EDUCATION IN A REMOTE COMMUNITY:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Education in a Remote Community: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

A small, remote, and isolated community presents educational challenges different from those experienced in larger, more accessible places. The purpose of this study is to examine critically the educational context of one such remote community, present any challenges that surface, study coping mechanisms used, and make recommendations about improving the educational environment studied. At the remote school six teachers interviewed outlined the difference between their expectations and the realities of the community, shared both their perceptions of the challenges and the coping mechanisms used, and examined role of technology. The researcher saw significant difference between teacher expectations and community realities, identified several challenges, examined coping skills, and considered the limitations of implementing and using technology The study highlights a distinct need to address the named concerns so that remote schools may strive for an effective educational environment.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

The education system in Newfoundland and Labrador is richly diverse in its urban, rural, and remote schools. Rural and remote schools have special characteristics and present unique challenges unknown to urban schools. The most common trait of rural and remote schools is that both school systems are small and both lack the plethora of human and material resources that would be available in larger centres. There are also specific challenges for particular schools; some are difficulties related to rural and remote areas and others are problems specific to teachers of French second language.

A common claim concerning rural and remote education has been that educational authorities have ignored the rural, remote setting to focus primarily on large urban schools. Anderson (1994) makes the statement, "I feel we can never be truly recognized for our achievements, or correctly evaluated, unless we ourselves change how we are viewed" (p. 58). The more populated centres appear to maintain control over all monitoring instruments such as government support, evaluation set-ups, and media availability. These more populous groups and areas are seen as shaping and defining reality for others. Because rural and remote schools are out of sight, they are perceived as having little influence on policy-making. This notion of invisibility has been accepted so that educational authorities have dealt with rural and remote schools and shown little concern about the implications for rural and remote schools (Mulcahy, 1995). There even appears to be a formidable urban subjectivity in all aspects related to education. Invisibility demonstrates a tunnel vision in the authorities who deal with issues concerning rural and

remote schools. These urban decision makers are unaware of the difficulties which teachers, in particular French second language teachers, face living in a rural and remote environment.

Upon completion of teacher education programs, new and inexperienced teachers are likely to go into a small community thinking they will have the required program resources as well as sufficient supplementary material for teaching an effective French second language program. Unfortunately, the reality is that they are likely to have only the essential material. This scarcity of higher-than-basic resources is especially the case in the small remote community being studied.

In small communities, the teachers are likely to come under intense scrutiny and will probably experience little privacy. The image of the " fish bowl " comes to mind. Teachers experience a cultural phenomenon unfamiliar to them. In such small communities, the teacher is on display both in school and out. Such a claustrophobic atmosphere can be unnerving. There is speculation that "students are in a position to know much more about their teacher than is comfortable for many teachers" (Meyenn, Sinclair, and Squires, 1991, p.145). As a result, the stress that accompanies any new position is increased.

Another difficult aspect for new teachers accepting positions in small, remote communities is lack of accessibility. Many of these isolated communities are only accessible by boat once or twice a week during the summer and early fall and by plane year round. Quite often, weather is a factor in transportation. Ice blocks marine traffic causing late openings and early closures of the shipping season; rain, freezing rain, fog,

snow, and high winds can play havoc with air transportation--especially since the plane is a small eighteen-seat Twin Otter airplane. People in these remote communities can experience periods of two to three weeks having no contact with or mail from the outside world. Those harsh realities of living in remote and isolated communities can definitely affect a new teacher's expectations.

<div align="center">Background</div>

Having taught French as a second language in the small, remote community under study for the past nine years, I have met the challenge of limited resources and have experienced difficulty in making French relevant to the students. Part of this difficulty stems from the community's isolation as well the perceived distance from such French milieux as Québec. Although the physical distance to Québec is not great, Québec is more removed culturally. It has been a struggle to bring such French milieux closer to the classroom. This isolation and remoteness has caused students to miss the value of learning French. Quite often, students do not see beyond the boundaries of their small, remote, and isolated rural community. In one community considered, a teacher commented that education was not valued because the students had no intention of leaving their little community. All of this experience has stirred in me a great interest in overcoming the challenges that remote communities present in French second language education.

New teachers have difficulty finding teaching positions in large urban areas. In fact, many will likely find themselves teaching in small, rural, and maybe even isolated, remote communities. Unfortunately, since many of these teachers do not fully understand what they are getting into, the transition from an urban centre to a rural or remote area

can appear to be unattractive, even frightening. The constant scrutiny calls for great emotional strength as these teachers try to adjust to their new environments.

The challenges presented in this research will apply to both rural and remote communities. These challenges, however, are intensified in remote, but also isolated communities. By identifying these challenges and offering ways of overcoming them, I hope to raise the level of awareness among new and unsuspecting teachers coming to such positions directly from university. Raising awareness and educating new teachers, can reduce the psychological stress that comes with a new teaching position, especially a position in a rural or remote community.

<div align="center">Purpose</div>

The jarring experience of leaving a large urban centre such as St. John's where I grew up and moving to a small isolated remote community such as Cartwright on Labrador's southeast coast, prompted me to acquaint new teachers with the trials of such a major change. Culture shock can have a severe impact, affecting a person's mental outlook and coloring the classroom experience. This radical change can have a profound impact on the way teachers conduct themselves in the school and outside. I feel that teachers in small remote communities need to be aware of what the community demands.

My goal in this research is not only to highlight the challenges that are faced by teachers going into remote communities but also to examine ways that teachers can overcome such difficulties. The paper will address teacher expectations and show how these assumptions differed from the realities of such a context. Also of interest are the means that teachers have developed in order to cope with the various situations that have

arisen in the remote educational context. Finally, I hope to determine whether the current

distance education framework for teaching French second language is successful in

attaining the course objectives and whether any changes may be necessary. Technology

plays a part in the study because modern technology can have a significant positive effect

in overcoming the challenges faced by teachers in the remote educational context.

Therefore, this research will strive to address the following questions:

- What are some of the challenges faced in a remote, isolated community?
- How do teachers cope with the challenges related to rural education in remote communities?
- In what ways may these challenges be overcome?

<u>Definitions</u>

The definitions of rural and remote schools vary throughout the literature. The

National Rural and Small Schools Consortium (1986) defined a rural school as one having

an enrolment of 2000 students or less in grades kindergarten to Grade 8 or 12. Fennel

(1990) speaks of a rural school as one likely to have an enrolment of less than 200

students in kindergarten to Grade 12. Lewis (1995) adds to Fennel's definition saying a

rural school can have a large geographical area.

A remote school, according to the National Rural and Small Schools Consortium

(1986), is a school district or building that meets the definitions of rural and/or small

school in a location 100 miles or more from the closest non-small school district.

The National Rural and Small Schools Consortium (1986) defined a small school

as one consisting of less than 2000 students in kindergarten to Grade 12. Fennel (1990)

designated a school as one consisting of less than twenty students per grade. In the report of the Small Schools Study Project (1987), the examiners recommended that "each all-grade school in which the enrolment divided by 25 is not greater than the number of grades in the school be defined as a 'small school' " (Singh, 1987, p. 33). Since the definition of a remote school is one relative to rural and small schools, the terms rural and remote shall be used interchangeably.

Finally, an isolated school has been defined as "a school in a community not connected to other communities by road or continuous ferry service; or, if connected by road or continuous ferry, the school is located more than 30 kilometers from another community" (Mulcahy, 1995, pp. 2-20). A definition of isolation may be helpful. Meyenn et al. (1991) define isolation as "a basic measure of a location's distance from, or readiness of access to, any centre offering a comprehensive range of social, cultural, and economic goods and services" (p. 141). The school used in this research is both remote and isolated.

Although the findings presented in the review of the literature deal with the various challenges facing teachers in remote areas, I will evaluate these challenges as they pertain to the presentation of an effective French second language program. French second language teachers have long been referred to as unique individuals. Given this belief, we need to consider the unique problems these individuals face.

<u>Significance of the Study</u>

The completion of this research may serve as a catalyst in the development of a manual or guide for new teachers. Such a guide can serve as a useful orientation tool outlining the various challenges that new teachers will undoubtedly face while teaching in remote communities. In particular, various pedagogical issues will be identified and possible solutions offered for coping with challenges. The hope is to raise the level of awareness concerning the experiences of teachers in the remote educational context while offering possible means of rising above difficulties.

In this time of educational fiscal restraint and human resources cutbacks, I feel that teachers are not being adequately prepared to deal with the possible teaching situation in remote communities. The remote community's educational context, unique but challenging, offers the potential for great success and achievement. This potential, I feel, can be hindered by the new teacher's lack of awareness. Although there are certainly many challenges, just as certainly there are solutions.

The instruction of French second language in a non-Francophone milieu, for me, has been difficult. When placed in a remote community, I found the challenge almost insurmountable. One of the objectives in doing this research is to ascertain what the challenges are in teaching French second language in remote communities as well as to devise ways of confronting these challenges and presenting an effective French second language program. One issue studied is the use of technology in the French second language classroom; there is a need for improved implementation. The best tool to bolster the Core French program in remote communities, I feel, is the use of technology.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Causes for Concern

Fennell (1990) states, "The steady decline in rural population is one of the main problems affecting rural schooling" (p. 8). One of the principal causes of declining populations in remote communities is change in the local economy. Small, remote, isolated communities tend to depend on one natural resource such as the fishery or forestry to provide industry. Resulting from many complicated, interacting economic and social conditions, a large-scale transformation or even the collapse of such single-resource industry in a small community has traumatic effects on the community and its school. (Miller, 1993). As a result of such difficult experiences, residents of these small communities face an uncertain future suffering high unemployment, poverty, and geographic isolation. The collapse of an industry then leads to increased out-migration and a lower birth-rate. Schools face lower enrolment and decreased funding (Fennell, 1990). In addition, a cut in teacher allocations leads to the necessity of multi-grading or multi-age classes. With reductions in teaching units, French second language teachers fear programs reductions or cuts. This issue will receive closer attention later in the discussion of downsizing financial and human resources.

The Challenge to Education in Remote Communities

Isolated areas must deal with many challenges in relation to educational programs. Gandell et al. (1994) determined that there are two principal issues: financial and human resources. They proposed that, since financial resources are limited, remote schools cannot offer a full diversity of quality programs to small groups. They also stated that

specialists, professional development, and supplies are more costly, and therefore limited, both in financial and human terms. This research finding is further supported by the statement, "The costs of delivering needed educational services in sparsely populated areas are inherently and inevitably higher than the costs of providing the same services in more densely populated areas" (Sher, 1990, p. 9). With reduced and limited budgets, schools cannot possibly accumulate all the resources required by teachers to complete their programs. This has been a source of great teacher dissatisfaction in remote communities. Quite often, teachers have been left to obtain relevant and useful resources at their own expense.

Fiscal restraints have also placed strict limitations on the number of courses offered and the number of specialists employed in remote schools (Gandell et al., 1994). In an ideal setting, teachers specifically trained would be teaching the courses. However, in reality, the scarcity of specialists and the belt-tightening fiscal restraints have left remote schools staffed with teachers having neither the correct formal training nor sufficient experience. For example, French teachers may find themselves teaching religious studies, social studies, or career education. Having to straddle several areas of study can produce a challenge to French second language teachers, as they cannot maintain a level of continuity in their instruction of the French language. Another result of fiscal restraint is multi-grading or mixed-age classes. The fact that teachers find themselves teaching multiple areas of the curriculum has implications for curriculum development, classroom management, teaching, and learning strategies (Fennell, 1990; Gandell et al., 1994; Mulcahy, 1995).

One of the most prevalent criticisms of small schools is lack of variety in course offerings (Singh, 1987). This problem is tied into the aspect of fiscal restraint and the reduced number of teaching units. A remote school is limited in the number of both courses and classrooms. Stevens (1998) posits that with regard to education and even employment, students in rural areas experience inequality of opportunity. Quite often, teachers find themselves in situations where they cannot complete the required curriculum because the number of class periods allocated in a cycle is below the number legislated provincially. In other circumstances, limiting the number of teachers restricts the number of courses offered in a particular subject so that students do not receive the whole benefit of a full program.

Even if sufficient financial resources were obtained by remote schools so that they could have adequate physical facilities, there would still be another stumbling block: "The most significant issue facing rural schools, after garnering sufficient financial resources, is the recruitment and retention of teachers" (Matthes and Carlson, 1987, as cited in Storey, 1993, p.160). Difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly trained teachers is a greater problem (Haller, Monk, and Tien, 1993). Mulcahy (1995) stated that small rural schools are under-resourced in relation to availability of personnel. He went on to say that the modern curriculum requires a specific number of teachers in a school. Any school having less than this specific number he considered "inferior" because such a school is unable to provide quality education. The majority of schools in Newfoundland and Labrador could, based on Mulcahey's definition, be considered inferior.

Weaknesses in Rural Education Training

      Rural schools differ from their city counterparts in that, small and isolated as they are,

they celebrate a rural character. Although they are not all alike, these schools seem to foster

this rural cultural aspect. "Rural small schools have a special set of needs, in addition to those

shared by all small schools" (Gandell et al., 1994, p. 21). Remote isolated schools are unique

in that the community's culture has a profound influence on the school and its students.

      Pre-service teacher education provides minimal training specific to remote or rural

education and fails to prepare prospective teachers for either maintaining a heavy load of

extra-curricular responsibilities or facing greater community expectations (Fennell, 1990)

Curriculum development and teacher training programs have almost exclusively

concentrated on large schools. The Royal Commission report (1993) highlights this issue

in its statement, "Preparation for the responsibilities associated with teaching in small

schools has been neglected. The Faculty of Education, in preparing teachers, uses an urban

model which does not take into account rural conditions, small schools, limited resources,

or multi-grade settings " (Mulcahy, 1995, p. 3-8). These teacher education programs do

not address the special characteristics or needs of teachers in remote areas. The training of

French second language teachers, for example, does not prepare future French teachers to

deal with limited resources; nor does it ready the teacher for the alienation caused by

geographic or professional isolation. Quite often, first or second year French teachers in

remote communities face their situation alone; there is no other French teacher to consult

for the purpose of seeking information or sharing ideas.

      Storey (1993) made the point that remote and rural teachers have different training

needs. Teacher training institutions have not focussed on rural education (Mulcahy, 1995). This lack of pre-service education has placed new and inexperienced teachers in highly difficult and stressful situations. Meyenn et al. (1991) maintain that "without adequate training and preparation, young teachers, especially those with an urban background, might not grasp the potential impact on them of adjusting to life and work in a small, isolated settlement" (p. 152). Since many new teachers often have difficulty making the transition from student to teacher, the challenges associated with a small, remote, and isolated school increase the difficulty exponentially. Stevens (1998) argues that many teachers in rural and remote communities believe that they are living and working in totally different cultural situations. They must come to terms with a different lifestyle, atmosphere, and situation as well as accept being highly visible in the community. Some even feel as though they are in exile from city life.

Balen (1995) makes the point that during pre-service training, potential teachers should be required to take a rural sociology course to make themselves more aware of the realities of rural social life. This kind of training would better prepare those prospective teachers from urban backgrounds to adapt to isolation as well as alleviate some of the effects of culture shock.

Frequently, university professors fail to understand the realities of teaching in small remote or rural schools. Mulcahy (1995) argued that professors are incapable of understanding what is being done in the remote communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some professors have implied that the quality of education provided to children in remote communities is inferior. Rural education may not be as inferior as these remarks

imply. While it is true that rural and remote schools are restricted in funding and staff, the curriculum that is presented is of good quality. Many rural and remote teachers tend to make the best of what is at their disposal; a few teachers even provide a curriculum of excellent quality. Some university professors have, perhaps, lost the true perspective on actual day-to-day matters and concerns in the classroom and do not recognize the needs of either the students or the teachers living in remote areas.

Challenges to Curriculum

A common theme in all of the literature reviewed was that course availablity and curriculum diversity tend to suffer in remote communities. A prime difficulty in remote schools is the prevailing expectation that rural schools adopt the provincial curriculum. This provincial curriculum attempts to prepare students for a highly-technical urban lifestyle that suits urban activities and facilities (Hathaway, 1993). This high-tech approach does not appear to relate to the remote environment, nor does it address the skills appropriate for local employment opportunities. What one may be able to do in a large urban school may not be financially or otherwise possible in a remote school. In French second language curriculum, for instance, there are several urban topics such as subways and city maps. Normally such topics are culturally inappropriate and cause students, so far removed from the larger centres, to have tremendous difficulty speaking in a foreign tongue about a totally foreign situation. It becomes common practice to modify the topics extensively so that the students can relate. Without these modifications there is a high risk of the students losing interest in French. It is crucial that French teachers guard against irrelevancy by always working to adapt material to the local scene.

Geographic Isolation

One of the hardest aspects of teaching in a remote, isolated, and small school is the geographic isolation. Inability to travel to another community by road or ferry can have a severe impact on teachers. A common goal shared by most teachers is to provide opportunities for students to experience other cultures and ways of life. This serves as a motivational purpose for all curriculum areas. In remote communities, however, this challenge of being isolated is not easily overcome. Remote schools and the communities in which they are situated tend to be small. The community resources on which one can draw are limited. Balen (1995) puts forward the idea that field trips, while increasing instructional effectiveness and student learning, tend to be more of a headache because fundraising generally proves too extensive. This frustration with fundraising is true of remote communities. For example, if a teacher wishes to take a group of students on an educational excursion, he or she is faced with the dilemma of extremely high costs. Fundraising proves to be a tremendous task when many groups are vying for the same dollars. This problem, combined with the limited availability of government and school board funding, more often than not confines teachers and their classes to the remote community.

The Perceived Value of Education

Another aspect of education in remote communities that challenges teachers is the low value placed on formal education. Students, parents, and the community at large appear to question the value of the proffered education package. Balen (1995) stated that parents and students view school as dispensable in rural life and that the community had a

low amount of respect for teachers' academic expertise. The community's apparent lack of interest has resulted in lower demand for more advanced courses. Balen (1995) also believed that these low educational expectations could affect a teacher's self-concept and their perceived worth as professionals. All too frequently communities raise questions about the necessity of education. Isolation and the attitudes about distance lead both parents and students to question the validity of certain programs now being offered in remote communities.

<u>Social Isolation</u>

Those involved in remote education suffer from social isolation in addition to geographical isolation. Students are sometimes affected by the isolation because of lack of role models and cultural support; teachers, especially those from urban centres, find themselves cut off from their network of family and friends (Gandell et al., 1994). This problem is demonstrated in remote communities when, in many cases, the only people with cultural knowledge and outside experiences are the teachers who come to these communities. This narrow world-view deprives the students of vicarious experiences as well as depriving them of communication opportunities. Social isolation limits linguistic experience, too. Having other French language speakers around can be quite beneficial to the students as they strive towards linguistic competency. Hearing a variety of speakers provides them with other possible models to follow and also allows them to get accustomed to other people's accents. Unfortunately, this luxury does not frequently present itself in remote communities. This draw-back also affects the students when they are faced with substitute teachers who themselves are limited in outside experiences.

Challenges for French Second Language Teachers

Professional Isolation

As a French second language teacher, I feel one of the biggest challenges faced by French second language teachers in remote communities is professional isolation. Several aspects of professional isolation should be addressed.

The first aspect is that French second language teachers have less access to curricular support. Quite often, teachers are left on their own to do the best that they can in demanding and difficult situations (Mulcahy, 1995). Frequently, pedagogical support from administrators and program specialists can be limited because of distances involved. Opportunities for contact with advisory staff can be limited in a geographically vast rural district.

Second, teachers feel the lack of professional interaction with other teachers in their subject domains. Balen (1995) stated that the biggest dissatisfier professionally for rural teachers is the lack of interaction with other educators. She quoted one teacher as saying, "It's really frustrating. I'm the only French teacher for Grades 7 through 12, and this year the new French curriculum was implemented. In the staffroom, I have no one to ask for curriculum ideas … I really can't turn to the Math teacher for advice" (Balen, 1995, p. 3). Balen touches on a familiar sentiment of French second language teachers. Having no one to turn to can indeed be frustrating and stressful to French teachers. Quite often, being able to share ideas or discuss different perspectives can be beneficial. Unfortunately, French second language teachers do not have this luxury. The professional isolation of the school, coupled with the scarcity of professional development days,

presents a painful challenge.

Finally, being unable to access inservice opportunities and not having occasions for professional development can a have a long-standing negative effect on French second language teachers. The rural district's lack of human resources to organize an inservice session and the lack of financial resources to bring in specialists for professional development opportunities presents limited access to inservices (Gandell et al., 1994; Balen, 1995). French second language teachers in remote communities also face both exorbitant travel costs and severe weather conditions that prevent travel on any given occasion. Frequently, inservices are cancelled or missed because French second language teachers are unable to attend. Such cancellations have been experienced on more than one occasion by this author. In order to maintain current teaching trends and methodologies, a French second language teacher needs the experience of attending professional development sessions regularly.

It can be seen from the previous paragraphs that teachers suffer by being cut off from their colleagues. Whether they are teaching French second language or another course, the teachers miss the collegial interchange that does so much to enrich their professionalism.

The Challenge of Teaching French Second Language Culture

There is, in the existing literature on teaching French second language culture, a gap which needs to be addressed. Teaching French second language culture is a significant challenge to French teachers in remote communities. Arguably the most effective way to teach culture to a group of French second language students is through the actual

experience of taking a trip to a French centre. Such a venture proves difficult because of geographic isolation and fiscal restraint. Another factor that may be taken into account is the high cost of travel and scarcity of funds available through grants. The final factor that needs to be considered is the amount of fundraising that takes place in a small remote community. Many school groups and community organizations find themselves competing for the few available dollars; that state of affairs severely restricts the amount of money that a particular group can raise. With the community so far removed from a French-speaking milieu and culture, teaching French second language culture in remote communities can indeed be difficult. This author, having gained personal experience teaching in such a community, hopes to shed some light on this matter and partially fill in the existing gap in the literature.

Impediments to Learning Opportunities: Small Peer Group

In remote communities, classes are small. Mulcahy (1995) points out a concern about restricted learning opportunities in relation to interaction amongst peers of a small peer group. This concern is based on the assumption that students learn best by interaction with same-age children. While this generally is perceived as a challenge to teachers in small remote communities, this author feels that in light of the current French second language methodology, small classes are a definite advantage. The communicative approach calls for a great deal of student interaction which can usually be better facilitated within small classes.

Summary

Teachers, commonly described as unique, face unique challenges in remote communities. The success that teachers achieve can indicate whether they have been able to overcome these challenges. Teachers need to be innovative and creative in order to meet these challenges head-on. While the research includes some literature on these challenges, there is still a significant gap in what researchers know about the challenges of rural education for teachers.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Rationale

Given the circumstances and parameters of living in a remote community, I have chosen to conduct a critical ethnographic in-depth case study analysis of teaching, and in particular teaching French second language in a remote community. Having the remote community as my stamping ground saves on my limited finances and enables me to conduct a useful and suitable piece of research.

Critical educational research is committed to the idea that educational difficulties need to be examined according to the social, political, cultural, and economic trends in education. Popkewitz (1987) maintains that the educational process has to be examined as a socially constructed environment that includes constant contradictions. From a critical perspective, we need to become aware of the contrast between both appearance and reality as well as between the world as it presently is and how it should be. In this fashion, critical educational research becomes the medium for social action (Giroux, 1981). Critical researchers need to be cognizant of different ways of knowing and various forms of knowledge. Neither the research process nor the derived knowledge is neutral. Consequently, critical educational researchers need to "reveal their allegiances, to admit their solidarity, their value structures, and the ways such orientations affect their inquiries" (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 38). In carrying out a particular case study, one can gain a valuable understanding of the educational practices that take place in a remote community. Merriam (1988) states, "Most case studies in education approach a problem of practice

from a holistic perspective. That is, investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved" (p. xii). A critical educational researcher should habitually commence with the idea that knowledge is framed by existing social relationships.

It is also necessary to start by interrogating the discourse used in and around a study. One aspect of this investigation is to situate terms and ideas in a more holistic context and to identify that they symbolize interests that profit from certain meanings. This notion expands on the cultural construction of meaning which concerns both political and economic interests (Doyle, 1994). Critical researchers need also to bear in mind that knowledge never results from a mind that is separate from realities about everyday concerns. Anderson (1989) states that a critical ethnography, such as the one taking place in this study, must be "sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the social structural constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency" (p. 249).

Knowledge is a product of human actions that are encouraged by natural desires, needs, and interests. Harvey (1990) maintains that "the aim of a critical methodology is to provide knowledge which engages the prevailing social structures" (p. 2). He further states that knowledge is critique -- a dynamic process, not a static entity. Therefore, knowledge is defined as "a process of moving towards an understanding of the world and the knowledge which structures our perceptions of that world" (Harvey, 1990, pp. 3-4). This holistic perspective allows the researcher to examine both the macro- and micro-contexts of the case in question. The whole context needs to be examined and educational concerns and difficulties must be derived and exhibited in their cultural, social, economic,

historical, and political context. Critical research needs to concentrate on the values, judgements, beliefs, and interests of the individuals taking part in the research study. McLaren and Giarelli (1995) maintain that critical theory holds knowledge as socially constructed, contextual, and dependent on interpretation. Jurgen Habermas (as cited in Carr and Kemmis, 1986) emphasizes "interpretive understandings" and "causal explanations" as adding a deeper dimension to critical research.

The case study design is quite appropriate for the examination of critical issues and can expand on the existing knowledge of aspects of educational practice. A powerful tool for dealing with issues and concerns that arise daily in education, the case study enables the researcher to seek an understanding so as to ameliorate the educational practices in question. Critical theory in educational research needs to be related intrinsically to the professional development of educators. Carr and Kemmis (1986) state that "a critical educational science, however, has a view of educational reform that is participatory and collaborative" (p. 156). That is to say, educational enquiry is examined by researchers in and for education. The significant point here for critical educational research is that it has to have a vast understanding of and a familiarity with history, and be a descriptor of the environment that focuses on the intricacies of education (Doyle, 1994). Carr and Kemmis (1986) also stress that critical educational research should maintain the viewpoint that a "systematic understanding of the conditions which shape, limit, and determine action so that these constraints can be taken into account is required" (p. 152). Merriam (1988) maintains that a " case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit " (p.

xiv). In the case of this proposed study, the entire context of the remote community and education needs to be examined in-depth. Merriam (1988) contends that one of the major advantages of a case study is its capability of examining a variety of evidence such as documents, interviews, artifacts, and observations. According to Harvey (1990), " Critical social research requires that empirical material is collected. It does not matter whether it is statistical materials, anecdotes, directly observed behavior, media content, interview responses, art work, or anything else. Whatever provides insights is suitable. But whatever it is, it must not be taken at face value … data are important in order to ground inquiry but data must not be treated as independent of their socio-historic context " (p. 7-8).

Merriam (1988) quotes Cronbach and refers to the case study as "interpretation in context." A case study allows a researcher to focus his/her attention on a particular unit of analysis and aims to identify the interaction between significant factors unique to that phenomenon. In this sense, educational life must be viewed as problematic. Nothing can be taken for granted since the critical researcher has to attempt to go beyond surface appearances and interpretations. Becker (1968) views the purpose of a case study as twofold. A researcher employs the case study design "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study" and " to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process " (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). Case studies "help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object" (Merriam, 1988, p. 32). In order to conduct this critical analysis of education in a remote community, it is vitally important that the whole context be examined in great detail. The particularistic nature of

case studies allows the researcher to concentrate on a certain situation and its participants. As Merriam (1988) points out, this is an effective means for analysis of issues that arise out of everyday teaching practice. The researcher can examine specifically the methods teachers deal with these educational challenges. Critical educational research must attempt to go beyond comprehension and description for the purpose of conducting a methodical critique of the environment in which the educational practices take place. Merriam (1988) alludes to Olson who maintains that the case study can highlight the complexity of a situation under study while allowing the researcher to seek an understanding of the different views of various contextual agents. In relation to critical research, educational cases have to be studied in the context of the common educational values and beliefs of the individuals involved.

Educational case studies attempt to understand direct issues and pedagogical difficulties. The knowledge that stems from case studies is more contextual than other research knowledge. Merriam (1988) refers to Stake's idea that people's experiences are based in context, as knowledge is rooted in case studies. The postmodern perspective of the generation of knowledge places emphasis on experience, reflexivity, holistic comprehension, and subjectivity. Educational case studies can concentrate on questions, issues, and concerns related to curriculum and instruction, the environment, delivery system, student body and theoretical orientation. Merriam (1988) makes reference to Yin who suggests that case studies are a valuable means of evaluation in education because they can "explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are far too complex for the survey of experimental strategies. A second application of the case study is to describe the

real-life context in which an intervention has occurred. Third, an evaluation can benefit, again in a generative mode, from an illustrative case study--even a journalistic account--of the intervention itself. Finally, the case study strategy may be used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes" (Merriam, 1988, pp. 28 – 29). The main focus point for critical research is the attempt to find "representations of social reality capable of providing social explanations sensitive to the complex relationships between human agency and social structures" (Anderson, 1989, p. 251).

Critical educational research needs to strive for more than locating and identifying shortfalls in the educational environment. While this may appear to be difficult, material solutions should be offered in order to create some change or transformation. Solutions arising from critical educational research should be highlighted in their cultural, economic, historical, and political contexts. This type of research is based on the goal of achieving or starting educational transformations, and effecting social and political changes. As Simon (1984) emphasizes, critical educational research does more than provide explanations, assessments, and descriptions of how things are; it also undertakes the task of supplying a logical plan for proceeding beyond current situations.

Data Collection

Merriam (1988), quotes Bromley when she says that case studies allow researchers to "get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires) …. Also, case studies tend to spread the net for evidence widely" (p.

29). The critical ethnographer, according to Harvey (1990), is not required to be a neutral observer. Rather, the researcher is reflective in a continuous struggle with the "taken-for-granteds." In this critical ethnographical in-depth case study analysis, the two methods of data collection utilized were personal interviews and in-depth contextual field notes. The study took place over a one-year period.

The in-depth personal interviews involved six teachers from the remote location being studied: the replacement teacher who filled in for the researcher while he was on leave to pursue further studies; the school's administrator; and four former remote school teachers who were employed by the school board for one year but promptly left the community at the conclusion of their first year. The length of an interview was one hour to ninety minutes. Interviews were arranged regarding time and location at the convenience and wishes of the participants. According to the framework set out in Appendix A, the interviews were recorded.

During the researcher's time in the remote community, he took intensive field notes based on the school environment, contextual observations, and classroom observations. These field notes, coupled with notes on personal experiences in the remote community, contributed to the study as the evolving themes were identified.

Protection of Participants

All individuals participating in the study were given a letter (Appendix B, C,. D) containing information about the study's nature and purpose. Written permission was required before any interviews were conducted and tape-recorded. All information obtained from individuals in the study has been regarded as confidential by the researcher,

and all possible precautions were taken to protect the identities of the participants. Involvement in the study was voluntary with the participants having the option to refrain from answering any questions. After the researcher completed the interview transcriptions, participants were able to examine their responses for accuracy. Upon request, a copy of the study will be made available to the participants, school principal, or school board.

Data Analysis

All interview tapes were transcribed. The data was then analyzed in terms of the evolving themes or relationships and in light of the expectations for a critical ethnographic in-depth case study analysis of teaching in the remote community context. The researcher analyzed themes already existing in context and examined them according to existing institutions and ideologies of the participants and for their transformative potential. These participants were also viewed as rational social agents as well as cultural informants. The solutions recommended by participants were considered in the recommendations made.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the study. First of all, the study is limited to one remote community's educational context with only six teachers being interviewed. The researcher was alone in the role of observer. All participants interviewed, except one, left the community after short stays. Therefore, this study is limited in that it is not meant for general application to other remote communities and can only serve as a guide for further research.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Data

The Community

Cartwright, a community located on the southeast coast of Labrador approximately 150 miles east of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, lies at the entrance of Sandwich Bay (See Appendix E). An English merchant and explorer, Captain George Cartwright, who in 1775, chose it for its strategic position establishing it as a settlement as well as a fish and fur trading post. In 1786, Cartwright left Labrador and sold his business to Hunt and Henley in 1815. The business, purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1873, remains under their ownership today.

Today, the community of Cartwright has a population between 600 to 650 people. It is a community depending primarily on the local snow crab industry which seasonally employs a significant number of the residents in the fishery and processing plant. On occasion, the plant also processes sea urchins and whelks, locally referred to as wrinkles. The fishing season usually extends from early June until early October during which period residents work to qualify for employment insurance premiums which will help them live during the remainder of the year. The Cartwright people hope that this industry which has been so successful and lucrative will continue to thrive.

Cartwright is serviced by Coastal Labrador Marine Services during the summer months and early fall when supplies are brought into the community in substantial amounts so as to ensure that enough is available after the shipping season has closed. Air Labrador flies from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to the coast Monday to Friday weather permitting;

however, the air price is exorbitant.

The school in Cartwright, which has undergone the various stages of renovations over the past nine years, has a current enrollment of approximately 120 students from kindergarten to Grade 12 with a staff of eleven teachers, one administrator, and a teaching assistant. Several multi-graded classrooms in the school provide challenging situations for teachers and students alike. Grades 1 and 2, Grades 3 and 4, and Grades 5 and 6 make up three double-grade classes separated only for Math class. For most of the school day, Grade 7 and 8 curriculum is combined to form multi-grade groups. In senior high, students of Levels I, II, and III will often find themselves combined for various subjects; sometimes the combinations result in class sizes of twenty-five to thirty-five pupils--a large group by the standards of a remote community. Course selections in senior high require no discussion because there is not enough staff available to provide students with even a single choice. The only exception is the student who opts for distance education. The administration must pay strict attention to ensure that students not only meet the graduation reqirements but also have the required courses for admission to post-seconday institutions should students opt to register.

<u>Expectations</u>

Before arriving in the remote community under study, teachers had either uncertain or negative expectations. The majority of these preconceived beliefs were based on hearsay and media coverage. As one respondent stated, "Most of the things that I heard about the coast were very negative, so I had low expectations." Television and radio coverage of the social problems in coastal communities such as Sheshatshiu and Davis

Inlet would lead a person to make assumptions about the remainder of the coast. Scant knowledge often gives birth to stereotypes.

One common expectation shared by all involved in the study was that of remoteness and isolation. Teachers frequently commented on the fact that they anticipated living in this tiny rundown remote and isolated community cut off from the "outside world." Some, if not the majority, prepared for the worst case scenario rather than build up their hopes, as was evident in one teacher's reply, "I just thought that if I believed the worst, then anything could get better from there." Others worried about the small confines of such a community and the attendant lack of privacy that would lead local people to form judgements that proved more swift than accurate. The negative publicity generated by the various media agencies, as noted previously, caused many to envision widespread alcoholism and abuse in this small community. One respondent noted that she had heard only that "the communities were rundown, there was a lot of alcoholism, abuse: it was a teaching situation difficult to get out of; there were medical concerns; I think basically the reason why people said such negative things were [sic] mainly Davis Inlet and they thought that all coastal communities were the same. So, I had really low expectations." All respondents appeared to foresee a significant contrast in terms of social and physical ways of life between living in the remote community and urban or even rural Newfoundland existence. One participant said, "Living in a relatively small community was an unusual experience for me." She continued, "Living in a fairly isolated community, I missed many of the things that I had taken for granted in St. John's-- such as movie theatres, guest lecturers at the university, shopping malls, and various fast food establishments."

From the point of view of education, three common asumptions were prevalent in all interview responses. First of all, it was believed that the schools in this small community would be less advanced than urban schools in relation to technological applications and resources as well as student academics. One respondent commented, "I didn't expect the students to be as smart as they were when I went there ... it's probably just a biased opinion ... hearsay type thing." The second common assumption made before teachers came to the remote community dealt with the amount of resources that would be present in this remote educational institution: "I didn't expect there would be a whole lot of resources but I expected the quality to be the same ... The resources had to be the same as everywhere else." As the comment demonstrates, most believed that there would be a lack of resources with the school possessing only the bare minimum to achieve predetermined learning outcomes. Finally, respondents anticipated the tremendous transition they would have to make from the urban lifestyle and educational experience to the small remote community's way of life and educational environment. "I expected that the school experience would be different from what I was used to, with smaller classes and multi-grading." They believed that students in this community have pasttimes, music, television shows, and attitudes different from those of urban students. Many also expected, but were not prepared for, multi-graded classrooms as well as smaller classes.

Realities

What one expects or fears in moving to a new environment often turns out to be quite different in reality. As was reported in the previous section, most participants anticipated and believed the worst before moving to the remote community. However,

upon arrival, they discovered things to be better than anticipated and experienced fewer problems than thought would be the case.

One respondent stated, "I haven't had any problems … It is better than what I had thought. I had thought the worst and all I can say is that is that it's better than that." Several people responded that the local inhabitants of the community turned out to be wonderfully considerate and nice people. The research data also suggest that the students were not all that different from those in an urban setting. One teacher indicated, "One thing that surprised me was that I found the students, in terms of music they listened to, the clothes they wore, the stuff they like to eat, the shows they like to watch … I was expecting maybe more of a difference from children I knew in St. John's, but there was less of a difference than I was expecting." Another teacher commented, "I was really surprised with a lot of the students and … they did not even realize how intelligent they were." Some were surprised with the level of students' academic ability. One teacher commented that her three-month learning experience in St. Pierre et Miquelon when she was studying for her Bachelor of Arts degree in French helped her to cope with the remoteness and isolation.

Throughout the interview sessions and discussions held with the participants of the study, the researcher was left with the impression that there existed both adequate and sufficient resources to conduct courses in their curriculum area. One respondent said that there were "enough resources available to do what I needed to do but, I mean, you're always expanding and improving. So when you do this, then the resources would not be there. As you improve you need better things and more resources." But the respondent

lamented that the resources were just not there. Another participant indicated a similar belief when she said, "I think there is enough to carry out a decent program, but I think you could still benefit from better access to additional materials." Furthermore, respondents maintained that while there were adequate resources at the teachers' disposal, there was still a significant need for supplementary resources to improve instruction and programs. In relation to technology, teachers' beliefs were represented in the statement, "The availability of resources and technology was either on par or in close proximity to that of [other] urban or less isolated communities."

Challenges Experienced

Common challenges mentioned in the research data by participants included what people commonly referred to as "cabin fever" and the "fish bowl." Teachers in a remote community cannot leave school, shut the door behind them, and forget about school. Everybody can identify the teachers who must take home that personna, the school work, and the associated problems. Because parents have easier access to teachers in these small communities, there are occasional harassing and troublesome telephone calls on matters that should be dealt with within the school. One respondent declared, "Parents have easier access to you than they would in a bigger community and I found 'housing' a big problem because you can't live your life really, like your life. You're under a microscope all the time." If a teacher needs time to think, to clear his or her head, or even get some peace and quiet, a walk may not even be possible. One teacher commented, "You can't get away and go for a walk without running into a teacher, student, or parent."

Another challenge noted by respondents was the occasional extended period when

there is absolutely no contact with anyone outside the community. Another teacher pointed out that on one occasion, she experienced thirty-one days of fog during which there were no planes flying to carry passengers or mail in and out of the community. To add to the problem, the telephone lines went down. In most instances, teachers had a tendency to say that they felt the effects of cabin fever in the spring during the months of April and May. However, one teacher explained, "I think it was sooner in the school year--like November."

Arising from the research data was the major concern about a general lack of housing for teachers in this remote community. There are examples when teachers eat, sleep, and teach with the same people, a situation which can become bothersome and place an undesired strain on interpersonal relationships. In one case, a lack of teacher accommodations resulted in a teacher having to board with a family whose mother and father were employed as teachers and whose child was in Grade 1. This meant that since the child's friends were constantly at the residence, the teacher had little respite from work.

Participants cited another challenge was the lack of appropriate resources. They agreed that they had the basic materials to conduct their programs and meet the desired learning outcomes; yet, there was still much room for improvement. Most educators reported that the community offered no supplementary resources or teaching supplies and added that high postal rates charged in northern areas prevented their seeking the materials elsewhere. Timing was another factor adding to the challenge of obtaining additional resources. One person claimed that "resources are limited … more so than

anywhere else because it's so hard to get them in … In the fall or the spring, it's fine when the boat is running, but when you got the planes …. The planes are not that efficient." Another individual also felt compelled to acquire new materials late in the spring or early fall when the shipping season was open rather than rely on uncertain air transport during the school year. A plane may fly to the coast on a given day and then miss a week because of weather or mechanical difficulties. Therefore, if a teachers needed something in a hurry, they would be taking a big chance of getting it in time if they depended on air transport.

Parental attitudes and the community's perspective on education created another significant hurdle named by respondents in the remote educational context. It has been perceived by some of the respondents that education is not viewed to be significantly important nor is it seen as a means to a better future. This is further supported by a response stating that parental involvement was either extreme or did not exist at all. This was evident in one individual's statement: "You don't really see parents getting involved a whole lot for the most part. There are some parents that do … but for most of them, you never see them. And there are a lot of poor attitudes with the students as well. You would never say that many of them are going to go to university or college after high school." These attitudes have also apparently been passed on to the students. In one example a respondent quoted a Grade 9 student as having asked, "Why do we have to be here anyway, Miss? We're only going to work in the fish plant when we finish." Another respondent provided a different perspective on this issue maintaining that parents may see education as important, but they do not push their children to go beyond high school. This is also evident in the fact that there have been few dropouts in the past nine years. One

person said that parents feel powerless in the face of the wider world. Another pondered, "Maybe they just lack the motivation to encourage their children to seek higher learning because they are content to have their children stay at home 'forever'."

Several other challenges were raised by various respondents. One commented that she was teaching courses for which she had neither the qualifications nor the experience. She also mentioned the diversity of talent demanded of her: "It is not easy to go from doing *Lure of the Labrador Wild* with the Grade 12 students to teaching French songs to the Grade Two students, and then giving the Grade 10 and 11 class notes on how to compose a bibliography, all on the same day!" Two other consequences of small teaching staffs in remote schools is that of the multi-graded classroom experience and the extremely limited number of senior high school courses being offered. Several teachers commented that since their pre-service education training had prepared them for neither multi-graded nor multi-aged classes, they found both to be significant challenges. This lack of preparedness was apparent in one teacher's response when she declared, "I don't feel all that prepared to teach in a rural area. There were not any specific courses related to rural education that I was required to take and multi-grading might have been mentioned once or twice in class but nothing significant."

One respondent raised the issue of staffing, an important matter in this small remote school. First of all, the current teaching staff is viewed as lacking motivation, initiative, and goals. The belief was generated that the "staff provided little support for each other. They do not work together as a team." They seem to be satisfied to teach as they have always taught their classes and are unwilling to develop and/or try new ideas. As

one individual claimed, "Remoteness can lead to a lack of accountability where a teacher feels he has a comfortable situation when he doesn't have to work, strive for excellence, or possess any incentive to gain accomplishments." Secondly, there is the difficulty with teacher recruitment and retention has become prominent over the last two years. Attracting qualified teachers to positions in the school is a trying exercise. On one occasion, suitable candidates were not found until October, and it is entirely possible that this same scenario will play out again in the approaching school year. Even more significant is the fact that once hired, these teachers have stayed only one or two years in the community before moving on. On the other hand, there are also difficulties arising because of a stagnant staff. Some respondents claimed that this teaching staff contained too many stagnant teachers set in their ways; yet, they understood that frequent turnover was not a positive element for continuity in teaching methods and expectations.

Finally, some participants raised concerns over the availability of qualified substitute teachers. In this remote community, there is generally only one qualified substitute teacher with an education background and experience. All others who normally fill in for teachers out of town or on sick leave are referred to as emergency supply personnel. What this means is that ordinary people from the community such as a recent high school graduate will come into the school and attempt to substitute for a teacher for a meagre fifty dollars a day. Unfortunately, not much can be accomplished in such a setting. On one occasion, a teacher was required to go on extended sick leave for approximately the last month of the school year. In this case, an emergency supply person with no educational qualifications was brought in from the community to fill the position.

Other respondents remarked upon the lack of opportunities for education-related field trips to which they could bring their students. There are few places where a class can go on an excursion in a remote community. One teacher referred to the Grade 9 religion program when she stated, "The program says to visit the nearest Salvation Army church, we don't have that. So, a lot of times we're making up for what the community doesn't have. There is a lack of cultural relevancy in terms of course topics." The high cost of travel serves as both a crippling and a discouraging factor in relation to taking a group of students to district events outside the remote setting. There have been occasions when student groups have been denied the opportunity to travel because the group could not raise enough money. On other occasions, the size of the groups travelling has been reduced to accommodate a restricted financial budget. Therefore, the students fail to experience the full educational and personal impact of a good field trip.

The final challenge identified is perhaps the most detrimental in relation to an educator's professional growth. Respondents named the challenge of trying to obtain adequate professional development opportunities for educators in remote, isolated communities. One respondent noted that the mere fact of having only one school in the community can affect professional development. "I think just in terms of less daily exposure to different schools. There might be only one school in the community ... you wouldn't get as much of a chance to see how other schools run things." The school and all its significant components cannot draw on another school's environment or operation so that the remote school lacks a similar model with which to compare itself. A companion school could aid in improvement of programs and spike new initiatives.

Possibly the most significant challenge to a remote educator's professional development is that of tight fiscal restraint and travel. Life in a coastal community brings high travel costs. If an inservice is scheduled for two days, a coastal teacher must allow four days to take in travel time. Each teacher is allotted a set number of days for conferences. Because of longer distances and complex airline scheduling, the coastal teacher uses up the professional development days much earlier in the school year than does the teacher who lives adjacent to all the conferences sites. Intensifyinging this problem is the fiscal restraint levied by the provincial government and school board. One respondent used the example of applying to go to an inservice opportunity outside the community. When the request was made, it was turned down because of the high cost associated with the opportunity. "The board is looking at me and they're saying, well, we have to pay four hundred dollars. That's just the flight to get you out, and you have to lodge, then you need meals. And then, this is not including the time a substitute would have to come in for me, which would be two extra days--more than somebody who lives in Goose Bay." While this may seem a little disheartening, the teacher felt it was meant as a "reality check" not discouragement.

<u>The Ultimate Challenge</u>

While many challenges face educators and education in remote and isolated communities, possibly the most trying of all challenges is the issue of resources and the acquisition of additional materials. One stakeholder in the study posited that "all of the challenges are possible to overcome, but I think the resources issue would probably be the most difficult." Another individual lamented, "Just the difficulty of getting and finding the

resources in a remote place …and then trying to get the money and everything. That's a big problem as well. The money isn't there for them." The lack of funding, like a parasite, prevents the location and procurement of additional resources so that teachers are left to fend for themselves. One teacher stated, "It would certainly put the most responsibility on the teacher to go out and find things herself and to bring resources in from outside if need be." Among respondents there is a consensus that the onus to acquire supplementary materials rests with the teacher.

Although several people in the study considered lack of resources to be the most insurmountable challenge, there were also those who named other challenges as the most difficult to overcome. Communication and the delay of communication between schools and their teachers and the school board office was also believed to be important. For example, a program specialist travelling to coastal communities may be given messages for other coordinators at the board office. Sometimes an apparent breakdown or delay in communication occurs. On other occasions teachers have mailed electronically requests and messages to particular program specialists but failed to receive replies or feedback. One teacher provided a good example when she described an incident she experienced: "I remember making a call to the school board about the possibility of an exchange and if there was any money available for that sort of thing, to get a student exchange or student program where they would be able to visit St. Pierre et Miquelon or Québec. And I didn't really get much of a response … I remember I called several times and either couldn't get through and left a message and nobody called me back. I thought that was really strange."

The apparent disinterest of the community towards education and its value in

securing a more prosperous future was also noted as the ultimate challenge. The reason provided for the downplay of formal schooling is the availability of good employment within the fishing industry which has minimal education requirements. One individual emphasized this when he stated, "Employment is easy to obtain whether applicants have an education or not; therefore, education is not viewed as being important."

Finally, the issue of social isolation was considered by one respondent to be the ultimate challenge for her. The fact that one cannot get away and remove oneself from the community can be so confining, especially for a new teacher or even one of an urban background: "I think the biggest challenge for me was the isolation and not being able to get away because it got to the point where it was too stressful and I just wanted to get away." This particular participant felt that, in addition to being a first year teacher in a remote community, living under a microscope was too stressful. Finally, another individual made a strong statement when she said, "It was a trying experience and you quickly learn what you are made of and whether you make or break as a teacher and a human being."

Coping With Adversity

The data collected indicate that many teachers are left to their own devices to find ways of dealing with the challenges of teaching in remote communities. Each teacher develops a means of coping and such practices vary from one individual teacher to the next. The participants of the study had ways and means of their own to deal with and overcome adversities that they encountered.

To cope with the shortfall of supplementary resources, some teachers were inclined to improvise. One respondent took full advantage of having family and friends in a

more centralized location. She frequently had them mail in the resources she required throughout the school year. Others prepared themselves beforehand for a shortfall in available resources by bringing with them the supplementary materials they would use. Finally, one participant believed that she had to create additional materials as she progressed through her teaching: "A lot of times I'd either do without and use whatever I had in the classroom or ... When I needed things, I would make it up myself, especially with the younger grades, like a game--come up with it on my own and do everything myself."

In addressing general attitudes towards education, one teacher attempted to develop a better rapport with students so as to influence and try to ameliorate their attitudes towards school and their future. Another participant worked on a greater sense of humour to reduce the amount of stress and tension she was experiencing. Sometimes, she tried to turn to her colleagues who might or might not be understanding. Their usual curt response was only one word "cope."

Moving to a new community, especially the small close-knit one studied in this case study, is difficult. One teacher responded that she went home frequently without any concern for the outrageous price of travel. The telephone also played a key role through her talking to family and friends. Exercise and plenty of rest were other ways of overcoming the stress resulting from being isolated socially.

Community's View of Education

A few of the collected data suggested that education was considered important in the community. There was some indication that people thought education was a valuable

path to follow towards a more successful future. There were some parents who tended to show concern and get involved in their child's educational development. Unfortunately, the majority of the data and the lack of parental supportive involvement seem to suggest that there was not much importance placed on the education presently offered in the community school.

In general, respondents believed that the education offered was not a priority. As one individual conjectured, "I think the community in general perceives education very poorly. I also get the impression that school is just somewhere the children have got to go during the day." Education does not appear to be the vehicle travelling towards a better future; on the contrary, there seems to be a lack of ambition for higher learning and education. One parent remarked to one of the school's staff that she "did not see why" her son "has to do homework when he does enough work in school." Over the past eight to ten years, a limited number of high school graduates have moved on to attend post-secondary educational institutions; of those, some have returned home without attaining the goals that they set out to accomplish. This community is not a financially poor community as one respondent remarked: "The children have the best of everything." However, the cost of air travel and the cost of post-secondary education may seem to the parents a bit overwhelming.

Student Attitudes towards French Second Language Education

According to the data collected in the study, student attitudes are mixed in relation to French second language education. Some students enjoy learning a second language such as French; others take French because it is something that they have to do, and still

others do not look at French seriously at all. It does seem, however, that attitudes are changing for the better with each and every new year.

The data imply that students who do not view French class seriously feel that they should learn a more useful language such as Innuktitut or concentrate on other studies that are culturally relevant to themselves and their community. One respondent countered, "Even if they were learning Innuktitut, they would still complain because they don't realize that it is a lot of work to learn a second language." It is also believed that students do not have enough self-motivation in relation to education in general to apply themselves appropriately. One participant also suggested that perhaps the negative attitudes originated at home. "For the most part, I think they just get it from their parents because I hear a lot of students say 'my mother says this' or 'my father says this'." They're developing attitudes from their parents like 'What's the point in having French?' 'Why don't you study Innuktitut or some aspect of their culture?'

For those students who take French because they must or because it is interesting for them sometimes, respondents felt teachers need to make a greater effort to locate and utilize methods to make a connections that will inspire the students to want to try harder in French second language education. Because of the community's geographic location and high travel costs, there is a lack of both Francophone cultural exposure and presence for the students who cannot truly make the connection between themselves and the target language and culture. As one teacher stated, "It would be good if the students could have more things, more exposure to French outside the classroom, if that were somehow possible."

Those involved in the study believe that students who enjoy and love French find it an interesting learning experience. Some even proposed that the positive, creative,and learning atmosphere made French class enjoyable. One participant made the comment, "It is a different style of learning that they are not really accustomed to and that can make it very enjoyable for the students." Another statement found in the data was "Students find French class enjoyable, but they don't fully realize the importance of it in the long run." Finally, another teacher commented that attitudes towards French class are improving because the students are starting earlier in their school experience with the introduction of French classes in kindergarten, Grades 1, 2, and 3.

<u>Resources</u>

In a small community that is isolated from all others such as this one is, the school tends to be a central focus of the community. In general, everyone in the study felt that the school had adequate resources , both human and material, to achieve the prescribed learning outcomes. Some respondents felt that this was not enough because there was nowhere for teachers to take their students on outings so they could experience other ways of learning apart from those exercised in the classroom. One participant commented,"There is more to school than just school and the school has to compensate for what the community lacks." Community resources and cultural experiences appear to be lacking in the community. While everyone believed that there are resources to carry out their basic programs, there is still much room for resources for a richer educatinal event. Finally, one participant made the interesting observation that while there may be adequate material resources, human resources are lacking as is evident by the number of multi-

graded classrooms, the shortage of senior high school courses being offered, and the lack of professional support.

In relation to French second language resources, there also appears to be agreement that basic resources are available to achieve the required outcomes. However, if the teacher wishes to go beyond the basics for a richer experience, there are insuficient resources. One respondent said, "French could use a little more materials to make it easier on the teacher and students." Another teacher commented, "I think it would be easier on the teacher and better for the students, if it [the school] had more." The most important resource lacking in terms of French second language education is exposure to the French language itself and the Francophone culture outside the classroom. With high travel costs and limited financial grants available, the probability of taking a group of students to a French milieu is minimal. Therefore, students of French do not have the opportunity to enjoy a valuable, authentic learning experience. One respondent summarized this commonly-held belief when she made the comment, "Students need to be more immersed in the French culture and not just the language. That is the most difficult thing to do here in a remote community."

<u>Professional Development</u>

The research data also reflect a significant deficiency in relation to professional development and professional isolation. When professional opportunities arise for the province's teachers, the geographic isolation reduces the accessibility for teachers in coastal communties. When opportunities actually come up, teachers must hope for adequate funding and good weather to enable them to leave the coast to build on their

professional knowledge. On more than one occasion teachers have missed an inservice because inclement weather prevented the planes from flying to the coast. One individual pointed out the community's location was a drawback when she stated,"It's where the community is located--it's just horrible! A lot of times, teachers wouldn't go out ... to seminars that they had the opportunity for because of weather--or the planes just didn't come in." Data indicate, however, that ample inservice opportunities are available depending on the teacher's subject area.

The data suggest that French second language teachers feel there are not enough inservice opportunities for French second language teachers. For example, in the fall of 1999, a four-day conference for all teachers in Grades 5 through 9 was scheduled for the entire board. Of all the sessions that took place during the conference, only one session was dedicated to Core French. This session lasted a mere hour and a half. At the same conference, all teachers of physical education were together the entire conference and followed their own agenda.

The data also indicate a breakdown in communication between board personnel and teachers in coastal schools. A teacher may call the board office but the program specialist they are looking for is in another community; it may be a week or more before that person is able to return the teacher's call. This is, of course, the case for only some school board personnel. Some board personnel, according to the participants, are quick to return phone calls or e-mails while others need to be contacted numerous times before any response may be given. In September of 1998, a new Canadian history course was introduced in the school. The program specialist for this area of the curriculum made it

clear to the teacher, who also happened to be a first year teacher with absolutely no background experience or training in social studies that an inservice would take place in September before she progressed too far into the course. Unfortunately for her, the introductory and preparatory inservice for the course took place in March of 1999, seven months into the school year. "When I came here, I didn't have a clue about Canadian history ... I was told that I would have some kind of professional development seminar in September, but it didn't come until March. So what is the point? The damage is done. It's too late to erase it now!"

One final point that can be drawn from the data on professional development is the notion of "teacher daily survival." One respondent felt that perhaps because of the geographic location and isolation of the community, teachers felt alone in their profession. It is believed that a portion of the staff try only to "keep their heads above water" and cope to survive. One teacher presented this viewpoint: "Staff wise, I think a lot of their personal philosophy is developing a way to survive here, they just trying to cope. And to me, you have to do more than just cope ... coping to me is just, keeping your head above water ... I don't want to be like that. I want to be enthusiastic, and I just find a lot of the staff around here, just think that that is fine, just to cope." Teachers do not always strive to facilitate greater achievement, a fact that is evident from the lack of teamwork, as several respondents mentioned. The data also support the perspective that there is little support amongst staff members and an apparent lack of collaborative involvement. For example, one respondent related an occasion when she entered the staffroom "with a stressful situation and I was kind of stressed out about it; their first words would be, their

words of advice would be to cope. To me that's not helpful."

Improving Professional Growth

The data present several mechanisms for more meaningful professional and support. Most mechanisms proposed centre around the concept of organization and the need for a better governance of available resources and personnel. These proposed means of strengthening the professionalism of the individual teacher can also be classified as a need for increased leadership and communication.

First, communication between the board office and coastal staffs has to improve. This can be accomplished by placing more emphasis on technology and the use of electronic mail. This method appears to be more effective than the telephone on some occasions. Next, program specialists need to make more of an effort to visit coastal communities and their schools. Third, opportunities for professional growth must be planned so that inservice sessions are accessible to the teachers from remote communities. Inservice education opportunities dealing with new courses should occur closer to the beginning of the school year. Travel time is needed. One individual proposed, "We should really be given at least two more extra days of professional development because of the travel time. Our travel time should not suffer for the fact that we have to travel out of here." Another individual stated, " It takes a whole day to get back to work and a whole day to get where we are going .... If the conference was on Thursday and we wanted to go, we would have to take Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday off. Plus possibly Monday and Tuesday too, if the weather came down."

There exists a need for greater leadership in relation to school improvement,

accountability, and technological integration. At this time when teacher accountability is being stressed and initiatives are being taken to improve curriculum and schools, stronger leadership is required to guarantee that school improvement initiatives see meaningful follow-up. One respondent further emphasized this point when she stated, "Staff or professional support from the staff is affected because staff morale is down and needs to get up and in order for us to have the support of staff, the morale needs to go up and it needs to improve. And we've talked about that through school improvement …that's fine but a lot of the time it's not followed up …. Stronger leadership is also required to encourage more teamwork." Stronger leadership is necessary both at the school level and board level to lead teachers towards the academic and educational benefits presented by technological innovations that are becoming ever more present in our schools.

Finally, a greater investment in both interest and funding is needed for district and provincial events. Events like junior and senior high school drama festivals, music festivals, and sports meets truly build our children. Unfortunately, students have to miss out sometimes on these opportunities because of fiscal restraint and lack of funding.

Distance Education

The study's data uncover mixed opinions on the issue of distance education and its effectiveness as well as a lack of familiarity by most teachers about the current framework of distance education.

In the school in question, distance education courses are carried out with the use of two-way audio teleconferencing equipment. There is a telewriter which serves the same purpose as a blackboard. The teacher is located in another community and the class

consists of students from other communities who come together on-line. Classes are normally scheduled in the school's timetable; some classes take place on-line and others are referred to as off-line classes. Students are expected to study, complete work samples, or assignments; a teacher is available via the telephone. At no point during the school year, except for tests and examinations, are students supervised by local teaching staff. The students are considered to be highly capable academically and independent workers since they are expected to be able to work on their own and still make deadlines.

Distance education in remote communities can be a solution to overcoming certain challenges of education in such isolated environments. However, the data present several issues that need to be addressed if the mode of instruction is to improve. The data also present positive feedback concering the method of teaching some courses via distance education.

Looking at distance education in remote communities in a positive light will show that this kind of program does provide a few select students with a greater opportunity for a richer education. These students have the chance to attempt such courses as advanced mathematics, physics, and senior high core French. Distance education can prove to be an effective means of instruction for the extremely bright, hard-working, confident, and independent students. Distance education students see another teacher's perspective on various concepts and issues and experience different teaching styles. In the case of core French, students to hear and understand another person's teaching methods, French accent, and mannerisms.

When one examines distance education from a negative point of view, the data also

present some critical issues and concerns that should be analyzed. Some participants maintained that there may be a lack of resources since the teacher is not located in the actual school and is not able to control all resources sent to the school. Another concern raised regarding distance education in remote communities was the absence of a teacher's physical presence. As one respondent indicated, "There is nothing like having a one-on-one session with the teacher." Without the physical presence of a teacher, it may be difficult to set up a rapport. The possibility of a distance education teacher working one on one with a student slight. One participant said, "It would seem to me that there would be a lot less interaction between the teacher and the student." Another point raised by the data is that the current framework for operating distance education courses lacks a sense of security and structure. There is the fear that classroom management and discipline issues may arise without supervision being present. Finally, from the data the researcher gets the impression that the current distance education framework and mode of operation is not an effective method of instruction in French second language education. "I think it could be done, but I don't think it would be done as well as if the person were there dealing with the student one on one ....You're going to have less chance just to interact and to speak French in that situation than you would if you were in a classroom and could just stick up your hand and the teacher can respond. So I think it can work to a certain extent, I don't know if it can work as well." Distance education offers fewer opportunities for communicative activities and interaction among students and between the teacher and student. One other issue raised was that distance education lacked the physical classroom stimulation that can often be found in a French classroom.

Perhaps the most important concern that arose from the data concerning the current distance education framework and mode of instruction is that distance education does not accommodate the majority of students. It is meant for only those who are extremely bright, independent, confident, and diligent students. Therefore, concerns have been raised about other students of varied abilities.

Technology

The current role of technology

Information collected in the study suggest that technological resources and equipment in the school are not used to full effect. Distance education is a good example of employing technology to overcome the many challenges presented by the remote community's educational context. In what is called the Community Access Program a location in the community becomes a community access site for the Internet, e-mail, and technology. At the present time, the community access site is located in the school's computer lab and employs a satellite dish to get on-line.

Until now teachers and students have been unable to take advantage of the technology because major technical difficulties have limited its role in the school. Primarily, technology is used for distance education, word-processing, educational software, and research using software such as Encarta and Canadian Encyclopedia. Time is available for teachers to bring their classes into the computer lab. According to the data gathered, a combination of the lack of inservicing and poor technological support has led to loss of confidence in the available technology. The problems have existed since January, 2000, and have yet to be rectified. Respondents also noted that few opportunities for

inservice have arisen. Also, the technical difficulties experienced in the school have discouraged teachers. They have developed poor attitudes towards using the school's technology which they have found unreliable. Therefore, as one individual explained, "Only a limited number of teachers in the school utilize the technology and only those who are technologically inclined to get through and overcome technological difficulties as they arise." This is the state of technology despite positive encouragement at both the school board and school levels to employ technology in teaching practices.

<u>Implementing technology</u>

The data indicate that the majority of teachers feel that all educators should be computer literate and be capable of utilizing the technology in the classroom. One respondent indicated, "We should be just shown what computers can do and should know more about them than we do." However, because of a lack of personnel, leadership, and inservice few teachers have the competence to feel confident with technology. Teachers need training in technology. In reference to a lack of knowledge-building opportunities, one teacher stated, "I don't think you are given enough information ... Here's what you should do. There's some sites that you should go to and look at, but... you're never told what's on them or how to incorporate that into your course itself." One respondent summarizes the importance of teachers employing technology in their classrooms: "The students are so interested, it would be sad to not just use it and ... if you could, the only thing you need to know is how to incorporate it into your subject, so they would enjoy it plus they're actually getting something out of it."

Improving technology integration

According to the data, the first issue is to overcome the technical difficulties that have plagued our school for a long time. Teachers and students can then move on together as partners in education. The two primary suggestions that arose from the data collected were inservice and personnel. First, educators need more inservice opportunities to become more comfortable with technology and its many applications and advantages for education. Students would enjoy some subjects more with technology being integrated because it is "such a wonderful resource!" as one respondent exclaimed. The second issue that should be addressed if educators are to integrate technology meaningfully in remote schools is that of personnel. One individual remarked, "If we are to take full advantage of technology in our school, a full-time technology teacher is needed and more technology inservicing for the staff has to take place." The maintenance and operation of computer labs in our educational institutions today is a full time job. In addition to this, the Labrador School Board is an extremely large board in terms of geography. It possesses two urban-like communities with several schools in each and then has numerous isolated communities as well. Currently, the board employs five technology people to service the entire region-- a daunting task.

The future of technology in remote communities

Teachers involved in the study feel that technology will play a greater educational role in this period of fiscal restraint with the further development of distance education and a greater number of courses being offered. One individual summarized the future of technology in education in the statement, "Technology is becoming more and more

important, and more and more used in all subject areas. In rural schools, I think, they'll probably head towards doing more courses over the Internet along the lines of distance education courses." Given sufficient funding, educators can use technology to achieve greater success despite a shortfall in human resources. The technology that presently exists in the school needs to be better utilized. A team approach should be adopted; we have to work together and share our knowledge and ideas if we are to succeed in providing a complete education to our young people. One teacher stated, "There has to be a sharing of knowledge and ideas; ... we also have a severe need to develop a team approach for this school from what I've seen this year." Teachers should also be reminded that technology is a useful tool but it is not the only tool. We cannot forget the human element in education either as one person quoted the old adage, "Too much of something is not a good thing either."

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Expectations and Realities

The data highlight that teachers had pessimistic preconceived beliefs and attitudes before arriving in the remote community in question and that these attitudes came from hearsay and negative media coverage. Because the media covered major social problems in a few coastal communities, teachers assumed all communities were alike and braced themselves for a challenging situation. Also with some knowledge of the geographical area, teachers were also expecting to encounter the isolation problems and face the lack of privacy characteristic of most small communities where everyone knows everything about everybody. All participants in the study foresaw difficulty in making the transition from the urban to rural life. While there was not total agreement among participants concerning their expectations concerning the level of academics and ability of the school, most did envision an academically inferior learning environment. One other expectation was that there would be insufficient resources to deliver the curriculum programs.

For those participants who expected the worst situation, the reality of the experience materialized into a situation far better than expected. Labrador is a vast geographical area, and every community has its own particular culture and way of life. Fortunately for people foreign to the area, while major social problems do exist in some Labrador communities, they are not prevalent in most coastal communities as they are not in the community being studied. Regarding the lack of privacy, the common fish-bowl phenomenon of always being on display is certainly present. Some participants were

pleasantly surprised that students showed so much ability. The resources and equipment, while deemed adequate for the basic prescribed program, needed to be upgraded for delivering a richer program.

Social Isolation and the "Fish Bowl"

A constant concern that kept emerging was the dual problem of social isolation and the "fish bowl" effect. Living in a small community such as this one can be quite challenging for those from urban centres and even for those who come from rural Newfoundland communities which are not isolated. The lack of privacy and living under a microscope that can be quite common in small communities can be mentally demanding on a teacher not accustomed to such experiences. The social isolation of being without family and friends, especially for new teachers, can be an extreme culture shock for those not accustomed to life in a small community. Teachers felt that the inability of escaping from work and getting moments to themselves presented a significant mental obstacle difficult to overcome. The lack of available teacher housing and heavier teaching loads also led to a feeling of "cabin fever"--teachers felt trapped in their environment, perhaps even exiled from their urban lifestyle.

Resources

The common result that was mentioned by all participants was that were the basic resources to meet curriculum requirements. In all cases, however, teachers felt that there was still a need for improvement. Most teachers believe that they always have to be striving for the best and improving upon the current plans of action. For many, this means the acquisition of new resources with which to upgrade instructional levels and heighten

student interest. A teacher can always use additional materials especially if the teacher is located in a remote community without instant access to supplies. Teaching in remote and isolated communities may require a more liberal approach to the spending allowed. Teachers were also concerned about the amount of time required in order to obtain additional supplementary resources. In general, teachers were unable to place their hands needed resources without a significant wait.

The Community's View of Education

The data collected in the study proved inconclusive concerning the community's perceived view of education. While there was some mention of a positive outlook on education in terms of a means to a better and more prosperous future, most interviewed in the study maintained that the community's view of education left much to be desired. Parents, it appears, view a child's education to be somewhat important until high school but also seem to be content to let their children stay at home after high school is finished. There seems to be a general lack of motivation concerning post-secondary education. One can make this assertion based on the low number of high school dropouts in the past nine years. It is possible to conclude that this is a result of the community's historical way of life. Since the community has always survived on the fishing industry, parents may feel that the fishery has provided them with a sufficient means of living and should therefore be adequate for their children. The easy availability of employment requiring little formal education may also play a part in the seeming lack of ambition for higher education. Some participants stated their opinion that the school was viewed as a place for the children to go during the day. The low number of high school graduates that have pursued post-

secondary education and also the high number of students who have returned without having completed their post-secondary programs serves to indicate a diminished value on education. One possible conclusion is that the lack of ambition exhibited by both parents and students is derived from a lack of exposure to the wider society outside the remote, isolated community.

<div align="center">Teachers</div>

Staffing and Replacements

      Arising from the data one issue that evoked much concern was that of staffing. The staff was perceived to lack motivation, purpose, and initiative. An apparent satisfaction or laissez-faire attitude has developed as a result of stagnation. Some members of the staff seem to be content to merely survive every day never attempting new strategies and methodologies to elevate the level of their instruction. Another personnel concern is the twin-problem of teacher recruitment and retention. There is a disturbing inability to recruit qualified teachers for the community's only school. At one point, the school was without a physical education teacher well into the month of October; this same problem may recur this approaching school year as a science teacher is still required.

      The final concern brought out by the research was the lack of qualified substitute teachers available in the community. One can conclude using an unqualified, inexperienced emergency supply person will not complete the prescribed work or meet the same high standard. Quite often, teachers will go to work even though they should not be there because the amount of effort that they have to put into lesson plans to teach and direct an emergency supply person is considerably more than they would have to expend on their

own plans and preparation.

Professional Growth

Responses concerning professional development and growth showed consistency. In general, all participants decried the lack of opportunity and time for pursuing inservice prospects. Fiscal restraint, weather, and just plain reality were cited as reasons preventing teachers from attending professional development sessions. Weather can halt all travel to and from coastal communities causing teachers to miss inservice dates; the high cost of travel reduces the number of opportunities for teachers in coastal communities to grow professionally. Unfortunately, the weather is an uncontrollable reality, and the high cost of transportation is a reality that is not likely to change in the foreseeable future.

Improving Professional Growth

The data provide some indications of the possible key to improving coastal teachers' opportunities for professional development. First, using efficient organization educators would place professional development seminars in the school year so that could use the knowledge gained. Next, communication between schools and the school board has to improve and become more efficient. This could take place through an emphasis on technology such as electronic mail. Visits of program specialists to coastal schools need to be more frequent and last longer in order to be beneficial to the coastal teacher. Finally, ways have to be found to make professional development sessions more accessible to coastal teachers as these now serve only the less isolated teachers.

The Ultimate Challenge

Most respondents felt that the issue concerning resources was the ultimate challenge. The

opportunity to locate and obtain additional resources so as to raise the standard of one's

teaching and instruction as well as increase student academic achievement brought most

concern. All who responded in the study agreed that there were resources adequate for

completing programs at a basic level but the room for improvement still existed. For those

who did not feel that the resources issue was the most difficult challenge that remote

teachers faced, lack of communication, the perceived community's view of education, and

social isolation were considered equally difficult.

Coping Mechanisms

Pre-service teacher education does usually not provide future teachers with ways

of coping in stressful situations. It is even more important to note that teacher education

does not prepare the new inexperienced teacher to cope with the remote educational

context and the many challenges it presents. The success of teachers--and especially new

teachers--in a remote community depends on how they encounter and conquer its many

challenges. Overall, the data did not present many ways that teachers have developed to

cope with the often overwhelming challenges that exist in the remote educational context.

In relation to resources, teachers tend to either make their own--a time consuming, but

rewarding, process or have family members send materials in via the mail or bring them in

beforehand. Some have coped by attempting to create a better rapport with students in

order to foster a more positive view of education in general. Others have attempted to

develop a greater sense of humour to counteract the high stress they have had to endure.

Student Attitudes towards French Second Language Education

The data collected in the study cannot support a definitive opinion on student

attitudes towards French second language education. Everyone interviewed appeared to agree that, while attitudes were mixed concerning learning a second language such as French, student attitudes as a whole were improving. One common belief that teachers felt contributed to perceived lack of student interest in French second language education was the lack of cultural relevancy and exposure. Finally, teachers reasoned that those students who enjoyed learning French as a second language could be appreciating the different learning style and environment.

Distance Education

From the research data can be drawn no clear-cut decision or consensus on the current distance education framework as it applies to the remote educational context. One point that does appear to be clear is that there is an overall lack of familiarity on the part of teachers in relation to the current distance education framework and how it functions in the school. Some respondents believe it to be a positive aspect in the remote educational environment and a useful adapting of technology in schools. Presenting it in a positive light, teachers believed it to be beneficial to certain students with high academic ability; these students have also to be motivated and capable of independent study. It offers such students the opportunity to complete at the senior high school level more advanced courses which would not normally be offered in a remote school with staffing shortages. Since a consensus could not be obtained from the research data, the current distance education framework as it exists in remote schools today was also judged negatively.

Participants viewed distance education with some reservation and concern. First of all, all agreed that the current framework and approach to distance education needs some

modification and improvement. Second, teachers believed that proper resources were not available for distance education courses. In fact, some believed that distance education suffered more of the shortfall of resources than did regular, in-school courses. Teachers also feared that a one-to-one rapport between the distance education teacher outside the community and the students was not developed effectively and there was also a perceived lack of rapport among students in the class.

Responses also indicated a significant weakness in the current framework of distance education concerning French second language education. The current methodologies and approaches to second language education were not facilitated by such an impersonal learning environment. While an appropriate and innovative application of technology to education in remote communities, distance education is still relatively new. Much needs to be done in order to make distance education an effective means of French second language instruction.

Some concern was voiced that the current framework of distance education delivery to remote communities lacks accommodation for other students. Distance education in its present state does not lend itself to the academic students who may need a little guidance and teacher supervision or those who need program modifications because of various styles of learning. Finally, the concern is raised that there is a shortfall in the area of interpersonal communication and relationships produced.

<u>Role of Technology</u>

In the research data participants gave opinions about the role of technology in the school in a couple of positive ways. First of all, teachers feel that the available technology

and equipment is used as efficiently as possible. They do feel however, that distance education and the advent of the Community Access Program are good examples of technology being put to effective use in the school. The general impression given by almost all participants in the study is that the major difficulties that have plagued our school's computer lab for the last six months have led to the creation of negative attitudes and frustration in teachers and even in some students. The negative attitudes toward technology have limited its role in our educational environment. When discussing this issue however, we need to be careful about blaming the technology person; no one factor accounts for the limited role that technology has been playing in our school. While technical difficulties have been long-standing, it must be said that when the technology was operative earlier in the school year, few on the staff were stepping up and taking advantage of that technology. Once again, the participants' responses demonstrate the lack of motivation possessed by the teaching staff about increasing the effectiveness of their educational delivery.

<u>Implementing Technology</u>

In order to implement technology into the curriculum of the school, the research data point out that teachers need to become more technology-literate. According to teacher responses, few teachers are confident and competent in their own use of technology, but even fewer are comfortable about employing and adapting technology in their classrooms. The primary reason for the fears was the lack of inservice opportunities. The lack of inservice delays integration of technology into teaching practices. Either the teachers cannot use the technology or they cannot use the technology well enough to

connect it smoothly to the lesson. All the while teachers wait for inservice sessions, the available technology sits on the shelf becoming obsolete.

Improving Technology Integration

The research data suggest three means of improving technology integration. First, a greater effort is required to rectify the technical difficulties plaguing our school's technology system. Secondly, more inservice opportunities are needed to ensure that teachers gain the competence and skills necessary to integrate technology into the curriculum. They need to be shown the educational value of technology integration while being given opportunities to implement it and achieve success. Finally, there is the issue of personnel. Labrador is a vast geographical region which includes many communities and schools. Much expensive travel is required to service all communities. Participants felt that a team of five technology technicians for a board of this geographical magnitude is not satisfactory. Brand (1997) supports this by listing a number of advantages served by a full-time technologist: ensure that the objectives of the school and district are me; organize and align the staff; support teachers emotionally and technologically; work with a core group of teachers; co-ordinate the schedule of use for resources; act as a link for all involved. Coastal communities will surely need more personnel and support if they are to be technologically astute.

The Future of Technology in Remote Communities

Technology has the ability and power to overcome the geographic isolation that presently exists in remote communities. As time races on and technology continues to improve and become more efficient, one should see significant improvements in the

remote educational context. The research data gathered in this study indicate that all teachers foresee technology as playing a greater role in education, especially in remote communities. The geographical boundaries that currently exist in these remote communities will diminish as technology continues to improve and become more effective. The consensus of opinion is that the current distance education framework will improve and become more effective offering students a greater selection of advanced courses in senior high school. The video-conference could solve so many of the problems encountered by teachers and students in remote ares. The hope exists that technology will be better utilized in remote schools and that staffs will adopt a more cohesive, collaborative, and team approach to tackling the ever important task of future generations using technology.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

Pre-service Education

From the statement "Teachers could not even begin to 'practise' without some knowledge of the situation in which they are operating and some idea of what it is that needs to be done"(Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.113) one can make the conclusion that teachers need to possess not only some theory of education but also an understanding of the educational environment they are about to enter. From January until April of the year 2000, I had the pleasure for the first time to work with a teacher intern from Memorial University of Newfoundland. She was sponsored and financially supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association in co-operation with the university. This marked only the second occasion that a teacher intern was placed in a remote and

isolated community such as Cartwright. This, I think, is a step in the right direction. That step made, the teacher training now needs to find a means to bring more teacher interns to a remote and isolated community. There they can enjoy the new situation and become accustomed to it. Experiences such as this would also help prospective teachers to realize that an educator should be adaptive, creative, dynamic, and independent by nature and that remote settings such as this inspire the teacher to be even more life-giving.

Another significant issue those involved in pre-service teacher education must address is the lack of a rural component in the studies required by prospective teachers. A new teacher could enjoy training that educates about various topics like rural sociology, multi-graded and multi-aged classes, and life in the small school. There needs to be a section in all pre-service teachers' education programs that exposes future educators to rural living and all the various intricacies that compose the remote isolated educational experience. Meyenn, Sinclair, and Squires (1991) draw attention to this issue when they state, "Without adequate training and preparation, young teachers, especially those with an urban background, might not grasp the potential impact on them of adjusting to life and work in a small, isolated settlement" (p. 152).

<u>Becoming Acclimatized to the Remote Community</u>

Another important issue that needs to be addressed in rural and remote education is acclimatizing the new arriving teacher to the community. The local School Council should play a major supporting role helping the new teacher to become accustomed to what the community has to offer. First of all, the new teacher should be met upon arrival in the community by a welcoming committee formed from the school council; such an

introduction could ease any concerns or uncertainty possessed by the teacher. Next, the council should play an active role in helping the teacher locate adequate housing while helping them to settle into the community. This allows the teacher to feel welcomed and more comfortable in the unfamiliar surroundings.

Finally, the School Council should collaborate with the school board and school personnel to develop a handbook and/or a video for each community, a manual to be used by new incoming teachers. This handbook should include descriptions of what these teachers can expect in the community, prospective financial burdens, the climate, population, medical facilities, and activities taking place in the community. The handbook could also tell what the incoming teacher would need in order to survive in the remote community. A list of the current teaching staff and board personnel with their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses would be quite helpful. Another good idea would be contact numbers for the School Council members. Finally, new teachers should receive a registry of contact information for personnel at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Social Isolation

Living in a remote, isolated community such as this one, new teachers have a tendency to feel socially isolated or exiled from the outside world. Overcoming this feeling in a close-knit community can be challenging unless there is guidance and support available. While some teachers tend to believe that exercise and rest will help them deal with feeling isolated socially, I strongly believe that there is only one real effective path to follow; that is, teachers need to get involved in community life outside the school

environment. Increased involvement in the community in such organizations as the church, the local Lions Club, or sports is possibly the most rapid way to socially fit into the community. If local people notice that a teacher is taking an interest in community life and activities, the teacher will find new friends and fit in more comfortably. The new circle of people and new activities can lead to a reduction the stress related to social isolation.

Community View of Education

One of the more difficult issues to address in remote educational environments is the community's perceived view of education. While it is wonderful to see employment readily available for residents in the community, it is also important that young people be shown that there is a life outside their little community. Education plays a role in reshaping society. Society must endeavour to diversify from a resource-based existence like reliance on the fishery and expand the thinking of future generations so that people aspire to higher learning and seek educational achievement. Teachers need to instil the value of extensive education not only in students but also in their parents. All must open their eyes to a brighter and better future.

Before attempting to enlighten students and promote a life-long learning process, I feel that educators must first look within: "Most schools are dreary, boring places. Perhaps it is time to encourage educators to take risks, to try out new ideas" (Shor, 1986, p. 161). McLaren reiterates, "We must not forget that we can act in ways other than we do"(1988, p. 67). No longer are people satisfied with mere survival; just coping is not enough. Teachers need to reflect upon teaching strategies and beliefs to determine what is effective by today's standards. Encouraging greater involvement by both parents and

students in the educational process, teachers could increase communication levels between the school and the home and practise good public relations so as to alert the parents to the virtually unlimited possibilities that exist outside the resource-based way of living. Through effective technology, teachers will demonstrate to the stakeholders of education a more complete picture. All these approaches will inspire people and plant seeds of ambition so that people will want more than just a traditional livelihood.

<u>Distance Education</u>

Is there an alternative to distance education that could encompass and benefit a greater number of students in remote communities? While the current framework of distance education delivery is an innovative and appropriate application of technology to the remote educational environment, it is limited to a few select students who normally are at an academic peak. However, there is some indication that further research is required into the application and further development of the distance education delivery of senior high core French and also into a search that would result in a more flexible system whereby students of varied academic abilities could avail of the enhanced and expanded educational opportunities.

<u>Improving Technology Growth</u>

How do schools improve the ways they integrate technology into education? First, educators have to overcome the technical difficulties that have many of them so handicapped. Solving the technical problems could enable teachers and students to move forward and apply this resource to their educational practices. The fact is that teachers have to try to make the effort to keep abreast of technology's rapid advancement. Now

faced with outdated computers and equipment, educators shiver at the price of keeping up with rapidly expanding technology. More funding initiatives to replace ageing equipment may be possible through community industry and business partnerships which could make up for what is lacking because of fiscal restraint at the provincial and school board levels.

Educators can no longer afford to stress only mathematics, English, and the sciences as the fundamentals of education. Shor (1986) claims that technological literacy has become an important part of the "basics" of twenty-first century education. Students should not fear being stragglers in a world of technology. Teacher inservice on technology and technological application in educational environments must be addressed if teachers are to provide children with a more beneficial education. Most teachers in this setting lack the skills that would motivate them to use technology in their classrooms. Teachers must learn the benefits and value of this innovative teaching tool; they should also know to employ technology in the classroom. If educational authorities do not take the time to educate teachers on the value and benefits of technology as an educational tool, teachers will not bring technology into their teaching practices. The old expression, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink" applies here in that teachers need to be shown the path to technological integration, and then the onus falls on them to use it. Therefore, inservicing can be seen as a self-liberating process for teachers in that a whole window of opportunities for teaching can be opened up if they are taught the value of technology in education.

Another possible remedy to cure computer illiteracy is to team a technologically competent teacher with an educator who has not yet developed and mastered the

necessary computer skills for integrating technology into their instructional practices. The pair of teachers could work together on various initiatives such as Grass Roots projects sponsored by Stemnet and SchoolNet and share ideas about the benefits such technological applications would have for them and their students. The other positive result arising from this pairing off would be the facilitation of team building and collaboration especially among a stagnant teaching staff. If the need were to arise, this process of sharing know-how could happen through the assistance of some technologically competent students. This student-as-teacher event would serve to strengthen the sense of co-operation in the learning environment and help all involved to continue with the lifelong learning process. Although some educators are hesitant to ask students for assistance concerning computers, there should not be such reluctance. Children today are a product of a technological renaissance and have much to offer.

The final issue that needs to be addressed about the improvement of technology integration in the school is personnel. The task of maintaining and overseeing the operation of computer labs in schools is a time-consuming chore. Educators cannot afford to rely on teachers, who already have a heavy teaching load, to keep technology systems up and running. The common desire of teachers is to have a permanent, full-time technologist in the school. This would relieve some of the pressure from the teacher currently charged with this overwhelming task. In a school board of the geographical magnitude of Labrador, a small team of five technicians would be rapidly overwrought and some schools would be denied the appropriate service. Two days taken from a school year, as was the case this past academic year, is not enough to keep equipment

functioning. Lack of personnel has become a technological stumbling block to the
improvement of education. Educators need to make an effort to obtain additional funding
for extra technicians such as information technology teachers or trades people. Creating a
partnership with the College of the North Atlantic and similar institutions could be
possible; such a union would enable students pursuing post-secondary education in the
field of information technology to complete internships in the region's schools. The period
of internship would benefit the intern, the teacher, and the students.

Improving Professional Growth

In relation to curriculum research and professional competence, "professional
development simply requires an increasingly skilful use of an existing stock of pedagogical
knowledge"(Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 29). Arguably, the most important concern that
arises from research in rural and remote educational environments is the poor approach to
professional development. How do educators equalize opportunities for professional
growth for both the remote, isolated teacher and teachers located in less rural or urban
settings? First, an emphasis on technological communication could be more beneficial to
teachers in enabling them to communicate with teachers in their subject area outside the
community via such tools as subject domain related listservs or electronic discussion
groups.

Secondly, program specialists must increase their efforts to visit coastal schools
and be in contact with teachers to keep them abreast of changing approaches as well as
innovative ideas suitable for classroom practices. Program specialists need to spend at
least three days in a school during each visit. This practice, once used by the school board,

should be reinitiated to enable program co-ordinators to spend some quality time interacting with teachers in their areas. For example, in the school year 1999-2000, the program specialist responsible for my subject domain made only a single one-day visit to our school before she moved on to the next community. This is not acceptable since time is not available for teachers with an all-day teaching load to meet with these co-ordinators during school hours. Another practice that should stop is that of program specialists and support staff shortening their stays in the school because a weather forecast threatens conditions that might prohibit them from travelling the next day. This is a serious injustice to coastal schools, their teaching staffs and, most of all, their students. If a visit is scheduled for three days, it should last three days. If board personnel are required to spend an extra day in a community, they should look at it as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their teaching expertise and help the teacher. They might even learn of a new approach or idea that they can share with others in the board. One other related aspect in relation to the visits of program specialists to coastal schools is that the first of these visits should occur early in the school year, especially if the coastal teacher is new and inexperienced. It must not be forgotten that a new teacher can realize success or failure early in the school year and needs to be supported, counselled, and given feedback early to maximize the opportunity for success.

Thirdly, a needs analysis should be conducted at the end of the previous school year or at the beginning of the current school year to determine where inservice opportunities are most needed and where these sessions should take place. Coastal teachers should be willing to identify weaknesses and strengths that they want addressed

in future professional development sessions. The object of this exercise would be not to to dwell on teacher shortcomings but to concentrate on helping the teacher become professional.

In addition to the needs analysis process, a suggestion might be made to incorporate the creation of portfolios or professional development profiles of all coastal teachers. This would include the teachers' curriculum vitae, professional development sessions attended, and areas of presumed weaknesses in relation to education. Another entry for the portfolio would be a list of the perceived strengths of the teacher so that the teacher could serve as a professional resource person called upon by both the school board and other teachers. Finally, these portfolios would include the teachers' career goals and education aims to facilitate teachers in choosing the best path to professional growth. Teachers should not be content with their present level of education and knowledge. The portfolio could eliminate some of the complacency and perhaps promote the lifelong learning process for educators.

In January of 1991, the school board held a one-week conference for all teachers of Grades 7 to 12 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. This conference was beneficial and provided teachers with the opportunity to meet and discuss concerns, issues, and methodologies with other teachers in their subject areas. Unfortunately, it was not until the fall of 1999 that I encountered another opportunity of such magnitude when the school board sponsored another four-day conference for all teachers of Grades 5 through 9 in Labrador City. I welcomed the opportunity to meet with other teachers in my subject area. Much to my dismay, within the entire four-day conference, only one ninety-minute session

was scheduled for core French. While conferences such as this one are a great idea, more organization would ensure that such conferences are relevant to teachers' needs and professional requirements. For a conference such as this, at least seventy-five percent of the time should be allotted for subject area teachers and their colleagues to discuss their curricular programs, challenges, and methodologies. While it is not economically feasible to arrange grand-scale professional development opportunities every year, it should be attempted every three to four years. Eight years between comprehensive conferences is too long.

Finally, teachers in coastal communities should be allotted extra days in their professional development banks to account for the travel time required to and from the coast. The extra days would give these educators equal opportunity to experience as much professional development as possible.

Professional development will be successful, according to Guhlin (1996), if it extends a vision to empower teachers, stimulates reflective practice, values collegiality, and enables teachers to shape their own learning.

Staffing

How is the transition made from a stagnant teaching staff to a team of educated professionals devoted to the most complete and effective education of young people? First, teachers need leadership. Teachers have to show motivation and innovation in their teaching practices. Teachers must risks and try new methods and without fear of failure. If teachers attempt a new approach and discover that it is not appropriate or effective, they should reflect critically on what they tried to accomplish and learn from the experience.

Teachers need to think success just as their students need to think positively. Teaching is a learning process whereby teachers gather knowledge and present it to students in the most effective ways. Educators must take charge of their environment and show initiative in the application of technology to education. Teachers cannot afford to wait for someone else to lead the way. If teachers demonstrate the willingness to take risks and encourage their colleagues, our schools can scale to new educational heights.

Secondly, teachers need to work together to promote higher learning. To facilitate team building, teachers can work together in pairs regardless of their subject area; the two can provide support and positive feedback for each other. This could occur through observation. That is to say, during certain preparation periods throughout the school year, a partnered teacher could observe the collaborating teacher teaching a class. Later, the observer could offer positive feedback and perhaps even suggest another possibly more effective means of instruction. This process could occur on three occasions during the school year and could promote a sense of co-operation and teamwork among staff members. An effective teacher is a teacher open to new ideas, free in taking risks, and willing to accept constructive criticism.

Thirdly, the process of teacher mentoring should be considered when a new and inexperienced teacher arrives in the remote community. The stress related to a new teaching position combined with the stress of moving to a remote community can be discouraging and have a negative impact on the new teacher. There are many challenges in such an educational environment; these challenges could be detrimental to a teacher's success. Mentoring could alleviate a major portion of this stress and difficulty. The idea

would be to form a partnership between an experienced teacher, who has endured the perceived hardships of life in the isolated community, and the new arriving teacher. This collaboration would aid not only the new teacher but also the experienced teacher. The experienced teacher would assume the role of helping the new teacher to become established in the school and community while familiarizing the novice with the complexities of the school's environment. Meanwhile, the process could also be beneficial to the experienced educator with the existing possibility of being informed of new approaches, creative ideas, and available materials. Finally, this process could also play a crucial role in the team construction process and serve as a necessary building block to a more efficient and effective professional teaching staff.

Finally, in addressing the issue of qualified substitute teachers and the lack thereof, an initiative must be taken to provide emergency supply personnel with a formal information session at the commencement of the school year. This session of one or two days would acquaint them with school rules and regulations as well as ways to manage particular situations as they occur. It would also equip emergency supply personnel with a limited knowledge and an awareness of what the school and teaching staff expect and provide a fundamental knowledge base of the various curriculum areas. If time does not permit the school staff to present this information session, it is possible to draw on the wisdom and experience of a recently retired teacher living in the community to offer this beneficial experience.

School Improvement

Since the early 1990s, school boards and the Department of Education have embraced the concept of school improvement. The Labrador School Board has adopted school improvement initiatives with enthusiasm over the past five to six years. Many inservices have taken place in our school concerning this program and an extensive wide-ranging topics have been discussed. While it does appear that much progress has been made through these sessions, limitations do exist. For some teachers, school improvement meetings have evolved from a positive look at the school's educational environment to the notion of a "day off." On many occasions, an idea is discussed during the day with the aim of successful implementation. Often the idea is shelved.

School improvement teams must always be cognizant of the remote, isolated school as well as the urban one. Any imoprovement embarked upon has to to seen as a benefit for every child because every child has a right to an education. This means that there must be improvement of accessibility in its truest sense.

If schools are to improve, the recommendation is that teachers approach this issue seriously and work towards the betterment of the school, the enrichment of students' personal lives, the heightened professionalism of teachers, and the strengthening of our whole society..

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Appendix A

<u>**Interview Questions**</u>

Expectations and Reality

- What were your expectations of this community when you first came here?
- How did these expectations differ from the realities you encountered?

Challenges

- What are the challenges of teaching in a remote community such as this one?
- Which would you consider to be the most insurmountable challenge?

Coping with Challenge

- Have you developed ways of coping with these challenges?
- What were the techniques you found helpful in dealing with the challenges?

Value of Education

- How do you think the community perceives education?
- Do they see education as valuable or as a means to a better future?

Resources

- Do you feel that this school has adequate resources to meet its educational needs?
- Do you think that the school is lacking in terms of resources?

French Second Language

- How would you describe student attitudes towards French second language learning in this community?
- Do you think the French second language resources are sufficient for delivering an effective program?

Professional Development and Support

- Do you feel that there are ample opportunities to pursue professional development? If so, what professional development sessions have you attended? If not, why do think that professional development opportunities are insufficient?
- How would you characterize the level of professional support that you have experienced in your time here?
- Are there any suggestions that you might make in order to improve professional development and support?

Distance Education

- Could you describe the distance education framework in this school?
- Do you feel that this is an effective means of instruction?
- What are the advantages that you see in teaching by distance education?
- What disadvantages do you feel exist in the current framework of distance learning?

Technology

- In your school at this point in time, what role does technology play?
- Is technology being implemented throughout the curriculum or are there limited teachers who utilise it? Why do you think this so?
- In relation to technology and its use in the school, what are your suggestions for improving its use and implementation into the curriculum?
- Where do you see technology heading in the curriculum for remote communities?

Appendix B

<u>**Letter to Director of Education**</u>

P. O. Box 141
Cartwright, Labrador, NF A0K 1V0
TEL: 709–938-7276
E-MAIL: <u>scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca</u>

March 15, 1999

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

Dear Mr. Patey,

I have been employed as a French second language teacher with the Labrador School
Board for the past nine years. I am presently working on the research component required
for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning -- Second Language
Education and Technology -- at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of
my research is to make a critical examination of teaching in the remote educational
context. My research will be a critical ethnographic in-depth case study analysis.

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to conduct research at Henry
Gordon Academy in Cartwright within the Labrador School Board's jurisdiction. If your
approval is provided, five consenting teachers in Cartwright will be interviewed. I will also
be seeking an interview with the teacher who replaced me during the 1998-1999 school
year. A letter will be given to participants outlining background information relating to the
study, procedures, and confidentiality information; this letter will also include a consent
form that must be signed by teachers. The letter will also inform them that prior approval
to conduct this study has been received from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee
and that your has been given to conduct this investigation in this district.

I will be employing two methods of data collection for this study. This will include in-
depth personal interviews that will be one hour to ninety minutes in duration and in-depth
contextual field notes, which will take into, account the school environment, contextual
observations, and classroom observations. My own experiences in a remote isolated
community will also be included.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have the right to request that their interviews be erased and transcripts destroyed upon completion of their participation in the study. Participants may also refuse to be tape-recorded. If a recording is not done, the researcher will make field notes to record interviews. Transcripts and recordings will not be disclosed to anyone other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk during this study. All information collected in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and assured. Participation in this study is voluntary and the participant is entitled to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions. A copy of the study, if requested, will be made available to you, the school principal, and the teachers involved.

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

If you require further information in relation to this study, please contact me by phone at (709) 938-7276 or (709) 368-8726 or e-mail me at scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca. You may also like to contact my Supervisor, Dr. Clar Doyle, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7556 or e-mail him at CDOYLE@morgan.ucs.mun.ca. You may also contact a third person who is not involved in the research: Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7656 or e-mail him at bsheppar@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

C. Scott Baker, B.A., B.Ed.

District Consent Form

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

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

Date: _____   Signature: _____

Appendix C

LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

P. O. Box 141
Cartwright, Labrador, NF A0K 1V0
TEL: 709–938-7276
E-MAIL: scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca

March 15, 1999

Mrs. Kim Morris
Principal: Henry Gordon Academy
P. O. Box 40,
Cartwright, Labrador, NF. A0K 1V0

Dear Mrs. Morris,

A French second language teacher with the Labrador School Board for the past nine years, I am presently working on the research component for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning -- Second Language Education and Technology -- at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my research is to make a critical examination of teaching in the remote educational context. My research will be a critical ethnographic in-depth case study analysis.

I request your permission to conduct research at our school in Cartwright. If your approval is provided, five consenting teachers in Cartwright will be interviewed I will also be seeking an interview with the teacher who replaced me during the 1998-1999 school year. A letter will be given to participants outlining background information relating to the study, procedures, and confidentiality information; there will also be a consent form that must be signed by teachers. The letter will also notify them that prior approval to conduct this study has been received from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and that permission to conduct this investigation in this district has been received from the Labrador School Board and you.

I will be employing two methods of data collection for this study: a) in-depth personal interviews which will last approximately one hour to ninety minutes, and b) in-depth contextual field notes that will take into account the school environment, contextual observations, and classroom observations. My own experiences in a remote isolated community will also be included.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. Participants have the right to request that their interviews be erased and transcripts destroyed upon completion of their participation in the study. Participants may to refuse to be tape-recorded. Should there be no tape-recording, I will use field notes to record interviews. Transcripts and recordings will not be disclosed to any persons other than the researcher. Participants are at no risk during this study. All information collected in this study is strictly confidential. Participant anonymity will be preserved and assured. Participation in this study is voluntary and the participant is entitled to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions. A copy of the study, if requested, will be made available to you, the school board, and the teachers involved.

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

If you require further information in relation to this study, please contact me by phone at (709) 938-7276 or (709) 368-8726 or e-mail me at scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca. You may also like to contact my supervisor, Dr. Clar Doyle, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7556 or e-mail him at CDOYLE@morgan.ucs.mun.ca. You may also contact a third contact person who is not involved in the research: Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7656 or e-mail him at bsheppar@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

C. Scott Baker, B.A., B.Ed.

School Consent Form

I, _____, on behalf of Henry Gordon Academy, declare that I understand the study outlined in the attached letter and signify my willingness to permit teachers at the aforementioned school to voluntarily participate in the study as described.

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

Date:_____ Signature:_____

Appendix D

<u>**Letter to Teachers**</u>

P. O. Box 141
Cartwright, Labrador, NF A0K 1V0
TEL: 709–938–7276
E-MAIL: scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca

March 15, 1999

Dear _____,

A French second language teacher with the Labrador School Board for the past nine years, I am working on the my thesis as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Teaching and Learning – Second Language Education and Technology – at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of my research is make a critical examination teaching, in particular French second language teaching, in the remote educational context. My research will be a critical ethnographic in-depth case study analysis.

As a part of my research, I would like to interview you at school in Cartwright. I hope to have five other participants from the school. I will also be seeking an interview with the teacher who replaced me during the 1998-1999 school year. I have approval from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, the Director of Education, and your school principal to conduct this study

I will be employing two non-evaluative methods of data collection for this study:
- in-depth personal interviews -- these will last one hour to ninety minutes
- in-depth contextual field notes -- these will take into account the school environment, contextual observations, and classroom observations.

My own experiences in a remote isolated community will also be included.

Recording devices for data collection include audiotapes and field notes. You have the right to request that your interview be erased and transcripts destroyed upon completion of your participation in the study. You are also entitled to refuse to be tape-recorded; if that is your wish, I will use field notes to record the interview. I will keep all transcripts and recordings confidential. You are at no risk during this study. Your anonymity is assured. Your participation is voluntary you may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions. If you participate you may have a copy of this study and would like to have one. A copy of the study, if requested, will be made available to you, the school board, and the teachers involved.

This study has received the approval of the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Education; the Director of Education for the Labrador School Board; and the principal of Henry Gordon Academy. If you agree to agree to participate in this study, please read and sign the attached *Teacher Consent Form*. Please detach and return the form at your earliest possible convenience in the stamped envelope provided.

If you require further information in relation to this study, please contact me by phone at (709) 938-7276 or (709) 368-8726 or e-mail me at scbaker@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca. You may also like to contact my Supervisor, Dr. Clar Doyle, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7556 or e-mail him at CDOYLE@morgan.ucs.mun.ca. As a third contact person who is not involved in the research, you may contact Dr. Bruce Sheppard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, at (709) 737-7656 or e-mail him at bsheppar@calvin.stemnet.nf.ca.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

C. Scott Baker, B.A., B.Ed.

Teacher Consent Form

I, _____, declare that I understand the study outlined in the attached letter and signify my willingness to voluntarily participate in the study as described.
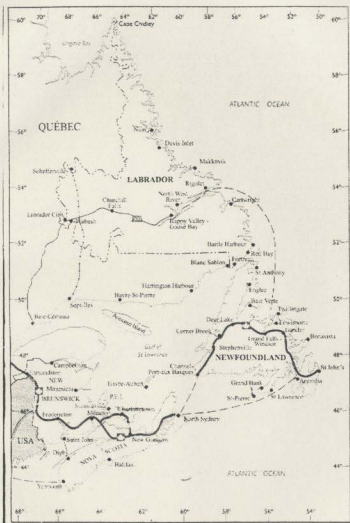
I understand that I have the right to decline participation in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice of any kind. I understand and agree that any information collected as a result of this study and my identity as a participant will remain confidential. I give permission to be anonymously quoted in any research article produced after I have had the opportunity to review the text. I also understand that I may obtain the results of this study.

Date:_____   Signature: _____

APPENDIX E

Figure 1: Map of Newfoundland and Labrador