P&lt;.01

### Test of Hypothesis 1(f)

**Hypothesis 1 (f):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to parental support.

Two items on both the student and educator questionnaires were used to test the validity of this hypothesis (see Table 9). Column 4 of Table 9 reveals that both item 13, "parents were not interested in their child's school work", and item 14, "parents did not encourage their child to stay in school" showed a significant difference at the .05 level between the two groups of respondents. Their responses to these items indicated that educators reacted positively and dropouts tended to react negatively.

Item 13 which addressed parental interest in their child's work revealed that over two thirds (69.8%) of educators compared to 33.1% of dropouts agreed with the item statement. Similarly, 17.0% of educators compared to 26.8% of dropouts disagreed with the statement. In addition, a large number, 39.0% of dropouts were uncertain whether a lack of parental interest in their school work influenced them to

terminate their schooling prematurely. This suggests that while educators place a greater emphasis on this as a reason for dropping out, a large number of dropouts also felt that their parents were not interested in school work and this influenced them to drop out. In addition, a large number of dropouts were not sure if their parents were interested in their education or they did not feel comfortable expressing anything negative about them.

Responses to item 14 revealed that 63.4% of educators and over one third (34.1%) of dropouts agreed that parents did not encourage their children to stay in school. However about one-third each of educators (30.8%) and dropouts (39.0%) disagreed with the item statement. Overall, this suggests that while educators placed a much greater emphasis on this as a reason for dropping out, dropouts were more evenly split on the issue.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was relatively good at 0.8226; and an analysis of variance on both items combined revealed an overall significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to

parental support. Based on this the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 9

## The Perceptions of Educators and Dropouts on Parental Support.

Items	Educators (n=42)			Dropouts (n=42)			Values					
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F	Sig.F
13. Parents were not interested in child's work.	69.8	13.2	17.0	2.2	1.2	34.1	39.0	26.8	3.0	1.1	10.70	.002
14. No Parental encourage to stay in school.	63.4	5.8	30.8	2.5	1.4	34.1	26.8	39.0	3.1	1.1	5.50	.022

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Parental Support items: 0.8226;

Analysis of Variance on all Parental Support items: F= 8.9; P<.01

### Test of Hypothesis 1(g)

**Hypothesis 1(g):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to relevance of the school curriculum.

Two items were used to test the validity of this hypothesis (see Table 10). Column 4 of Table 10 shows that there was no significant difference between educators and dropouts at the .05 level concerning both item 35, "relevance of school curriculum" and item 36, "no course of specific cultural relevance". The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators tended to agree in their opinions on both items and that dropout reaction was more neutral.

Item 35 which investigated whether irrelevant curriculum influences a student to drop out of school revealed that over one half (54.7%) of educators and over one third (35.0%) of dropouts agreed with the item statement. However, 17.0% of educator compared to 30.0% of dropouts disagreed that the curriculum in the Band-operated schools was irrelevant. This suggests that many educators viewed the curriculum in the Band-operated schools as irrelevant, and contributed to students dropping out of school. Students, however, were more

"undecided" about this as a factor in leaving school although there was also a tendency to agree with the statement.

Almost two thirds of educators (62.3%) and over one third of dropouts (37.5%) agreed with item 36, "that there was no course at school of specific cultural relevance to Native students". However, about the same number of educators (30.2%) as dropouts (32.5%) disagreed, arguing that there were courses that were culturally relevant to Native pupils. This suggests that students placed less emphasis on this as a reason for dropping out, although about one-third were "undecided" about it.

The alpha reliability of this cluster of items was relatively good at 0.6910; and an analysis of variance on both items combined revealed an overall no significant difference between educators and student perceptions with respect to relevance of school curriculum. Based on this the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 10

## The Views of Educators and Dropouts Concerning the Relevance of the School Curriculum.

Items	Educators (n=52)			Dropouts (n=42)			Values					
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F	Sig. F
35. Curriculum was irrelevant.	54.7	28.3	17.0	2.5	.91	35.0	35.0	30.0	2.9	1.1	3.41	.068
36. No course of specific cultural relevance.	62.3	7.5	30.2	2.5	1.14	37.5	30.0	32.5	2.9	1.2	3.33	.071

Note: A= Agree; U= Undecided; D= Disagree

Alpha Reliability on Relevance of the School Curriculum items: 0.6910;

Analysis of Variance on all Relevance of the School Curriculum items: F= 3.6; P>.05 (N.S)

### Test of Hypothesis 1(h)

**Hypothesis 1(h):** There are no differences between perceptions of school personnel and dropouts with respect to specific reasons for dropping out.

Six discrete items were used to test this hypothesis (see Table 11). Column 4 of Table 11 indicated four statements having a significant difference at the .05 level and two on which there were no significant difference. Those having a significant difference included item 27, "had to live away from home in a boarding home or dormitory"; item 42, "left school to get married or have a baby"; item 44, "left school to go on welfare"; and item 45, "there was little educational material at home". Perceptions of both groups indicated no significant difference at the .05 level on item 17, "many friends who had dropped out"; and item 43, "left school because of financial problems at home".

The data reveals that 73% of educators, but only 42.5% of dropouts agreed with item 27, that living away from home contributes to students dropping out. However, 37.5% of dropouts compared to only 15.3% of educators disagreed with

the item statement. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 indicated that educators reacted positively to item 27 whereas dropouts reacted negatively. This suggests that the majority of educators believed that living away from home influenced students to terminate schooling prematurely. However, student responses indicated a mixed reaction to this reason with the largest proportion disagreeing that this was not the case.

Item 42 which addressed marital and pregnancy reasons revealed that almost one half (49%) of educators compared to only 17.5% of dropouts agreed that students left school to get married or have a baby. Similarly, only 7.9% of educators compared to two thirds (65.0%) of dropouts disagreed with the item statement. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 revealed that dropouts reacted negatively to item 42, whereas educators generally agreed. Dropouts felt more strongly that this was not a reason for dropping out than did educators, although it should be noted that 43.1% of the latter group were "undecided" about this.

Responses to item 44 revealed that a small number of educators (11.5%) and dropouts (7.5%) agreed that receiving

welfare was a contributing factor in a Native student's decision to terminate schooling. The majority of educators (50%) and almost three quarters (72.5%) of dropouts disagreed with the item statement. The means revealed that although both groups reacted negatively to item 44, dropouts felt significantly more strongly about it than did educators. This suggests that both educators and dropouts viewed welfare as unimportant, and in the perception of both, has no real influence on a pupil's decision to terminate his or her schooling.

Item 45 which investigated whether having little or no educational material at home contributes in a student's decision to drop out revealed that 63.5% of educators compared to 36.6% of dropouts were in agreement. By contrast, 13.4% of educators and 24.4% of dropouts disagreed. Twenty-three point one percent of educators and 39% of dropouts were undecided about this. Again this suggests having little educational material at home is considered to be a significant factor for teachers but less for students.

Item 17 which investigated the importance that educators and dropouts place on students having friends who had dropped

out revealed that 77.4% of educators and 56.1% of dropouts agreed that students dropped out of school because their friends did. Only 9.4% of educators compared to 29.3% of dropouts disagreed with this reason. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 revealed that both groups reacted positively to item 17. Differences between the two groups were not significant, and the majority of educators and dropouts considered having friends who had dropped out of school as an influencing factor in the decision to terminate schooling.

Responses to item 43, which investigated whether financial problems at home contributed to a pupil's decision to drop out of school, revealed that 21.6% of educators and 17.5% of dropouts agreed with the statement. However, the majority of educators (41.2%) and of dropouts (47.5%) disagreed with the item statement. The means presented in columns 2 and 3 revealed that although both groups reacted negatively to item 43, dropouts felt slightly more strongly about it than did educators. Differences were not significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that both educators and dropouts generally viewed financial problems as not being a factor in a student's decision to leave school early.

On the strength of the significant difference between educators and dropout perception with respect to item 27, living away from home; item 42, leaving school to marry or have a baby; item 44, leaving school to go on welfare; and item 45; little educational material at home, the null hypothesis is rejected and the conclusion reached that school personnel and dropouts differ with respect to their perceptions about specific reasons for dropping out.

Table 11

The perceptions of educators and dropouts toward other possible reasons for dropping out.

Items	Educators (n=52)					Dropouts (n=42)					Values	
	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	A	U	D	Mean	S.D	F.	Sig.F
	17. Many friends who had dropped out.	77.4	13.2	9.4	2.2	.79	56.1	14.6	29.3	2.6	1.3	3.0
27. Had to live away from home.	75.0	9.6	15.3	2.1	1.1	37.5	20.0	42.5	3.2	1.2	19.4	.000
42. Left school to marry and/or have a baby.	49.0	43.1	7.9	2.6	.88	17.5	17.5	65.0	3.8	1.2	30.3	.000
43. Left school due to financial problems.	21.6	37.3	41.2	3.2	0.8	17.5	35	47.5	3.5	1	1.9	0.18
44. Left school to go on welfare.	11.5	38.5	50	3.5	1	7.5	20	72.5	4	0.9	6.2	0.015
45. Little ed material at home.	63.5	23.1	13.4	2.3	1	36.6	39	24.4	3	1.1	9.7	0.003

**Research Question 1**

**Research Question 1:** What other factors do educators and the students who have dropped out of school consider contribute to dropping out?

Both groups of respondents were asked to respond to the open-ended question: "Are there any other factors which contribute to Native students dropping out of school". The results from this question were tabulated as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Other Factors that May Contribute to Native Children Dropping Out of School.

Factors	Educators (n=52)		Dropouts (n=41)	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
1. Lack of parental support.	10	19	2	5
2. Lack of direction in student lives.	9	17	1	2
3. Alcohol/drugs.	8	15	7	17
4. Homesickness.	6	12	5	12
5. Cultural shock.	4	8	-	-
6. Lack of extra-curricular activities.	3	6	2	5
7. Personal problems.	3	6	7	17
8. Irrelevant curriculum.	3	6	-	-
9. Pregnancy	3	6	3	7
10. Lack of commitment.	2	4	1	2
11. Too young to leave home.	2	4	-	-
12. Guidance counsellor needed.	2	4	-	-
13. Peer pressure.	2	4	3	7
14. School was boring.	1	2	4	10
15. Poor living arrangements.	1	2	1	2
16. Financial problems.	1	2	-	-
17. Town was boring.	-	-	2	5
18. Too many rules.	-	-	2	5

(continued)

Table 12 continued.

Factors	Educators (n=52)		Dropouts (n=42)	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
19. Isolation	-	-	3	7
20. Other.	6	12	4	10
21. No response.	20	38	9	22

Note: Respondents could give more than one reason. Up to three were included in this table. Frequency totals may therefore exceed 100%.

Except for two factors (the use of alcohol or drugs and homesickness) educators and Native dropouts differed in their responses to this question. Educators more frequently listed the lack of parental support (19%) and lack of direction with respect to student lives (17%). The next most frequently cited reasons were the use of drugs or alcohol (15%) and then homesickness by (12%) of this group. A small number listed such factors as cultural shock (8%), personal problems (6%) or questioned the relevancy of the curriculum (6%). By contrast, dropouts most frequently listed personal problems and alcohol or drugs as factors contributing to leaving school. Seventeen percent listed each of these. Homesickness was also cited by 12% of dropouts, and about 10% gave the reason that school was boring. A few also listed pregnancy (7%), isolation (7%), and

peer pressure (7%). Other reasons were given, but each by only one or two respondents from each of the educators or Native student group (see Table 12). It should also be noted that over one-third of the educators and about one-quarter of the dropouts did not list any reasons.

#### Research question 2

**Research question 2:** What specific factors do school personnel and the students who have dropped out of school consider would: (a) have helped students stay in school; and (b) return to school and complete their high school diploma.

The results from this question were tabulated as shown in Table 13 and Table 14. The largest percentage of each group (60% of educators and 17% of dropouts) indicated that parental support and encouragement was required to help increase the success rate of Native students. Approximately 10% of each group also suggested that having the high school on the Reserve and having more extra-curricular activities would help. It was also evident that educators (14%) considered that having qualified guidance counsellors would help, as well as more Native teachers (10% indicated the latter). Several

other suggestions were made by respondents in each group, but each by only one or two people. About one-third of each group gave no suggestions at all.

With respect to other factors that would help Native dropouts return to high school to complete their diploma, many more suggestions were made by educators than by the dropouts. The most frequent response given by 22% of the dropouts was having grades nine through twelve at a school located on the reserve. Approximately 12% also said that encouragement from their parents would help; and 7% of each said that distance education courses and having friends and family with them would also help (see Table 14). The largest proportion of educators (19%) again said that encouragement from home would help dropouts return to school; and about 17% cited the need for student motivation and perseverance. Other factors given that were considered might help were individualized programs (by 10%); tutoring and extra help with homework (by 10%); more involvement with the community (by 8%); and incentives in general (by 8%). Six percent also suggested either distance education courses or better guidance planning. Again, fairly

large numbers of each group (34.0% of educators and 46.0% of dropouts) gave no suggestions at all.

Table 13

Factors that Could Help Increase Success Rate of Native Students in School.

Factors	Educators (n= 52)		Dropouts (n= 41)	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
1. Parental support/ Encouragement	31	60	7	17
2. Qualified guidance counsellor.	7	14	2	5
3. High school on reserve.	5	10	5	12
4. More Native teachers.	5	10	-	-
5. More extra- curricular activities.	5	10	4	10
6. More relevant curriculum.	2	4	-	-
7. Distance education courses.	2	4	1	4
8. Make school more interesting.	-	-	1	2
9. Relatives living closer.	-	-	1	2
10. I don't know.	-	-	3	7
11. Other	10	19	8	20
12. No response.	19	36	16	39

Note: Respondents could give more than one reason. Up to three were included in this table. Frequency totals may therefore exceed 100%.

**Table 14**  
**Factors that Would Help Students Return to High School and Complete their High School Diploma.**

Factors	Educators (n=52)		Dropouts (n=42)	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
1. Encouragement from parents.	10	19	5	12
2. Motivation/Perseverance.	9	17	1	2
3. Individualized programs.	5	10	-	-
4. Tutoring/extra help.	5	10	-	-
5. More community involvement.	4	8	-	-
6. Incentives.	4	8	-	-
7. Better Guidance planning.	3	6	-	-
8. Distance education courses.	3	6	3	7
9. Friends and family with them.	2	4	3	7
10. Relevant curriculum.	2	4	-	-
11. Grade 9 and 10/high school on reserve.	1	2	9	22
12. Other.	9	17	10	24
13. No response.	18	34	19	46

Note: Respondents could give more than one reason. Up to three were included in this table. Frequency totals may therefore exceed 100%.

**Research question 3**

**Research question 3:** What effect did living away from home have on a student's decision to drop out?

The results of this question were tabulated as shown in Table 15. Again, educators suggested many more influencing factors, with by far the largest proportion (48%) citing homesickness as a reason for dropping out for students living away from home to attend school. The next most frequently given reasons by educators were lack of encouragement that would not be available from home (19%), cultural shock (15%), students being too young to leave home (14), unacceptable living arrangements (12%), and personal problems (8%). Native dropouts gave fewer responses to this question, and in fact, about 37% did not respond at all. The most frequently cited reason given was homesickness (by 15%) followed by financial problems (given by 10%). Also, 7% of the Native dropouts listed either cultural shock, personal problems, or the fact that school was boring as reasons for dropping out due to living away from their home.

Table 15

Effect of Living Away From Home on Student Decision to Drop Out.

Factors	Educators (n=52)		Dropouts (n=42)	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
1. Homesickness.	25	48	6	15
2. No encouragement from home.	10	19	-	-
3. Cultural shock.	8	15	3	7
4. To young to leave.	7	14	-	-
5. Living arrangements were unacceptable.	6	12	-	-
6. Alcohol/drugs.	5	10	-	-
7. Personal problems.	4	8	-	-
8. School was boring.	2	4	3	7
9. Financial problems.	-	-	4	10
10. I don't know.	-	-	4	10
11. Other.	4	8	7	17
12. No response.	17	32	15	37

Note: Respondents could give more than one reason. Up to three were included in this table. Frequency totals may therefore exceed 100%.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Introduction

The purpose for undertaking the study was to investigate the perceptions of educators and dropouts with respect to variables related to Native students leaving school prior to graduating. This chapter presents a summary of the findings and the conclusions of the study, and offers recommendations to the various tribal councils and education districts that may be used to reduce factors that contribute or influence Native children to drop out of school. It also lists recommendations for further study in this area.

#### Summary of the findings.

Eight hypothesis and three research questions were used to study the perceptions of school personnel and Native dropouts related to students dropping out of, or staying in school. A significance level of .05 was used to test each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1(a) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on school work and attendance. Ten items were used to test this hypothesis. While dropouts reacted negatively to all items, educators reacted positively to three, and on all others they were closer to agreeing with the statements than disagreeing. The analysis of variance results revealed statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were different.

Hypothesis 1(b) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on career plans and guidance. Six items were used to test this hypothesis. Overall dropouts did not consider this area contributed in their leaving decision but long term career planning was seen as somewhat of a factor. Educators on the other hand strongly agreed that this area contributed to student decisions to drop out. Like dropouts they felt that long term career planning was more of a contributing factor than the others. The analysis of variance results on all items revealed statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore

rejected and it was concluded that the perceptions of the two groups on this construct were different.

Hypothesis 1(c) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on belonging to school. Eleven items were used to test this hypothesis. While dropouts reacted negatively (tended to disagree) with all items, one half of them felt that a lack of involvement in extra curricular activities and the fact that the development and teaching of the curriculum by non-Natives were somewhat of a factor in their decision to drop out of school. Educators reacted positively to one, and on all others except three, they were closer to agreeing with the statements than disagreeing. Most educators agreed that curriculum developed and taught by non-Natives was a factor in student decisions to drop out. The largest proportion of both educators and dropouts disagreed with the statement that the school did not care about Native Students. Overall, the analysis of variance results revealed statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were different.

Hypothesis 1(d) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on home and school communication. Three items were used to test this hypothesis. Dropouts reacted negatively to one item, but were more neutral in their opinion about lack of sufficient school and teacher communication with parents and the community. However, educators reacted positively (generally agreed) to two (parents and teachers did not communicate enough, and there was little communication between school and community) and they were closer to agreeing that parents viewed the school as a "white school" than dropouts. The analysis of variance results revealed statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were different.

Hypothesis 1(e) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on student and staff relations. Five items were used to test this hypothesis. Both educators and dropouts reacted negatively to all items believing that they did not contribute in a student's decision to terminate schooling. The analysis of variance results revealed

statistically significant differences on only two of the items (students were getting into trouble with staff, and teachers treated students unjustly). However, the overall analysis of variance showed significant differences between the two groups. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were different.

Hypothesis 1(f) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on parental support. Two items were used to test this hypothesis. Dropouts did not consider this area contributed in their leaving decision whereas educators were in agreement that lack of parental interest and encouragement contributed to student decisions to drop out of school. The analysis of variance results revealed statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were different.

Hypothesis 1(g) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on relevance of the school curriculum. Two items were used to test this hypothesis. Dropouts considered that this area somewhat contributed to their

leaving decision whereas educators were more in agreement that it did, indicating that they were more sure that having an irrelevant curriculum or not having a course on specific cultural relevance contributed to a student's decision to terminate school. The analysis of variance results did not reveal statistically significant differences. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups on this factor were similar.

Hypothesis 1(h) compared the perceptions of school personnel and dropouts on other possible reasons for dropping out. Six discrete items were used to test this hypothesis. Overall dropouts did not consider the listed reasons particularly contributed to their leaving decision, with perhaps the exception of having many friends who had dropped out of school. This was seen as somewhat of a contributing factor. Educators, on the other hand, agreed with three reasons (dropouts had many friends who had quit school, students had to live away from home, and there was little educational material in their home) and felt that pregnancy or getting married was somewhat of a factor in a student's decision to drop out. However, they disagreed with two,

indicating that they considered financial problems and the lure of welfare as non-factors in a student leaving decisions. The analysis of variance results revealed statistically significant differences on four of the six items. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and it was concluded the perceptions of the two groups were different on these specifically identified reasons that could contribute to dropping out .

Research question 1 asked school personnel and dropouts to list other possible factors that may contribute to Native children dropping out of school. Except for the factors of the use alcohol or drugs and homesickness, educators and Native dropouts differed in their responses to this question. Educators more frequently listed the lack of parental support, the lack of direction with respect to student lives, the use of drugs or alcohol, and homesickness as the most influencing factors in a student's decision to drop out of school. Fewer listed such factors as cultural shock, personal problems or questioned the relevancy of the curriculum. By contrast, dropouts most frequently listed personal problems and alcohol or drugs as factors contributing to leaving school.

Homesickness and statements about "school being boring" were also cited by dropouts as influencing them to terminate schooling. Few listed pregnancy, isolation, and peer pressure as contributing factors.

Research question 2 asked school personnel and dropouts to list possible factors that may help students stay in school or return to school and complete their high school diploma. Concerning the former, the largest percentage of each group indicated that parental support and encouragement was required to help increase the success rate of Native students. Approximately the same number from each group also suggested that having the high school on the Reserve and having more extra-curricular activities would help. Educators also felt that having qualified guidance counsellors and more Native teachers would aid in keeping students in school. About one-third of each group did not suggest any reasons.

The most frequent response given by dropouts was having grades nine through twelve at a school located on their reserve, encouragement from their parents, distance education courses and having friends and family with them would help increase the retention rate of Native students. The largest

proportion of educators reported that encouragement from home would help dropouts return to school. In addition, educators suggested that individualized programs, tutoring and extra help with homework, more involvement from the community and incentives in general would help.

Research question 3 asked school personnel and dropouts what effect living away from home influenced their decision to drop out of school. Like research question 2, educators suggested many more influencing factors than did dropouts. Educators more frequently cited homesickness as a reason for dropping out for students living away from home to attend school. Educators also listed lack of available encouragement from home, cultural shock, students being too young to leave home, unacceptable living arrangements, and personal problems were influencing factors in a student's decision to quit. Native dropouts, on the other hand, frequently cited homesickness, financial problems, cultural shock, personal problems, and the fact that school was boring as reasons for dropping out due to attending school away from home.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

As the study investigated the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward Natives students leaving school early, each of the constructs used to examine these perceptions will be discussed separately.

#### **School work and attendance**

On the basis of the study it was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward school work and attendance, were statistically significant at the .05 level. Educators felt more strongly than did dropouts that problems associated with school work and attendance contributed in the decisions of students to terminate their schooling. In fact dropouts reacted negatively to all items in this construct while educators reacted positive to three and on all others were closer to agreeing with the statements than disagreeing.

Some of the difference between educators and dropouts may exist because of the different value system of each group.

The majority of individuals in the educator group were non-Native teachers and administrators from different cultural backgrounds and experiences than those students who were in the Band operated Native schools. Consequently, through their upbringing and academic preparation at post-secondary institutions, educators would typically consider that students who fail to attend school regularly or experience trouble with school work would be at greater risk of dropping out. Dropouts disagreed with the educators. They indicated that they dropped out of school not because of poor attendance or that they were having trouble with school work but for other reasons. This finding that problems with school work and attendance contributes to students dropping out of school is supported by other researchers (Hoyt, 1962; Bachman, 1971; Hoffer, 1986; Deblois, 1989; Spain and Sharpe, 1990) but not by Native dropouts.

#### **Career plans and guidance**

It was evident from this construct that the group of educators generally agreed (based on all six items) that lack of career planning and inadequate guidance contributed in

student's decision to drop out of school. Their opinions differed significantly from those of the dropouts. They expressed particularly strong concern that students did not have long term plans for when they completed school and thus lacked overall direction and purpose with regard to schooling. The students tended to agree that they had no long term plans, but were significantly less certain of this than the educators. Both groups also tended to agree on the lack of guidance counsellor services as a contributing factor. This is what one would expect since many of the schools under study did not have a professional guidance counsellor. However, many dropouts did expect to finish school and indeed cared if they graduated, although many were unsure about this.

Educators perceptions may arise because many students did not verbalize their career expectations since in their culture this would be perceived as "bragging". Also, many students who lack career plans or plan to pursue traditional livelihood activities (hunting and fishing) could feel that they have little need for career plans or guidance as perceived by "educators".

The findings of other researchers have indicated that having no life plans after school or having received insufficient career counselling contributes in students terminating their schooling prematurely (Spain and Sharpe, 1990; Mackey and Myles, 1990). Such views are particularly consistent with those of the educator group in this study.

#### **Belonging to school.**

This construct concerned perceptions toward belonging to school. On the basis of the study it was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts were statistically significant at the .05 level. However, such differences were not necessarily due to one group agreeing and the other disagreeing. For example, there were differences in opinions about the school curriculum being developed and taught by non-Natives, but both groups agreed that this could be a contributing factor in dropping out. However, the educators felt considerable (significantly) stronger about this. The implications of these responses suggests that a change of curriculum could help lend more relevance to schooling for students and that Native people should be

perhaps involved with both the development and delivery. This is consistent with the suggestions from other studies (Kennedy, 1966; Gillespie, 1979; Mackey and Myles, 1990; Ross, 1990; Spain and Sharpe, 1990).

It was also evident from a further examination of item responses in this construct that both groups perceived that students should become more involved with extra-curricular activities. Traditionally this has increased feelings of belonging and participating in school life and should therefore be encouraged where possible.

Another item where perceptions were similar concerned the school not caring about the students. Both groups disagreed with this important aspect of school life and the educational process and considered that it was not a contributing factor in dropping out.

With respect to being discriminated against by others, educators generally felt that this was the case with Native students. The latter however, mostly disagreed they were discriminated against and that this did not contribute to them dropping out. These difference between educators and dropouts may exist because "white" educators teaching Native students

on Reserves tend to be very sensitive to any form of discrimination that occurs in school, either by non-Native students or by others. Consequently, when they see a Native student dropping out they may attribute it to non-Native students making them feel unwelcome or that they were discriminated against by others in the school. Either dropouts terminated their schooling prematurely for other reasons than non-Natives making them feel unwanted at school or being discriminated against by others, or they may not be aware of the more subtle forms of discrimination that may occur in school or do not feel comfortable admitting that they were discriminated against.

Another explanation for the difference between educators and dropouts concerning interest in school is that educators maybe concluding that students do not care about education or feel a part of the school since, from the educators observations, many students were constantly late for school, did not participate in class, and failed to complete assigned work. However, from a Native perspective some of these factors can be explained. For example, it is culturally acceptable to be 30-45 minutes late for scheduled events or

arriving at school. In addition, culturally, Natives are generally shy and learn from observing. This is apparent in the classroom where many students are not eager to answer questions in class. This reason may account for the lack of involvement in class and not because teachers failed to engage the students interest and participation. Consequently, just because Native students behave in such a manner does not necessarily mean that they dropped out because they felt alienated from school or perceived school as being of little importance to their lives.

#### **Home/School communication**

This construct concerned perceptions toward home and school communications. On the basis of the study it was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts were statistically significant at the .05 level. Educators reacted positively to two items and on the third they were only marginally negative indicating that they believed that a lack of communication between parents and teachers, the school and the community, and parents viewing the school as a "white" school contributed to dropping out.

These findings are consistent with other researchers (Mink and Baker, 1968; Zamanazdeh and Prince, 1978; Gillespie, 1979; Adams, 1989; Bull, 1991).

Dropouts also agreed, but to a much lesser extent, that lack of home, school, teacher and parent communication can contribute to dropping out. It is therefore an important variable to consider. These differences between educators and dropouts may exist because educators, through their training and professional preparations understand that good communication between all stakeholders regarding a student's education can contribute substantially to successful schooling and thus high school completion. It is maybe because of this lack of communication that teachers believe that many parents view the school as a "white" institution. It was evident though, that many dropouts did not think that their parents considered the schools as "white" schools and thus was not a contributing factor in dropping out.

#### **Student/Staff relations**

This construct concerned perceptions toward student and staff relations and both educators and dropouts reacted

negatively to all items except with respect to teachers understanding students. According to almost half of the educator group teachers did not understand students. However, dropouts reacted more strongly (negatively) on four of the five items. It was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward student and staff relations were statistically significant at the .05 level.

Analysis of the items showed that dropouts in particular considered they were treated fairly and did not get into trouble with teachers. Both groups also considered that teachers encouraged school completion and student work efforts in school. This construct overall reflected positive attitudes toward student/staff relations by both groups, although dropouts were significantly more positive about this aspect of schooling. In the opinion of respondents it was for most, not a contributing factor in dropping out of school.

#### **Parental support**

On the basis of the study it was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward parental support were statistically significant at the .05

level. Educators reacted positively to both items whereas dropouts reacted negatively or were undecided which suggests that, as a group, they were less certain about their parent's interest in their school work and about encouragement to stay in school. The findings of other researchers have indicated this is an important area of consideration and that lack of parent interest and encouragement contributes to students dropping out (Mink and Barker, 1968; Zamanazdeh and Prince, 1978; Gillespie, 1979; Mackey and Myles, 1990).

These difference between educators and dropouts may exist because of the different cultural expectations, experiences and background of each group. Educators through their schooling experiences, believe that parents should take an interest in their child's school work and encourage them to stay in school and reach their fullest and best potential. If the parents of Native dropouts held similar views, then it is evident that they were not being communicated to their children, otherwise the dropout group would have perceived higher levels of interest and encouragement in their schooling from home.

**Relevance of school curriculum.**

This construct concerned perceptions toward relevance of school curriculum. Both groups were in agreement that the curriculum in the school was somewhat irrelevant and that having no courses of specific cultural relevance contributed to dropping out. It was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward the relevance of school curriculum were not statistically significant at the .05 level. This finding is consistent with other researchers (Coladarci, 1983; Deyhle, 1989; Ross, 1991; Mackey and Myles, 1990) who found that having culturally relevant material helped lend interest in schooling among Native students.

**Other possible reasons for dropping out.**

Several attitude items on the questionnaire addressed other possible reasons for dropping out. It was concluded that the difference in the perceptions of educators and dropouts toward these reasons were statistically significant at the .05 level.

Both educators and dropouts agreed that having friends who dropped out influences students to discontinue schooling.

This is consistent with other researchers (Rumberger, 1987; Ekstrom et al, 1986; Mackey and Myles, 1990;). The implications of these responses suggests that a policy dealing with encouraging dropouts to return to school may increase the graduation rate of other Native students.

The perceptions of educators regarding some items were consistent with other researchers. They considered that living away from home while attending school, leaving school to get married or have a baby and having little educational materials in the home contributes to students dropping out (Bryde, 1967; Rumberger, 1987; Ross, 1990). Dropouts on the other hand were less supportive of these reasons, especially with respect to pregnancy or to be married, a reason most strongly disagreed with.

These difference between educators and dropouts about educational material in the home may exist because educators, through their culture, experiences and background believe that not having adequate educational materials in the home is not conducive to learning. Many educators pride themselves in giving their children numerous books and current technology to enhance learning. Dropouts may have a different perspective

than educators, since through their culture, traditions and background they learn from watching or viewing so it makes much less sense for them to have reading or educational materials in their home.

Educators indicated that many Natives left school to get married and have a baby. Such perceptions are different from those of Native dropouts and may reflect cultural differences or biases. Once a teenager becomes pregnant educators assume that she must leave school to take care of her child. However, in Native culture teenage pregnancy is not shunned and the extended family or other community members help raise the newborn. Consequently, there is less need for a student to leave school to look after her child.

Research question 1 was an extension to hypothesis 1(h) and compared other reasons listed by school personnel and dropouts toward specific factors that may contribute to Native students dropping out of school. Except for two factors, the use alcohol or drugs and homesickness, educators and Native dropouts differed in their responses to this question. Educators more frequently listed the lack of parental support, the lack of direction with respect to student lives, the use

of drugs or alcohol, and homesickness as the most influencing factors in a student's decision to drop out of school. Dropouts most frequently listed personal problems and alcohol or drugs as factors contributing to leaving school. Homesickness and "school was boring" were also cited by dropouts as influencing them to terminate schooling. Dropout responses are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Spain and Sharpe, 1990; Mackey and Myles, 1990; Mink and Barker, 1968; Zamanazdeh and Prince, 1978; Gillespie, 1979; Lin, 1985; Clawson, 1990).

Educators continued to stress the importance of parental support and the need for longer term planning and guidance in students' lives. Dropouts viewed the problem of leaving school somewhat differently and addressed the problem as being personal in nature or related to alcohol and drugs or homesickness. Also, many residential Natives students are teenagers (with typical teenage difficulties), living away from home, in a different culture, and are trying to adjust to a new school and make new friends. Such a situation may well contribute to the reasons listed by dropouts for leaving school.

Research question 2 compared the reasons listed by school personnel and dropouts on various specific factors that may help students stay in school or return to school and complete their high school diploma. Concerning the former, the largest percentage of each group indicated that parental support and encouragement was required to help increase the success rate of Native students. Similarly, approximately the same number from each group also suggested that having the high school on the reserve and having more extra-curricular activities would help. Educators also felt that having qualified guidance counsellors and more Native teachers would aid in keeping students in school.

The most frequent response given by dropouts was having grades nine through twelve at a school located on their reserve, encouragement from their parents, distance education courses and having friends and family with them would help increase the retention rate of Native students. The largest proportion of educators reported that encouragement from home would help dropouts return to school. In addition, educators suggested that individualized programs, tutoring and extra help with homework, more involvement from the community and

incentives in general would help. With the exception of four items, incentives, individualized programs, having more Native teachers and having a high school on their reserve, this is consistent with the findings of other researchers (Bell, 1967; Mink and Barker, 1968; Zamanazdeh and Prince, 1978; Gillespie, 1979; Ekstrom et al, 1986; Spain and Sharpe, 1990; Mackey and Myles, 1990). The role of parents, the community, culturally relevant curriculum, and opportunity to complete schooling in the home community continued to be stressed.

Research question 3 compared the reasons listed by school personnel and dropouts on student living arrangements and how it influenced their decision to drop out of school. Educators more frequently cited homesickness as a reason for dropping out for those students living away from home to attend school. Educators also felt strongly that lack of encouragement from home, cultural shock, students being too young to leave home, unacceptable living arrangements, and personal problems were influencing factors in a student's decision to quit. Native dropouts, on the other hand, frequently cited homesickness, financial problems, cultural shock, personal problems, and the fact that school was boring as reasons for dropping out. This

continues to be consistent with the findings of other researchers (Bryde, 1967; Mink and Barker, 1968; Zamanazdeh and Prince, 1978; Gillespie, 1979; Lin, 1985; Spain and Sharpe, 1990; Mackey and Myles, 1990; Clawson, 1990; Ross, 1991).

### Summary

It is clear that educators and Native student dropouts have differing perceptions on why the latter terminate schooling prior to graduation. In some instances the differences indicate opposite perspectives of the issues involved. In other instances they significantly differ in the amount of agreement or disagreement but were obviously thinking along the same lines. For example, the items dealing with skipping school and classes, having life plans after school, insufficient career counselling, development and teaching of the curriculum by Native people, and increased communication between parents, teachers and students were more consistently identified by both groups.

Many of the perceptions of the mixed educators group in the research were more traditional (and thus predictable) and

tended to stress the importance of attending school and completing assigned work, involvement in extra-curricular activities and better communication between all stakeholders involved with education. Dropouts because of their culture, traditions and experience perceived some of the problems associated with dropping out as occurring, for example because of personal problems, homesickness, and involvement in alcohol and drugs. Also, it was evident they wanted grade 12 on their reserve, or their friends and family with them if they left their community to attend another school.

#### **Recommendations**

Throughout the duration of this study I have received overwhelming support from educators and Native students who have terminated their schooling. From their responses several recommendations can be made to Local Education Authorities and Provincial School Boards which may help Native students continue with their education. They are listed below:

1. Educators hired to work in Native schools need to be provided with opportunities that will enable them to

develop an awareness and appreciation for the Native culture. This should be done at the earliest opportunity.

2. Establish a process of three-way communication between school personnel, parents (including the community), and students. It was evident from research results that there exist a lack of awareness of the perspectives of each of these stakeholders and their role and contribution in the educational process. It was also evident that parent-student communication needed to be enhanced in particular, but not in isolation of intended schooling outcomes. This could be achieved in part if all stakeholders involved in education develop guidelines needed in addressing the issue of the kinds of home and school support which can potentially help increase the academic success of Native students and completion of school. Parents should be particularly encouraged to express to their children concerns regarding the importance of education .

3. Address the concerns resulting from students living in residence away from their home communities. When ever possible, parents of students from distant communities, should accompany their children to their new accommodations and new school and meet with the personnel responsible for taking care of them while they are away from home. In addition, every effort should be made to be in constant contact with these students to try and reduce homesickness that may contribute to dropping out of school. A more permanent solution would be for the Local Education Authorities to try and implement as many grades as possible (up to grade 12) on the reserve.

4. Provide students with assistance in developing long-term plans and aspirations. Despite cultural characteristics (of Native people) that may have to be overcome in this regard, such actions can provide direction in students' lives. If specific careers, occupations and, or post secondary education is part of their plans, then the relevance of completing high school may be realized.

5. Coupled with recommendations four is the issue of providing adequate guidance in schools related to careers, work habits and other facets of education. This issue could be addressed, in part, by

(a) having additional guidance counsellors hired with a focus of their work on long term plans which would provide direction in helping form perseverance with immediate plans and develop aspirations for the future.

(b) giving all counsellors on reserves extensive in-service on such topics as; career planning, high school and university requirements, expectations, and the role and responsibilities of parents and students concerning education.

(c) establishing a more comprehensive guidance program that is funded in school throughout the reservations so that many of the other emotional and educational problems encountered by students can be effectively treated.

d) making an effort in schools where guidance counsellors are not located, to assist teachers who

are interested in guidance techniques to provide guidance functions to students; and

(e) striving to implement a career education program within schools. This could be accomplished through a community-based effort.

6. In terms of adding relevance to schooling a Native perspective in school instruction should be developed and implemented in all subjects across the curriculum. Courses of specific cultural relevance are evidently needed to supplement or replace some of the current content. It might be most appropriate for district wide committees to work on this and include people from the community directly in the process.

7. The notion of belonging to school can be enhanced by encouraging all students to participate in extra-curricular activities. Schools should attempt to develop a wide variety of these in keeping with student interest and the Native culture.

8. A more general recommendation would be for a dropout committee to be established with representatives from all areas of the school district. Its responsibility would be to monitor the dropout problem (early identification of Native students at risk of dropping out) and report back to the Tribal Councils to try and prevent students from dropping out and to get dropouts back in school.

#### **Recommended Research**

Upon completing this research it became evident that several interesting and crucial questions would not be answered. Further research could be completed to enhance our understanding of the Native dropout situation. It is recommended that the following research be under-taken with respect to Native education:

1. A comparative study of parental, students, and educator attitudes toward schooling.
2. A comparison of dropping out in Native schools where there are Native teachers and, or Native or locally developed curriculum with schools where such circumstances do not prevail.

3. Consider other variables in the drop out process that would take into account age, gender and grade level reached in school.
4. Comparative study of school completion by residential students and students who completed their schooling in the local community.
5. Examine perceptions of different groups of educational personnel (teachers, school principals and vice-principals, education directors and superintendents), with respect to factors related to students leaving school prior to graduation.
6. Develop through community based research ways and means of creating and implementing cultural relevant content for Native schools.
7. Study collaborative based leadership issues pertaining to local (Native) content of education.

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## Appendix A

Questionnaire

Perceptions About Early Leavers in Ontario

Native Schools

Adapted from Ontario Native Student Dropout Study

Ontario Ministry of Education

by Ronald Mackay, (1990)

Current position in school (ie. teacher, administrator counsellor, teacher aide, director)

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Listed below are 45 commonly expressed statements reflecting factors which may contribute to students dropping out of school. How do you feel about each of these as contributing to Native students quitting school? Based your responses on your own experiences with native students who have quit school in this tribal council. Circle the most appropriate response for each question.

1. They had difficulty with English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

2. They were getting poor grades in school exams and tests.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

3. They were kept back one or more grades.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

4. They were failing one (or more) course(S) in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

5. They were falling behind with their homework.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

6. They often didn't pay attention in class.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

7. They were not good at doing work the teachers asked them to do in class.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

8. They were getting into trouble with teachers and/or the principal.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

9. Their teachers failed to understand them.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

10. Their teachers didn't encourage them to stay on at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

11. Teachers seldom praised them or their efforts.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

12. Teachers often picked on them unjustly.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

13. Their parents didn't have much interest in how well or badly they did at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

14. Their parents didn't encourage them to stay at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

15. The parents and the teachers of Native students didn't talk to each other enough.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

16. There was too little communication between the school and their home communities.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

17. Many of their friends had already dropped out.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

18. They had few or no friends at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

19. They did not expect to finish high school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

20. They did not care whether they finished high school or not.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

21. They did not have any clear plans about what they would do after leaving school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

22. Most of the subjects taught in school didn't interest them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

23. They felt that school was of little importance to their life.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

24. They seldom took part in sports or other after-school activities.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

25. School seemed to be too big and impersonal for them.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

26. They had to bus for quite a long time to and from school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

27. They had to live away from home (in a boarding home or a dormitory).

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

28. Many of their teachers were unable to engage their interest and participation.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

29. There were too many school rules that they couldn't see the point of.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

30. They didn't have a guidance counsellor with whom they could feel really comfortable.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

31. They didn't have a professional guidance counsellor, just a regular teacher who also did some counselling.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

32. They received insufficient career counselling in the school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

33. The school didn't really care about Native students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

34. Much of the work done in class was pointless.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

35. They had to study courses that had little to do with their lives outside of school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

36. There were no courses of specific cultural relevance to them as Native people.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

37. Non-Native students made them feel unwelcome at school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

38. They were discriminated against by others in the school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

39. They skipped school and classes quite a lot.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

40. The parents view the school as a non-native or white school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

41. Most of the curriculum is developed and taught by non-natives.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

42. They left school to get married and/or have a baby.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

43. They left school because of financial problems at home.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

44. They left school to go on welfare.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

45. There was little educational material in the homes of the students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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A

B

C

D

E

A. Are there any other factors which, in your experience, contribute to Native students dropping out of school?

B. What action, in your opinion, could help to increase success rate of Native students in school?

C. What would dropouts need to return to school and complete their high school diploma?

D. Were students living away from home while attending school? What do you think was the effect that this fact had on students decision to drop out of school?

E. Have you any comments to make on the content of this questionnaire?

## Appendix B

Questionnaire

Perceptions About Early Leavers in Ontario

Native Schools

Adapted from Ontario Native Student Dropout Study  
Ontario Ministry of Education  
by Ronald Mackay, (1990)

Listed below are 45 commonly expressed statements reflecting factors which may contribute to students dropping out of school. How do you feel about each of these as contributing to your decision to quit school? Circle the most appropriate response for each question.

1. I had difficulty with English Language skills( reading, writing, listening, speaking) in class.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

2. I was getting poor grades in school exams and tests.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

3. I was kept back one or more grades.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

4. I was failing one (or more) course(s) in school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

5. I was falling behind with my homework.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A	B	C	D	E

6. I often didn't pay attention in class.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

7. I was not good at doing work the teachers asked me to do in class.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

8. I was getting into trouble with teachers and/or the principal.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

9. My teachers failed to understand me.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

10. The teachers didn't encourage me to stay at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

11. Teachers seldom praised me for my efforts.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

12. Teachers often picked on me unjustly.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

13. My parents didn't have much interest in how well or badly I did at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

14. My parents didn't encourage me to stay at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

15. My parents and the teachers at school didn't talk to each other enough.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

16. There was too little communication between the school and my community.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

17. Many of my friends had already dropped out.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

18. I had few or no friends at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

19. I did not expect to finish high school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

20. I did not care whether I finished high school or not.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

21. I did not have any clear plans about what I would do after leaving school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

22. Most of the subjects taught in school didn't interest me.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

23. I felt that school was of little importance to my life.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

24. I seldom took part in sports or other after-school activities.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

25. School seemed to be too big and impersonal for me.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

26. I had to bus for quite a long time to and from school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

27. I had to live away from home (in a boarding home or a dormitory).

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

28. Many of my teachers were unable to engage my interest and participation.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

29. There were too many school rules that I couldn't see the point of.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

30. I didn't have a guidance counsellor with whom I could feel really comfortable.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

31. I didn't have a professional guidance counsellor, just a regular teacher who also did some counselling.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

32. I got insufficient career counselling in the school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

33. The school didn't really care about me.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

34. Much of the work done in class was pointless.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

35. I had to study courses that had little to do with my life outside of school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

36. There were no courses of specific cultural relevance to me as a Native person.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

37. Non-Native students made me feel unwelcome at school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

38. I was discriminated against by others in the school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

39. I skipped school and classes quite a lot.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

40. My parents view the school as a non-native or white school.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

41. Most of my courses were taught by non-natives.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

42. I left school to get married and/or have a baby.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

43. I left school because of financial problems at home.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

A                      B                      C                      D                      E

44. I left school to go on welfare.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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A	B	C	D	E
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45. There was little educational material in my home.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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A	B	C	D	E
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A. Are there any other factors which influenced you to drop out of school?

B. What would have helped you stay in school?

C. Under what circumstances would you go back to school and complete your high school diploma?

D. Were you living away from home while attending school? What was the effect that this fact had on your decision to drop out of school?

E. Have you any comments to make on the students not completing school?

## Appendix C

Bobby Hancott  
Kingfisher Lake, Ontario,  
POV IZO

Dear early school leaver:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and currently the Grade 7 & 8 teacher at Mary Ann Aganash Memorial School in Kingfisher Lake. This is my fourth year of teaching on isolated Reserves in Northern Ontario. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Dennis Sharpe, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

I am in the process of collecting data related to Native dropout issues. Your responses will be used to make suggestions for strategies that will **maximize Native student success** at school.

All students who left school early (dropped out) are being asked the same questions. If you don't mind participating, then go ahead and respond to the questions. Note that you don't have to answer any you would rather not, and that you may withdraw your help (without prejudice) at any time. All information you give is **strictly confidential** and at know time will you be identified. Your help is needed and greatly appreciated.

If you wish to talk to someone not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research at Memorial University, (709) 737-3402. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Bobby Hancott.

## Appendix D

Bobby Hancott  
Kingfisher Lake, Ontario  
POV IZO

Dear Education Authority member:

I am a student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and currently the Grade 7 & 8 teacher at Mary Ann Aganash Memorial School in Kingfisher Lake. This is my fourth year of teaching on isolated Reserves in Northern Ontario.

I am in the process of administering a study, the purpose of which is to examine the Native dropout issue. All teachers, principals, education authorities, in the Windigo and Shibogama Tribal Council will be asked to participate in this study.

Your responses will be used to make suggestions for strategies for **maximizing Native student success** at school. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Dennis Sharpe, 5th Floor, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

All information gathered in this study is **strictly confidential** and at no time will individuals or schools be identified. I would appreciate it if you could inform your staff. Your cooperation in this manner is needed and greatly appreciated.

Should you wish to contact a person not directly associated with the study, please call Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research at Memorial University (709) 737-3402.

Yours sincerely,

Bobby Hancott.

Appendix E

Bobby Hancott  
Kingfisher Lake, Ontario,  
POV IZO

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland and currently the grade 7 & 8 teacher at Mary Ann Aganash Memorial School in Kingfisher Lake.

I or a colleague at the school will be interviewing students to investigate the reasons for them dropping out. I am requesting **your permission** for your child to take part in this study.

Your child's participation will consist of answering a written survey. This will take approximately 30 minutes of your child's time. Their responses will be used to make suggestions for strategies for **maximizing Native student success** at school.

All information gathered in this study is **strictly confidential** and at no time will individuals be identified. Also, your child may withdraw from the study, without prejudice at any time or refuse to answer any particular question. This study has received the approval of the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

If you are in agreement with having your child participate in this study please sign below and return the copy to the school. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 532-2057. Copies of the completed study will be available at the school.

Should you wish to contact a person not directly associated with the study, please call Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research at Memorial University (709) 737-3402.

I would appreciate it if you would please return this sheet to me by March 15th, 1995. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

I (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/guardian) hereby give permission for my child to take part in a dropout study being undertaken by Bobby Hancott. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that my child can withdraw at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual will be identified.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parents/Guardians Signature Yours

sincerely,

Bobby Hancott.

## Appendix F

Bobby Hancott  
Kingfisher Lake, Ontario  
POV 1Z0

Dear colleague:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and currently the Grade 7 & 8 teacher at Mary Ann Aganash Memorial School in Kingfisher Lake. This is my fourth year of teaching on isolated Reserves in Northern Ontario. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Dennis Sharpe, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

I am in the process of collecting data related to Native dropout issues. All teachers, principals, education authorities, and dropouts in the Windigo and Shibogama Tribal Councils will be asked to participate in this study. Your responses will be used to make suggestions for strategies for **maximizing Native student success** at school.

**In this regard, would you please complete the attached questionnaire.** Note, you do not have to answer any questions you would rather omit.

All information gathered in this study is **strictly confidential** and at no time will individuals or schools be identified. I would appreciate it if you would return the surveys to my room in the envelopes provided. Your cooperation in this manner is needed and greatly appreciated. Results of the study will be made available to each school and Tribal Council.

If you wish to talk to someone not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research at Memorial University, (709) 737-3402. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education. Thank you in advance for your help with this research.

Yours sincerely,

Bobby Hancott

## Appendix G

Bobby Hancott  
Kingfisher Lake, Ontario,  
POV IZO

Dear Administrator:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and currently the Grade 7 & 8 teacher at Mary Ann Aganash Memorial School in Kingfisher Lake. This is my fourth year of teaching on isolated Reserves in Northern Ontario. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Dennis Sharpe, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

I am in the process of collecting data related to Native dropout issues. All dropouts in the Windigo and Shibogama Tribal Councils will be asked to participate in this study through a questionnaire(copy attached). **Their responses will be used to make suggestions for strategies for maximizing Native student success at school.**

In this regard, I will need your help to administer the questionnaires to all the students from your community who have dropped out of school from September of 1990 to the present. Could you please hand out the questionnaires to the students and collect them and return all completed copies to me in the stamped, self addressed envelope. **Your help in this manner is needed and greatly appreciated.**

All information gathered in this study is **strictly confidential** and at no time will individuals or schools be identified.

If you wish to talk to someone not associated with the study, please contact Dr. Patricia Canning, Associate Dean of Research at Memorial University, (709) 737-3402. This study has been approved by the Chief and the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Bobby Hancott.







