OJIBWE WOMEN AS ADULT LEARNERS IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM:
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING
OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING AND CHANGE

by

Kathryn M. Freeman

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Adult Education, Community Development, and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

Existing literature in adult education pays scant attention to the experience of Aboriginal adult learners, especially those who are women. Further, while more Aboriginal teachers are needed, and the majority of Aboriginal teacher education students are women, almost no research has been conducted with this student population.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of Ojibwe women as adult learners in a program of teacher education. The study explored the experience of eight voluntary participants ranging in age from twenty-nine to fifty-one years of age nearing completion of a two year university program in Aboriginal teacher education. Participants’ motivations, expectations, characteristics, interaction, experiences in the program, and goals upon completion were examined.

A qualitative approach was employed in gathering data. There were four parts to the study: in-depth interviews with participants; follow-up interviews after individuals had received transcripts of the first interview; a demographic questionnaire; and field notes. Interviews, which yielded more than four hundred typed pages, formed the main part of the study.
The emergent research design generated findings which were sorted into four main themes: relationships with others as an Aboriginal teacher education student; survival and success as an Aboriginal learner; personal change during the teacher education program; and “I am an Ojibwe woman.” Findings were reported primarily in participants' own words and discussed in relation to theories on adult learning, adult development and Aboriginal education.

Interpersonal, community and cultural connections were important to all participants and significantly influenced their educational endeavours. Participants demonstrated cultural continuity and a sense of social responsibility in their activities and concerns as teachers-in-preparation. Program features and other factors which supported or hindered participants in completing their program were identified and discussed. The study explored aspects of personal change and raised ethical issues regarding the appropriateness of conducting research in the area of Aboriginal adult development, concluding that a far deeper and broader research effort would be necessary, and one conducted from the perspective of a cultural “insider” to achieve legitimacy.

Conclusions which have implications for research and program planning in Aboriginal education and questions for further investigation were identified.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In reflecting upon this doctoral journey, there are so many people whom I think of with gratitude. These people have enriched my life in many ways, for which I am deeply grateful.

I begin by thanking my parents, Mac and Elinor Freeman, my first teachers and oldest friends, for their love, their encouragement, and their example which helped to sustain me throughout this long and sometimes arduous effort. I feel honoured to be your daughter.

Without the eight Anishinabe women who volunteered their time and energy as study participants, this document would not have been possible. Their thoughtful insights have given me a deeper understanding which has benefited my work and greatly added to my life. The humour and affection we shared was a gift to me, brightening my days and warming my heart. Thanks so much to all of you. Chi Meegwetch.

I'm grateful to my committee members who fostered my learning process and played key roles in shaping this work. My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Don Brundage for his unflagging efforts on my behalf; and for the many ways in which he contributed to my learning. Through course work and the ideas he introduced to me at OISE, he facilitated some of my most exciting learning experiences. Thanks to Dr. Ginny Griffin for showing me a powerful example of the learner-centered educator, and for honouring me with her wisdom and patience as I learned to 'name the processes.' I'm fortunate and deeply appreciative that she stayed the course with me. Finally, my grateful thanks to Dr. Cecil King who found time in his busy schedule to continue serving on my committee even after he moved to Saskatchewan and assumed the heavy responsibilities of a new job. It is my great good fortune to have had the opportunity to benefit from his excellent teaching and delightful company these many years. His guidance in the writing of the thesis, his wit, and his extensive experience in Aboriginal education and Ojibwe/Odawa community life have been a great blessing. My profound thanks to these three exemplary teachers.

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A special note of love and thanks to Wallace Edwards, for believing in me, for making me laugh, and for the countless ways that he made my life easier and better as I was toiling to finish this dissertation.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the OISE scholarship which provided financial support to complete the residency requirements of the doctoral program.

Throughout my life I have benefited from others who showed me how to love learning, helped me to grow, and demonstrated that they cared about me, the learner. In particular, I remember my grandmothers Gertrude Freeman and Andy Allen, and my grandfathers Jim Allen and Norman Victor Freeman. It is to great teachers such as these that I dedicate this dissertation.
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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience, motivations, expectations, future plans and interaction of Ojibwe* women in a post-secondary program of teacher education. The study (1) explores the experience of eight Ojibwe women near the end of a two year program in teacher education including their motivations; their characteristics; their experiences in the program; and their goals upon completion; (2) discusses these experiences in relation to theories on adult learning, adult development and Aboriginal education; and (3) presents implications of the study in relation to further research pertaining to program planning for Aboriginal students.

The study was undertaken with the hope that findings would contribute in some small way toward increasing the much-needed body of knowledge on the Aboriginal adult learner. As a valued goal, such work is aimed toward learning more about those aspects which are conducive to post-secondary success for Aboriginal student teachers. It is hoped that this information may be useful for those involved in building effective university programs, in order that Aboriginal students’ efforts may be honoured, and so that more Aboriginal teachers may graduate to address the widespread need for Aboriginal teachers in elementary and secondary classrooms.

Statistics on Post-Secondary Education and Aboriginal People

The proportion of Aboriginal students graduating from post-secondary educational programs has been increasing very slowly over the past two decades as compared to the non-Aboriginal student population. Results of Statistics Canada nation-wide census in both 1981 and 1991 report that in 1981 an estimated 2% of the Indigenous population graduated from university compared to 8.1% of the general population. By 1991 the disparity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal graduates had grown, with 2.6% of the Indigenous population graduating from university, a mere .6% increase, while 11.6% of the non-Indigenous population graduated, an increase of 3.5% (Statistics Canada, 1981 Census, 1991 Census, and 1993 Aboriginal Peoples Survey). These statistics are the most current available at present, and most useful in showing the small number of Aboriginal students attending and graduating from Canadian universities.
Figures indicate that the number of Aboriginal women graduating from post-secondary education also remains low compared to the number of non-Aboriginal women. At the same time, a comparison with figures provided in the 1981 Census suggests that there has been an increase in the number of Aboriginal women post-secondary graduates over the past two decades. At the 1981 Census count those Aboriginal women with a university degree numbered 830 or only 1% of the total population of Native women, while non-Native women in Canada with a university degree numbered 168,700 or 7% of the total population of non-Native women (Census and Household Statistics Branch, 1985, p. 25). By 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) reports that 2.9% of Aboriginal women have a university degree, accompanied by a similar increase in the number of non-Aboriginal women graduates from 7% to 10.7% (RCAP, Perspectives and Realities, 1996, p. 12).

Statistics indicate the difficulty which Aboriginal people experience in school. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) reports that although more Aboriginal students are attending university, the attrition rate is high. The Commission (1996, Vol. 3) states

The proportion of the Aboriginal population undertaking university programs increased to 8.6 per cent by 1991, but the record of completion was very low (three per cent) and increased by only one per cent between 1981 and 1991. (pp. 512, 513)

With the proportion of Aboriginal students completing university programs having risen by only one per cent over the last decade, Aboriginal people continue to be under-represented among university graduates – one-quarter of the proportion of non-Aboriginal persons who receive a university degree.

Further, with only three Aboriginal women in one hundred graduating from university (RCAP, Perspectives and Realities, 1993, p. 12), it becomes apparent from the statistics that university is a rare experience indeed for Aboriginal women in Canada. Aboriginal women who do enrol in post-secondary education are specializing in all fields of study, with statistics suggesting that the highest percentage are to be found in commerce, management and administration (30.9%), followed by health science and technology (16.6%), then education, recreation and counselling (15/3%) (RCAP, Vol. 3, p. 549).

Statistics on Aboriginal Women in Education-Related Professions

Women in education-related fields of study outnumber men significantly in both the Indigenous and the general Canadian population. In the general population, 21.2% received education-related training in 1991, and of these, 15.8% were women while 5.4% were men.
Among Aboriginal people, education-related training is the third most common type of training after commerce/administration and health. Of the estimated 21.7% of Indigenous people receiving education-related training, 15.3% were female and 6.4% were male (Statistics Canada Aboriginal Peoples Survey 1993). Twice as many Aboriginal women as men enrol in education-related post-secondary programs.

Similarly Aboriginal women outnumber men in education-related occupations. In reviewing occupations of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the experienced labour force in 1991, Statistics Canada estimated that 1.6% of Indigenous males and 6.1% of Indigenous females worked in education-related jobs (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 550). These statistics support the notion that teaching is a role more typical for Indigenous women than for Indigenous men.

Aboriginal Women in Post-Secondary Education Profiled in the Literature

Numerous authors have noted the paucity of literature on both Aboriginal women (Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1992; Brant Castellano, 1989; Green, 1992; Medicine, 1988; Miller & Chuchryk, 1997; Shoemaker, 1995), and Aboriginal post-secondary education (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986, 1987; Winter, 1991). As early as 1974, Blunt (1974) wrote “Little is known about Indians as adult learners. Research is needed to identify the problems and difficulties they encounter in order to design appropriate and effective learning experiences for them” (p. 41). Yet the literature on the Aboriginal adult learner is still scanty, and even more scarce in reference to the Aboriginal female adult learner.

A ‘key word’ search of University of Toronto/ O.I.S.E. library listings in 1992, 1997, and 2000 revealed that such literature is hard to find even at a university whose web page indicates that it “holds the most extensive specialized research collection in education in Canada, and is one of the largest in this field in the world” (URL http://www.oise.on.ca/~aeloise/library.html; July, 2000). Search activities over the seven year period showed only very slow growth in the availability of materials pertaining to Aboriginal women and Aboriginal education. In 1992 virtually no materials were available concerning Aboriginal adult learners or Aboriginal women. Five years later, the picture had changed little. Key word search “Aboriginal”/“Native”/“Indian” plus “adult” plus “education” showed that only twelve new references had been added even though references listed under key words “adult” plus “education” had nearly doubled, totalling four thousand and two. Similarly, although references called up using the key words “woman” plus “education” numbered two thousand six hundred and thirty-one, key words “Aboriginal”/“Native”/“Indian” plus “woman”/“female” yielded only three additional references for a total of
five listed. By the year 2000, the collection had grown significantly in volume, yet presented a disproportionately small increase in the number of Aboriginal references. The following chart depicts search results.

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<td>Aboriginal/ Native/ Indian + adult + education</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>woman + education</td>
<td>2,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal/ Native/ Indian + woman/ female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>adult + education</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>(on-line key word search, June, 2000)</td>
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<td>Aborigines, West Indians, Trinidadians, Mexicans, Guatemalians)</td>
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Table 1


In 1988 Aboriginal academic Beatrice Medicine (1988) noted the lack of research available in the United States. Her comments apply equally to Canada for that time:

...there is a paucity of public works on North American Indians, virtually no research in this area, and no research agenda for future. [Existing research shows] that North American Indians are frequently lumped together as one group, and tribal-specific structures, social achievements etc., as well as gender remain fuzzy. Published material is bound inextricably within male-produced ethnographic accounts.... Gender and role variation reflecting the
differentiated social structures and cultures of North American tribal groups is thus obliterated. Distorted images of Indian women have been perpetuated by the continuing male bias of mainstream writers. (pp. 86, 87)

Medicine's concern is echoed by Ahenakew and Wolfart (1992) who claim that “Outside their own communities, almost nothing has been heard until now about the life of Indian women. What little most Canadians have been able to read about Indian life concerns an earlier period and is focused on the activities of men in the buffalo hunt, in tribal warfare and the like” (p. 17). In reviewing the literature on Canadian Aboriginal women, Brodribb (1984) was “immediately struck by the scarcity of material available” (p. 86). Medicine (1988) echoes my own experience in pointing out that “a search of ERIC files yields little pertinent information directly related to the professionalization of Indian females” (p. 88).

What was written about the Aboriginal woman in education prior to the 1990's may be found in a smattering of references scattered through various fields of inquiry. A review of U.S. literature pertaining to American Aboriginal women in post-secondary education yields a profile of the Aboriginal woman in higher education which is aptly portrayed by Beatrice Medicine (1988, p. 88) who says

The Native American woman college student is more likely to have attended a non Bureau of Indian Affairs high school, will probably come from a home in which English is her first language (or if a native language is spoken, it will be the language always spoken in the home). She will be majoring in some field of education or social service, and will be somewhat more likely than her Indian male classmates to persist and complete her degree.

Medicine goes on to say that there are numerous aspects of the Native woman's college experience which still need investigation – their experiences in school, their educational goals, in what ways they have “internalized their Nativeness,” the ways in which they expect to contribute to their Native group, and similarities/differences in their experiences as compared with minority women (p. 88).

The need for more research and writing regarding Aboriginal women is only beginning to be addressed. Since the 1980's some effort has been made to rectify the lack of resources, following upon the first ever national symposium on Aboriginal women of Canada held in 1989 (Miller & Chuchryk, 1997). However, despite recent efforts, there is still much too little information available on the contemporary Aboriginal woman, let alone the more specialized topic of the contemporary Aboriginal woman learner, as compared with information available on women and adult learners in general.
What information is available about Aboriginal women must be vetted carefully, for, as Miller and Chuchryk (1997) point out

Until recently, much of the research upon which we have had to rely for our knowledge about Aboriginal women has reflected racist, sexist, and/or colonialist frameworks. Often, research is devoted to only describing Aboriginal societies, and in that description defining these societies and the women who live in them is somehow problematic. Unfortunately, such descriptions further minimize women’s struggles by utilizing ethnocentric methods of community research and problem solving, and relying upon Western theoretical frameworks to guide interpretations. (p. 4)

Identifying research which offers and honours Aboriginal perspectives continues to be a challenge. Anderson (2000) provides some helpful guidance here. As she says

...we still do not have enough material out there that is written by our own people. Native access to education and publishing is improving, but in the meantime, the majority of “Native studies” is still that; study of “Natives” by the outsider. I have found useful material in the work of non-Native scholars, but in working through the material, I called on a few factors to assist me in my critical approach. I asked myself: Who wrote this? What were their values? What was their understanding of women? What was their relationship to Native people? (p. 41)

Anderson and others stress the importance of Aboriginal people themselves becoming published authors. Research by Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people is a key factor in addressing the paucity of literature which presents an adequate perspective on Aboriginal lives.

In this study, I have endeavoured to use such research where possible. However, while there have been some recent advances with efforts such as the monumental nation-wide study completed by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), and with an increase in published works by Aboriginal women authors (see for example, Anderson, 2000; Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1992; Armstrong, 1991; Brady, 1989; Brant Castellano, 1989; Hill, 1999; Jackson, 1994; Keeshig-Tobias, 1996; Kirkness, 1989; Mihesuah, 1998; Miller & Chuchryk, 1997; Perrault & Vance, 1993; Swisher; 1998), Aboriginal women’s experience continues to be under-represented in the literature.

The Need for Aboriginal Teachers

Efforts to improve Aboriginal adult education and Aboriginal teacher education are much needed. The concept of education as a life long activity which may be found in or out of school is held by many Aboriginal people who value learning. As Nyce (1990) says “Education is a way of life for First Nations people” (p. 61). However, despite the interest in learning and the
recognized importance of education, Aboriginal people and Aboriginal women continue to be disadvantaged in their levels of formal educational attainment. For many Aboriginal women, attending school in adulthood is a difficult proposition. Female lone-parent families have been much more common among the Native population (RCAP, 1996). Aboriginal women are "more likely than non-Native Canadian women to live at or below the poverty line" (Miller & Chuchryk, 1997, p. 4). Non-Status Aboriginal women do not have access to educational support funding provided for Status Indians, and number among the economically disadvantaged (Census and Household Statistics Branch, 1985; Ontario Women's Directorate, 1986; RCAP, 1993). Aboriginal women often have conflicting responsibilities of home and work which make it difficult to assume the added responsibility of fulfilling school requirements or to leave their home community for extended periods of time to attend school.

At the same time, Aboriginal leaders have made positive comments about the benefits and value of post-secondary education (Assembly of First Nations, 1988, Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs; Armstrong et al, 1990; RCAP, 1993). However, these comments are contrasted by the reality of how few Aboriginal people actually attend post-secondary programming in Canada, as indicated by the statistics presented above. Armstrong et al (1990) voice the opinion of others (Blunt, 1974; Pottinger, 1989) when they say "the reasons for the low success rates among Indians are far from clear" (p. 40). They contend that more research into the factors of success and failure of Indian university students is needed if Indian students' participation and success rates in post-secondary education are to improve.

Aboriginal people posit that one way to address the difficulties which Aboriginal students face in school is to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers. As the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) points out

It has been recognized for decades that having Aboriginal teachers in the classroom represents the first line of change in the education of Aboriginal children and youth. The Hawthorn report of 1966 talked about the importance of Aboriginal teachers and non-Aboriginal teachers with cross-cultural sensitivity. The training of Aboriginal teachers has been a top priority for Aboriginal people since the 1960s when they began to lobby for programs that would bring Aboriginal teachers into the classroom. (p. 47)

However, despite lobbying, the need for Aboriginal teachers is yet to be fully addressed. The Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) goes on to say that

While there are many more Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school systems today than a decade ago, the numbers remain far too low relative to the current and projected need. At least three times as many are needed to achieve parity with the number
of non-Aboriginal teachers serving non-Aboriginal children. (p. 491)

Conclusion

The following study provides one more contribution to the small but growing body of work on the contemporary experiences of Aboriginal women, specifically, as adult learners in the context of a teacher education program designed for Aboriginal students. Recognizing the importance of participants’ voices being heard, I have endeavoured to present findings using their words as much as possible. However, it must be remembered that understandings gleaned here are perceived through my own “lens” as a non-Aboriginal researcher who has worked in the field of Aboriginal education for twenty years. As a non-Aboriginal person, my understandings are influenced by my own culture and experience. To gain a fuller understanding of the experience of Aboriginal women as adult learners, it is important to turn to the work of Aboriginal women authors themselves, and to support an increase in the number of published works by such authors in any way possible.

This study is aimed at identifying some of the ways in which Aboriginal students are able to succeed and graduate in teacher education so that these ways may be acknowledged and fostered. Given the pressing need for Aboriginal teachers, coupled with the fact that more Aboriginal women than men serve in the teaching profession, it is important to learn about what Aboriginal women have to say regarding teacher education. In order to make it more feasible for Aboriginal women to complete post-secondary education, it is important to identify their needs and preferences, and the systemic barriers to learning which they face. These tasks have yet to be adequately addressed as indicated by the very small representation of existing literature on Aboriginal women and education.

Although the study offers but a small sample, perhaps findings presented here will be useful to those who are striving to create more effective university programs for Aboriginal students. In the context of Aboriginal teacher education, it is hoped that such knowledge may add to the growing body of information which ultimately will contribute toward increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in all sectors.

*NOTE: Several terms used in the thesis bear definition. The term “Native” was used interchangeably with “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous” and “First Nation(s)” to refer to those who are of Aboriginal ancestry, whose ancestors were the first people of this land now called North America. The term “Anishinabe” (the Ojibwe term for themselves, meaning “the People”) is used interchangeably with “Ojibwe,” who are referred to in the United States as “Chippewa.” The term “Anishinabe kwe” is used to refer to Ojibwe women.*
CHAPTER 2

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The current study examines the phenomenon of the adult Ojibwe woman in teacher education: their background before coming to a program of teacher education; their experience in the post-secondary school environment; their interaction with the teacher education environment; and their motivations, expectations and future plans pertaining to teaching. There were four parts to the study: (1) interview(s) with eight Ojibwe women nearing completion of a program in Aboriginal teacher education; (2) follow-up telephone interviews after the participants had received transcripts of the first interview; (3) a demographic data questionnaire; and (4) a journal and field notes which I, the researcher, kept during the two years students were in the program and more intensively throughout the interview process.

From my own work in Aboriginal education over the past two decades I have noticed that Aboriginal students seem to approach post-secondary education differently than do non-Aboriginal students. My work has also brought me into close contact with Aboriginal students experiencing both difficulty and success in completing their chosen programs in post-secondary education. As the majority of the students in programs I have worked with have been Aboriginal women, and as there is little written information available regarding Aboriginal women in post-secondary education, their experience is of particular interest to me.

As a program planner it has become increasingly important to me to gain a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal adult learner so that I might more fully appreciate their educational needs. Theories of adult learning and development excited me as they provided new perspectives which could perhaps provide a framework for understanding the Aboriginal adult learner.

A review of the literature has only partially assisted me in gaining a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal adult learner. I needed to hear first hand accounts from Aboriginal learners themselves. This meant gathering information through interviewing Aboriginal students and reading Aboriginal authors' works, as well as reviewing other literature of possible relevance to the experience of the Aboriginal adult learner.
Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter I describe the design and methods used in the study. My reasons for using a qualitative research approach are presented first, followed by an outline of the design and steps used in the study. The chapter is organized as follows: research approach; design of the study; data collection; data analysis; and data presentation.

Research Approach

In order to understand the experiences of others, one must become more aware of their views and their own perceptions of their experience. The ability to listen to others as they tell their stories is crucially important, along with the ability to understand what their meanings are, keeping in mind that the researcher unavoidably brings biases and preconceived ideas to the endeavour. How does one gain access to the perspectives and experiences of another? While I can never hope to do this completely, there are some research methods which I believe may yield richer results than others. While traditional quantitative methods are useful in providing breadth and scope to findings, qualitative methods may be more useful in providing access to the depth and ‘texture’ of individual lives. Qualitative methods, phenomenological in nature, encourage the researcher “to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations... [and emphasize] the subjective aspects of people’s behaviour. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of the subjects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 31).

In qualitative inquiry, the main data collection instrument is the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Fetterman, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tesch, 1990). The issue of the researcher’s role in her or his research has been discussed in the literature. The positivistic perspective requires the researcher to have objectivity. Berg and Smith (1988), among others, reject objectivity and note the impossibility of researchers separating themselves from their research. In their view, this separation of the human from the work of the human reflects a technical-rational (positivistic) view of the world and limits inquiry.

Methods which do not stress detachment and objectivity but rather allow for the researcher’s presence in the research may permit the open identification of researcher biases and preconceptions which colour the findings. Peshkin (1988) states that subjectivity and values are always part of any writing and any research. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) write about the need to “allow the self back into the process of knowing” (p. 136). According to these women writers, this process is particularly important “if the women have learned the
lesson of 'weeding out the self' which our academic institutions so often teach..." (p. 136). Their outlook is compatible with my own orientation. During graduate school some of my work was on finding my own voice, and I was encouraged to do so there, in contrast to my previous university experience stressing academic abstraction. In addition, the courses and programs which I have participated in designing support an approach in which the self is included in the academic experience.

Finally, the choice of method must relate to the nature of my research questions. A qualitative approach, using an open-ended questionnaire and one-to-one interviews allowed me to use a somewhat structured approach while at the same time being open to participants' words, nuances, interests and understandings.

Design of the Study

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 54) state that "design" is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how to proceed. Along with Mishler (1986) and others they support a fairly loose design, while Miles and Huberman (1984) agree with the importance of being open to what emerges but support a more structured design. In the current study I structured the data gathering process but also included open ended questions in the interview schedule and encouraged participants to talk about additional things in their interview should they so choose.

There were four parts to the study: (1) interview(s) with eight Ojibwe women nearing completion of a program in Aboriginal teacher education; (2) follow-up telephone interviews after the participants had received transcripts of the first interview; (3) a demographic data questionnaire; and (4) field notes which I kept during the two years students were in the program and more intensively throughout the interview process. The interviews with the eight Ojibwe women formed the main part of the study and yielded more than three hundred and seventy-five typed pages of transcripts. The follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to ascertain that the transcripts reflected accurately what the participants had intended to say, to give participants an opportunity to add or change things as they wished, and to allow the researcher to ask participants to clarify aspects of their comments in transcripts. The questionnaire provided supplemental demographic background and family history. The journal and field notes provided a record of my personal observations pertaining to the study.
Data Collection

i) The Location

Participants lived in various settings both on and off reserve. In order to contribute to their maximum comfort level, I asked participants where they would prefer to meet. Individuals had different preferences with some choosing to participate in interviews in their homes, while others came to my home, asked me to come to their workplace, or met me during a university summer session on campus. Establishing comfort and trust with my participants was important to me. As Gurney (1991) notes, it may be more difficult for researchers to develop rapport and trust if they are different from the participants with respect to race, gender, values or beliefs. Haig-Brown (1995), and Cathro (1993), both non-Aboriginal teachers and researchers, write about working cross-culturally, and in their words “across borders” with Aboriginal people. Things which helped me to “cross borders” with my participants were my previous experiences with Aboriginal people, my involvement with the participants over their two year program, reading related literature, my shared gender, humour, and my attempt to demonstrate an ethic of caring and respectful equality in my interactions with participants. The establishment of rapport and trust has been identified as particularly important in qualitative research. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) say, “The ultimate credibility of the outcomes depends upon the extent to which trust has been established” (p. 257). Allowing the participants to decide where we met was one of the things I did in an effort to establish trust born out of respectful relations.

ii) The Researcher

While collecting the data I was employed in a post-secondary program for Aboriginal students. I informed potential participants that I was a doctoral student in Education at the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, University of Toronto. I also told them that I was interested in learning more about Aboriginal experience in post-secondary education as (1) there is little written information on the Aboriginal adult learner and (2) it would inform and benefit my work.

iii) The Participants

The eight Ojibwe women who participated in my study were enrolled in the same program of teacher education. All participants were volunteers. I approached two class groups and explained the nature of my study, handed out an information sheet, and asked any students who were interested in participating to see me after class. Ten volunteers contacted me. Nine of the ten were women, and of the nine women, eight were Ojibwe and one was Mohawk. In order
to have a somewhat homogeneous sample and thereby avoid skewing the data, I chose to interview only the eight Ojibwe women. I thanked the male volunteer, explained my dilemma and asked if he would like to be interviewed informally, which he declined. At the invitation of the Mohawk woman student, we held an informal preliminary interview which provided me an opportunity to practice the interview process, to determine whether the interview schedule was worded clearly, and to ascertain whether, in her opinion, there were any other interview questions I should ask pertaining to the study. This was a very helpful step. Based on her feedback I made several minor adjustments to the questions. No new questions were suggested. She was provided with a taped copy of the interview for her own interest.

iv) Instrumentation and Data Gathering Processes

As mentioned above, four methods were used to gather data: (1) interview(s) with eight Ojibwe women nearing completion of a program in Aboriginal teacher education; (2) follow-up telephone interviews after the participants had received transcripts of the first interview; (3) a demographic data questionnaire; and (4) field notes which I kept during the two years students were in the program and more intensively throughout the interview process.

Initial, brief meetings were held with each volunteer when they first came forward to determine their willingness to be interviewed, inform them of the parameters and requirements of the study, and determine places and times to meet. I kept an informal check list to make sure that I had covered the following topics with each volunteer: the nature and use of the study; the nature and scope of their involvement in the study; the purpose of a signed consent form; their freedom to request that portions of the interview be omitted from the study and/ or withdraw from the study at any time; an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity; indication from them that they would be willing to review their copy of the transcript and provide feedback if necessary; and a plan to meet and conduct one or more interviews.

In my design of the interview schedule, I relied upon the literature, my own experience, and feedback arising from the preliminary informal interview. Questions fell into three groups. The first grouping included questions addressing areas which I was personally curious about. I found the comment made by Bogdan & Biklen (1982) to be personally true, that “One’s research agenda is developed from a number of sources. Often a person’s own biography will be an influence in defining the thrust of his or her work. Particular topics, settings, or people are of interest because they have touched one’s life in some important way” (p. 56). The first group of questions included those I had formed while working in Aboriginal post-secondary programming.
The second grouping included questions related to the literature on adult learning and development. The third grouping included open-ended questions as I found a need to allow answers I did not know the questions for to be addressed in some way. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the un-askable questions when they say that an interview is dependent upon “(1) the extent to which one can, or cannot, form a priori questions to be asked and (2) the extent to which one does or does not know, in advance, what one does not know” (p. 159).

Questions pertaining to adult education/teacher education were then sorted into one section chronologically, and questions pertaining to adult development were sorted into another section chronologically. Open-ended questions were included in each section. At the end of the interview schedule a final question asked participants if there was anything else I needed to know. Please refer to the interview schedule, Appendix A, for a list of the specific questions.

A demographic information sheet was also developed in order to gather information about the participants’ backgrounds and family educational history. This sheet was distributed beforehand and collected when we met for the interview.

Interviews were conducted in July and August of 1994. These interviews lasted from about three hours to over seven hours and were held in one to three sessions. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were audio taped. Before the interview commenced, participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B). I reminded each participant of their right to opt out of the study at any time, and of their right to ask that information they disclosed be omitted from the study. Each participant then filled out a demographic information sheet (Appendix C). I discussed the purpose of the study, and asked that participants feel free to interrupt the questions at any time should they have comments or questions of their own.

In conducting the interviews, I learned that it was important to respect the participants’ silences. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) concur, silences enable participants to organize their ideas and to direct the conversation more effectively. Many times participants would sit for a lengthy period of time before answering. I also tried to use active listening techniques involving four kinds of listening responses; clarification, paraphrase, reflection and summarization (Cormier & Cormier, 1979). Sometimes I repeated participants’ answers to them to make sure that I was hearing them correctly. In several instances where I did not understand what the participant meant, I apologized and asked them if they could phrase their response another way. In one instance I telephoned a participant immediately after the initial interview to clarify a point.

Field notes were kept throughout, for as Brookes (1992) says, “I knew that I must find
out how I as ‘the researcher’ was located in the research process” (p. 11). Fetterman (1989) asserts that field notes are essential for detailed analysis. I found that field notes were particularly useful in recalling context when reflecting on interviews at a later date, and in providing a formalized way to ‘include myself in the research process.’ Field notes were kept in journal fashion and included the details of the setting, my perceptions during the interview as well as recording personal insights. Usually notes were written immediately following each interview. A personal journal was kept throughout the doctoral process where I intermittently wrote about the grueling and sometimes exhilarating experience of creating a dissertation.

Interviews were transcribed, resulting in transcripts varying in size from thirty pages to over seventy pages, totalling over four hundred pages in all. I did much of the transcribing. I then reviewed all transcriptions including those completed by a hired transcriber while simultaneously listening to the audiotapes to ensure that the participants’ words were accurately heard, typed and punctuated. Each interview transcript was copied and sent to the participant with a request that they review it and note any changes, omissions or additions which they would like to address in a follow-up interview. Due to the size, some participants did not review the transcript in entirety, but indicated that they were satisfied with the interview and had nothing to add or change. One woman asked that all grammatical errors be corrected. Another added information on her current activities.

Data Analysis
i) Steps in the Analysis

Merriam (1988) defines data analysis simply as “the process of making sense out of one’s data” (p.127). My process of data analysis involved first a general reading through each transcript and questionnaire to gain an overall impression of the material. While reading each transcript I listened to the corresponding taped interview simultaneously in order to verify accuracy and to augment my impressions by hearing the tone and cadence of the speaker’s voice. During this process I kept notes in a journal to record my impressions and thoughts pertaining to the material. Keeping notes was one way to record my interpretation of the participants’ meanings. I was keenly aware of the fact that as a non-Aboriginal, I was viewing the transcripts through the lens of a self situated in a culture different from that of the participants. Being culturally and racially different from the participants, I can never totally achieve an ‘insiders’ perspective. Having acknowledged this limitation, it became important to endeavour to
understand their meanings as fully as possible. One way of honouring their meanings was to be aware of my own interpretation of them; maintaining such awareness was enhanced through keeping field notes.

After a general reading, the transcripts, along with memos and field notes were coded. Codes were then grouped in files and analyzed, whereupon broader categories of information emerged. The start list of codes (Miles & Huberman, 1984) was used when reviewing transcripts a second time, upon which new codes were added and some items recoded as additional concepts and themes emerged. The start list was expanded and then reduced as codes indicating individual concepts were identified and gradually clustered to form broader themes.

I then returned to the literature to review work dealing with some of the themes which had emerged. After this focused review I read the transcripts a final time and added new codes corresponding to themes in the literature.

All sorting and coding was done manually, using a method of manual coding and sorting described by Miles and Huberman (1984), who define codes as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 56). Although I investigated several software programs which could be employed in the sorting process, I found that the sorting of data by topic on the computer tended to decontextualize the research and that it was important for me to read the text as I was sorting by topic in order to situate comments within the larger flow of conversation.

I purchased two accordion files into which I sorted quotes on the concepts and issues which formed the themes. Using the code list I examined the results of the categorized and clustered data and began to draw conclusions. Out of this process I developed an outline for the findings and discussion chapters including sections, headings and subheadings to use in presenting my findings.

A final stage in the analysis came after I had written a draft of the findings and discussion chapters in which I presented, interpreted and drew conclusions from the data in relation to the theory. At this point, I set the chapters aside for a time, finding it helpful to step back from the analysis as Kirby and McKenna (1989) and Lofland and Lofland (1984) recommend. I also circulated draft sections to my committee members for feedback. When I had spent some time away from the thesis, though thinking about it and living with it, I reread the chapters and rewrote or reorganized sections which were overlapping. Incorporating comments from committee members and my own reflections, I edited and reorganized the findings to condense
the thesis size, and to concentrate on those themes which were most prevalent in the research and which had particular significance for me. Though assembling a lot of information merely to edit it out later could have seemed futile, I was comforted and amused by Harry Wolcott’s (1990) comment regarding ‘tightening up’ written work—“Some of the best advice I’ve seen for writers happened to be included with the directions I found for assembling a new wheelbarrow: *Make sure all parts are properly in place before tightening*” (p. 47). The thesis expanded and contracted as the writing process unfolded, and throughout writing the findings and discussion I found it necessary to periodically return to the data in order to verify points.

ii) **Reflections on the Process of Analyzing the Data**

Berry and Dasen (1974) contrast “emic” and “etic” perspectives, with an emic perspective defined as one in which participants are described either individually or as groups and an etic perspective defined as one in which participants are examined and compared. In an emic perspective, the structure emerges from the research; in an etic perspective, the structure is created by the researcher. In an emic perspective, patterns emerge from the data; in an etic perspective, the researcher tests predetermined patterns via hypotheses (p. 16). Like Berry and Dasen (1974), Miles and Huberman (1984) note that categories or classes used by the analyst may be preexisting or may emerge as the researcher reviews the data. In addition they claim that categories “emerge from an interaction of theory and data” (p. 219). My process of analyzing the data used an emic perspective primarily, that is, concepts emerged from the data and participant’s comments were explored in depth but not compared with other groups. However, while most of my categories were emergent, there were also a few categories which were inspired by the research and so could be termed preexisting. Like Spradley (1980), I found the research process to be non-linear, with the data both providing answers and inspiring further questions which provoked a return to the literature and then a revisiting of the data. Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 21) refer to this non-linear style of analysis, saying that in qualitative research the activities of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification proceed concurrently, with some or all of these going on throughout the study.

In analyzing the data I tried to be cognizant of the ways that my own perceptions and values directed my interest, and how this could weigh aspects of what the participants had to say in ways which they would not have emphasized themselves. Honouring the insider’s perspective was helped by recognizing, as Fetterman (1989) concurs, that there are multiple realities operating simultaneously in perceiving incoming stimuli.
Data Presentation

i) Including the Participant’s Voice

One of the ethical questions which plagued me in this study is the danger of inadvertently misappropriating the participant’s voice, particularly as my participants are Aboriginal, and all too often their words have not been heard or have been used for ends not their own. As a non-Aboriginal researcher, extra vigilance is required in order to prevent misappropriation of another’s meaning through cultural misunderstanding. In *The Predicament of Culture*, J.A. Clifford (1988) looks at the activity of reporting on other cultures from an historical perspective. In discussing the evolution of ethnography as a field, from the period of high colonialism around 1900, through what he calls post colonialism, to neocolonialism after the 1950’s, he notes a shift in the general understanding of what constitutes ‘good’ ethnography (p. 10). In the early days of ethnography, the Western world could call itself the “unique purveyor of anthropological knowledge about others” (p. 22). The period of high colonialism saw a perception of the other in terms of dominant power relations and the perceived racial superiority of the dominant culture. By the mid-1930’s the general consensus had been reached that “valid” anthropological abstractions were to be based, wherever possible, on intensive cultural descriptions by qualified scholars (p. 25). More recently, the view has shifted again, acknowledging that even qualified scholars have cultural and historical biases. Clifford (1988) links what he calls “the breakup of monological authority” (p. 52) in ethnography and anthropology with the end of colonialism and a shift in power relations. Lately there has been a growing awareness that cultural images are created “in specific historical relations of dominance and dialogue” (p. 23). He says that anthropologists, ethnographers and those reporting on other cultures “will increasingly have to share their texts, and sometimes their title pages with those indigenous collaborators for whom the term ‘informants’ is no longer adequate, if it ever was” (p. 51). Now, Clifford argues, it is most important to recognize that “all authoritative collections...are historically contingent and subject to local reappropriation” (p. 10). Brodribb (1984, p. 89), among others, shares Clifford’s (1988) concern, pointing out that to understand Aboriginal women’s changing roles, we must deconstruct male-centered Euro-Canadian interpretations of history, thus clearing the ground for a perspective that begins from the standpoint of the Aboriginal woman.

This more recent approach to the process of learning about peoples from other cultures emphasizes respect, collaborative works with participants, and a conscious effort not to control the outcomes of a study. As Bowen (1964) says in her account of coming to know people of
another culture "Above all, I must learn to accept, with what patience and humility I might, the fact that their voice, not mine, was final" (p. 99).

Clifford’s comments (1988) have implications for this study. His words alert me to the importance of critically evaluating work by non-Aboriginals about Aboriginals regarding the assumptions and approaches used. It is no longer acceptable to take reports of other cultures at face value, even when those reports come from first hand experience. And works which are based on second hand experience are to be questioned even more stringently regarding their legitimacy.

An interesting example of the shift in standards for measuring the acceptability of cross-cultural reporting is illustrated by Ruth Landes’ (1971) work The Ojibwa Woman. Though at one time considered an authoritative work on the male and female life cycles of the Ojibwe of western Ontario, Landes’ (1971) book is a prime example of literature written by non-Aboriginals from second hand experience, and falls short when issues raised by Clifford (1988) and others are considered. Landes (1971) reported in broad generalities about the experience of western Ontario Ojibwe women, yet based her work on only seven months of observation and used the 1930’s accounts of a single woman who was herself of Cree descent as a primary source for her information (pp. v-vii). At no point in the book did Landes indicate that what she was reporting was not Ojibwe experience, but was in fact a non-Aboriginal understanding of a sole Cree woman’s perspective on Ojibwe experience. Further, there is no indication that those Ojibwe people whose life stories she told had the opportunity to check her information for accuracy before it was published. Rather, all information was accepted second hand and related at face value. In spite of these shortcomings, Landes (1971) did not feel the need to emphasize the limitations of her study, which suggests that she may have been a product of the era in which anthropological abstractions were considered valid when based on intensive cultural descriptions by qualified scholars (Clifford, 1988, p. 25).

In order to present a more balanced perspective, it is important to include the works and words of Aboriginal peoples themselves in reviews of literature pertaining to Aboriginal peoples. Legitimate and ethical research should also include, as Clifford (1988) suggests, those works which recognize Aboriginal participants as full participants, having freedom in response, access to the data, and the opportunity to vet their own words before they are made public. As William Perry (1986) says “after all, if one wants to understand the meanings one’s informants make, it is well to give them the opportunity to make some” (p. 188).

Finally, British philosopher J.W.N. Watkins (cited in Bowen, 1964) argues that valid
reporting requires including the observer in the observed, for only by bringing the human person back into scientific reports may the reader share the intellectual adventures of the author, and hence truly understand their hypotheses and forms of thought. Including the observer in the observed means "taking the reader into your confidence by explaining how you arrived at your discovery" (p. xi), and using what Bowen calls "an autobiographical style" (p. xi) which acknowledges the orientation and assumptions of the author. This style of writing may be particularly useful for non-Aboriginals reporting on Aboriginals, as it acknowledges the presence and perspective of an outside observer in that which is being reported. For this reason, I have written this thesis in the first person, a departure from more formal academic writing often written in the third person.

In this study several measures were taken in an effort to avoid the pitfalls of cultural misappropriation. First, during the interviews I practiced 'active listening' as frequently as possible, repeating to the participant what I heard to verify that my perception was correct. In addition, I asked for clarification when I did not understand the participant's meaning. Second, when the transcripts were complete, I sent a copy to each participant accompanied by a follow up telephone call to make sure that their words were transcribed correctly and that they were still comfortable with what they had said in the interview. Third, as much as possible, I endeavoured to identify my own biases and assumptions as I undertook the task of analyzing the data for meaning. Fourth, in presenting the data in the findings outlined in Chapters Four through Seven, I used direct quotes from the participants themselves as much as possible, in order to illustrate the findings in their own voices. Finally, upon completion of the writing, I contacted participants and discussed the thesis with them, then sent them custom made summaries of thesis findings and discussion which focused on their individual contributions to my learning.

ii) Other Ethical Considerations

In collecting, interpreting and presenting the voices of my participants in the study, I adhered to the ethical guidelines established by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and adopted by the University of Toronto. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, tasks to be accomplished, benefits and possible shortcomings. All participants were informed of the following ethical guidelines: that pseudonyms would be used to protect anonymity; that participation was voluntary and the participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time as well as the right to refrain from responding to interview questions should they so choose; that all information gathered from them would be treated
confidentially, with raw data kept in locked files which only I would have access to; and that all data would be destroyed after formal acceptance of the completed dissertation by the University of Toronto. Participants signed two copies of an informed consent form (see Appendix B for a copy of this form), one of which they kept and one which I kept.

iii) Locating the Data in the Writing

Information was gleaned from the demographic information sheets, the interviews, and from follow up telephone calls during which unstructured mini-interviews were conducted aimed at determining the veracity of the interview transcripts. Analysis of the data resulted in the identification of four broad themes and corresponding sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes emerged from data gathered in the interviews and follow up telephone calls. They are as follows: (1) relationships with others as an Aboriginal teacher education student (sub-themes presented in Chapters Four and Five); (2) survival and success as an Aboriginal learner (sub-themes presented in Chapters Four and Five); (3) personal change during the teacher education program (outlined in Chapter Six); and (4) I am Anishinabe kwe (sub-themes presented in Chapters Four through Seven). Other data includes demographic information gleaned from surveys. This information is presented in Chapter Three to introduce study participants by providing a profile of each one.

To connect the findings more closely with the literature and discussion, chapters present pairs of subheadings (findings, then discussion) addressing findings and corresponding discussion under each sub-theme. As one way to address the fact that I am a researcher working "across borders" as discussed in this chapter, heavy emphasis is placed on the participant’s own words in chapters Four, Five and Six, to ensure that their voices are heard, and to illustrate, support and substantiate my statements. In addition, selected quotes from participants as well as from published authors are presented in italics at the beginning of thesis subsections. Italicized quotes are provided both to highlight pithy comments and to recognize that these participants, like published authors, are authorities on their own areas of experience reported in this thesis.

Conclusion

The emergent (emic) approach used in my thesis places heavy emphasis on participants’ own words, as one way of ensuring that their voices are heard first hand. The following chapters present findings and discussion resulting from my research, and necessarily include my own perspective as a researcher.
CHAPTER 3

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Introduction

In this chapter, personal profiles for each of the participants are provided, with the information for these profiles collected primarily from the demographic data questionnaire which was circulated to each participant in 1994. Demographic data is provided to introduce the study participants and includes background information which the interviews did not reveal.

Organization of the Chapter

Information provided here includes each participant’s age when interviewed; their prior life, work and academic experience; information pertaining to their family; background leading up to their application to a program of Aboriginal teacher education; and their intentions upon graduating from the teacher education program. In two cases, supplementary questions were asked to fill gaps in the data, or to clarify what the participant had indicated on the questionnaire.

Profiles are provided alphabetically by first name. Participants provided information as they wished, with pseudonyms used to protect anonymity.

The Participants

i) CELIA(age 35):

For seven years prior to the interview Celia has held several positions working with children including acting as tutor escort for two years in a First Nations school. She has also worked for an employment agency. Celia has a background in social work and was working for an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program while she attended the program. She has been interested in teaching and working with children for several years, and is particularly interested in work with First Nations people.

In addition to an undergraduate degree with a major in Native Studies, she has completed a program in health science preparation, has U.S. army dental specialist training and a number of university courses in kinesiology and physical education. In total, she has spent twenty-one years in formal education.

Recently married at the time of the interview, she has an eleven year old stepson whom
she is very fond of. Neither of her parents have attended university, with her father having completed grade twelve and her mother grade ten. However, her parents strongly encouraged her to attend university.

Celia is a status member of an Ojibwe First Nation community but came to live on her reserve after university, and considers herself to have ‘a foot in both the Native and the non-Native worlds’ having lived on and off reserve and having mixed race parentage (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). As she said

I’ve had a lot of experiences, because I didn’t grow up on the reserve, I have different experiences that I can bring along with me to bring to the children. To let them know that there’s a lot of things in life that they can be exposed to or experience which would just enhance their... enhance their being.

Celia speaks English as a first language, and has in addition limited facility in Ojibwe, Spanish and French.

She applied to Aboriginal teacher education because she is interested in teaching and/or working in a counselling-related capacity with her own First Nations community upon graduation.

ii) **CLARA (age 36)**:

Clara has worked for more than a decade and during her program of teacher education has been employed in an education-related position requiring her to work with groups of children on a regular basis. She works in an educational resource centre, intending to continue in this position. She is particularly interested in increasing her skills to work with children who come to this centre.

Clara has completed two years of a program in business administration and several correspondence/distance education courses towards certification in this area. She finished grade thirteen, having a total of sixteen years of formal education at the time of the interview.

She is married and has two children aged ten and four years. Since enrolling in the program she has experienced a recurrence of some debilitating health problems which interfered with her schooling to some extent. However, she is continuing in her work and her roles as student and mother. While Clara’s father completed grade three, her mother has grade twelve and some post secondary education including certification in social work. Ojibwe is Clara’s first language in which she demonstrates great facility.

Clara lives and works in her own First Nation community and plans to continue working
in the position she currently holds. She is the only one of the participants who clearly stated that she does not intend to teach in a classroom setting, preferring to work with children through the avenues of her current work.

iii) **DORIS (age 29):**

For the six year prior to her interview Doris has worked in three First Nations organizations, and has been in education-related positions for the past three and a half years. Two and a half of these years have been spent working for a First Nations board of education in a tutoring position. She has continued to hold this position while a student in the teacher education program. She has been interested in teaching since she was a child, when she helped her mother who was a teacher in duties related to her job.

Doris entered the program with an undergraduate degree majoring in Native Studies. In addition, she has Life Skills certification and a certificate in Micro-computer Operation from a business college. After high school, she completed seven years of post-secondary education for a total of nineteen years of formal education.

At the time of the interview she was married (common law) and has two children at home as well as two step children whom she cares for on a part time basis. Since the interview, she has married. Several members of her immediate family have been involved in teaching-related pursuits, with her sister enrolled in a Master’s degree program, and her mother having completed a B.A., B.Ed., M.A. and Special Education certification. Her father has completed grade six.

Doris is a status Ojibwe who has lived on her home reserve all her life with the exception of the years she was pursuing post secondary education programs, when she attended school programs on campus away from her reserve. She speaks English as a first language and is fluent in Ojibwe.

Being admitted to a program of teacher education fulfilled a long standing dream, and she said that she is greatly looking forward to teaching in her own community upon graduation.

iv) **EDNA (age 31):**

When Edna entered the program she was not employed, having attended post-secondary education programs for the past seven years. For the year before she became a student, she worked as a supply teacher. This work and her father’s encouragement influenced her decision to apply to a program of teacher education.
She has completed a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Psychology and Native Studies, and was in the last year of a Bachelor of Social Work degree at the time of the interview. In addition she has taken courses in Nursing and Graphic Arts. In total, she has completed twenty-two years of formal education.

Edna, recently married, has two children. She comes from a family where both of her parents were involved in education. Her father completed a certificate in education, and her mother graduated from a one year certificate program as a Classroom Assistant. Her parents are very supportive of her efforts in post-secondary education and of her aspirations to become a teacher.

While Edna is a status member of an Ojibwe First Nation community, she has lived off reserve while attending a variety of post-secondary education programs over the past seven years, and was living in an urban centre at the time of the interview. She spoke of returning to live and teach on a reserve after graduation. She speaks both English and Ojibwe.

v) **FLORA (age 41):**

Flora has spent the past seven years working in teaching-related positions, first as a Native Education Counsellor for five years and recently as a teacher in a remedial education program in a First Nations school, continuing to work in this position throughout her teacher education program. While working in this position she learned of the program in teacher education and decided to apply as she has always wanted to be a teacher and the program seemed to suit her need to live and work on her reserve at the same time as attending school.

Flora has post secondary certification in Native Counselling, Life Skills, and Computer Literacy as well as having completed a study program in Non-Traditional Jobs for Women. In addition, she has taken three university courses which she did not complete, and is pursuing further training in Native Counselling. She had completed seventeen years of formal education including grade twelve.

Recently separated from her husband, Flora has no children living at home. Neither of her parents attended university, her mother having completed grade twelve and her father grade ten. She has lived on a reserve for most of her life and currently lives and works on reserve. She speaks English and has some understanding of Ojibwe.

Completing a university program in teacher education is a source of great pride for Flora, who intends to use her expertise in a teaching position when she graduates. At the time of the
interview she indicated that she would possibly continue to work in her current capacity teaching remedial education.

vi)  **JOAN (age 51):**

The eldest of the students enrolled in the program, Joan has extensive work experience. For seven years prior to the interview, she has been employed as an Education Counsellor for her First Nation Ojibwe community, a position held throughout her studies in teacher education. She has worked with Aboriginal children and their teachers as well as her First Nation education authority for over a decade. She applied to teacher education with a strong preference for a program she felt was suited to Aboriginal community needs.

Joan has completed a Native Social Counsellor Program. At the time of the interview she was enrolled in both teacher education and a college Theology program. Including grade twelve she has thirteen years of formal schooling.

Married and the mother of two daughters, aged eleven and seventeen, Joan is interested in children and their development. Neither of Joan’s parents completed university, her mother having finished grade eight and her father, grade ten. Although five of the eight participants indicated that they spoke and/or understood Ojibwe, Joan and Clara are the only two participants who named Ojibwe as their first language. Joan’s understanding and use of the language is extensive. She lives and works on her home reserve, and is respected and recognized as an elder by the other students in the program.

Joan intends to continue to serve her community upon graduation, and in addition to thinking about continuing in her work as Education Counsellor has explored the idea of teaching adults or going on to further education programs.

vii) **SUSAN (age 35):**

When Susan entered the program she had been working in an education-related position for three years, which she continues to do. For eleven years before that she coordinated a program in the cultural arts (Ojibwe). She enrolled primarily because the opportunity was available to her in her community, and because she wishes to gain additional credentials in her field. She has training in Native counselling, Life Skills, career and academic counselling and the applied arts. Susan has completed grade twelve and had fourteen and a half years of schooling at the time of the interview.
She is married and has one son who was ten at the time of the interview. She comes from a large, close family. Her mother had attended residential school and has a grade three education. Her mother has been very supportive of her efforts to attend university.

Susan understands Ojibwe and has lived and worked in her First Nations community for her adult life. Interested in teaching in the classroom, she also mentioned that the teaching credential would equip her better to do her current job as an Aboriginal Education Counsellor through her education authority.

viii) **TANIA (age 37):**

Tania has been a full time university student since 1990 and was continuing as a student at the time of the interview. Before this time she was employed as a medical secretary in an area hospital. For three years prior to applying to the program she had been interested in becoming a teacher, but had not applied elsewhere as she believed that the competition to be admitted to teacher education would prohibit her admission. While enrolled in the teacher education program she was finishing the last course toward her undergraduate degree specializing in child psychology. She has now graduated with a B.A. She also has a two year secretarial diploma and college course credits in Word Processing, Sociology, Interpersonal Relations, Guitar, French and Native Studies. She completed grade twelve and has eighteen years of formal education in total.

She was married at the time of the interview and has since separated. She has three children who were aged five, three and one year at the time. Her parents did not attend university, her father having completed grade six and her mother grade ten as well as a two year social work diploma program. Though both of Tania’s parents are of Aboriginal ancestry, they and she have only recently regained their status as registered members of an Ojibwe First Nation community. Tania has lived off reserve most of her life and was living in a large urban centre while attending the program. She speaks English.

Upon graduating Tania is very keen to begin teaching as soon as possible, though she indicated that she would like to return to school for further education at a later date. She is interested in teaching either on or off reserve and looks forward to teaching with enthusiastic anticipation.
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<th>Work</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th># Yrs. of Ed.</th>
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<td>Gr. 12, Native Social Counsellor Program</td>
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<td>16 2</td>
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CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

The eight Aboriginal women I interviewed were closely involved with their family and community life. Relationships factored in participants' reasons for applying to a program of teacher education, in their learning and success while in the program, and in their intentions upon graduation. In response to questions pertaining to factors which helped or hindered their learning, relationships were mentioned in numerous capacities, some of which are discussed in Chapter Five pertaining to program features, and Chapter Six pertaining to personal change.

This chapter presents participants' comments about some of the ways in which relationships with others and the community outside the formal contexts of academia impacted on their lives as adult learners. Along with reflecting upon how they had been affected by others, participants spoke of their own personal agency in affecting others and in working for positive change in Aboriginal education. Findings are analyzed using sources from the literature on adult learning and Aboriginal education.

Several terms used here bear definition. The term "community" is used by participants primarily to refer to their individual First Nation communities, but for some, was extended to include fellow learners in the program, Aboriginal people in general, and for one, a global community encompassing non-Aboriginal people too. Participants' comments discussed below provide specific references to the term "community" and show how it was used.

The term "adult learner" is important to clarify as numerous authors (Chickering, 1981; Cross, 1981; Kidd, 1973; Knowles, 1978; Kolb, 1984; Marineau & Chickering, 1982; Morstain & Smart, 1977; Solman & Gordon, 1981) have addressed the question “Who is the adult learner?” It is difficult to reach agreement on the definition or the description of the adult learner as the criteria for qualification is different from one source to another. While Marineau and Chickering (1982) state that “an adult is someone who has assumed major responsibilities of adulthood” (p. 14), MacFarlane (1991) points out that

it is often convenient to choose a biological age as a benchmark. More often than not in academic institutions the term ‘adult’ or ‘mature’ student refers to a person who is at least 25 and has been out of the formal academic setting for 3 or more years. (p. 16)

For the purposes of this study, using biological age as a benchmark is useful. Classified as adult
learners by virtue of age, the youngest of the participants was twenty-nine years old and the oldest fifty-one years of age at the time of the interviews. Not all participants had been out of school for at least three years, and so could not be termed 'mature students' as defined in some school calendars.

The term "interpersonal" is used to refer to relationships with one or more others.

**Organization of the Chapter**

Chapter sections outline both findings and discussion pertaining to participants' comments demonstrating the high value these Aboriginal teacher education students placed on interpersonal and community relationships. Sub-themes under the general theme of relationships and adult learning are discussed below, as follows: (1) motivation to enrol in a post-secondary program, findings and discussion; (2) family and community, findings and discussion; (3) mentors and role models, findings and discussion; (4) multiple roles of self, findings and discussion; and (5) relationships, teaching and cultural continuity, findings and discussion.

In this chapter, as in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, findings are presented using direct quotes from participants. Participants' comments are unaltered with the exception of omitting repeated words and terms like "um" so that the sentences are more concise. Names and places have been replaced with general terms inserted in square brackets, to protect anonymity. While there is some unavoidable intrusion to the flow of conversation in presenting quotes as excerpts taken from the whole, I have employed two strategies aimed at reducing the inherent violence to reported conversation found in using terse quotes which present ideas out of context. First, I have included background information pertinent to the quote, as needed, and second, I have quoted substantially. In some cases, such conscientiousness has resulted in rather lengthy quotes with related comments connected by [...] or [...]. It is hoped that including full quotes will give the reader the opportunity to hear the voices of the participants more adequately.

In this chapter, as in Chapters Five and Six, sections and sub-sections addressing findings and discussion are introduced by a heading followed by an italicized quote. While these quotes do not reflect the content of the whole section which they precede, they serve to highlight particularly salient comments on an important aspect of that section. Both participants' and published authors' quotes are highlighted.
Relationships: Findings and Discussion

1.1) Relationships and Adult Learning – Motivation to Enrol in a Post-secondary Education Program: Findings

*I could see the kids. It's in their faces. That's the first thing I thought of when I thought of becoming a teacher, is seeing all these eager little faces...*

- Susan

Participants were asked the following interview questions pertaining to their decision to come to a program of teacher education:

1) “What influenced your decision to come to a program of teacher education?”
2) “What were the most important factors involved in your decision?”
3) “How did you actually make the decision to apply?” and
4) “Why did you choose this particular program?”

In response to these questions, participants indicated numerous factors which motivated them to enrol in a program of teacher education. These factors included family influence and childhood aspirations (Joan, Doris, Edna), career interests (Celia, Doris, Edna, Flora, Joan, Tania), community-based delivery of the program (Celia, Doris, Joan, Clara, Susan), an affirmative action admission policy (Doris, Flora, Tania), opportunity and availability (Flora, Susan, Clara, Tania), respectability of the institution offering the program (Edna Flora, Susan), lifestyle considerations (Tania, Flora), Aboriginal children’s need for Aboriginal teachers (Celia, Flora, Joan, Doris), love of children (Susan, Flora, Celia, Joan, Doris, Edna), that it was a ‘Native program’ (Celia, Joan, Edna), and love of learning (Celia, Flora). Some participants had more than one reason for their decision to come to a program of teacher education.

Participants were motivated to enrol in a program of teacher education by other people, including role models, as discussed in section 3) on mentors, and in response to community need, as discussed in section 5). Motivators pertaining to program features (including community-based availability, respectability of the institution, that it was a ‘Native program,’ and an affirmative action admission policy) are discussed in Chapter Five. Provided here are relationship-linked factors which motivated participants to enrol in the teacher education program as follows: love and concern for Aboriginal children; the influence of family and friends; and lifestyle and career considerations.
1.1.1) Love and Concern for Aboriginal Children:

Six of the eight participants (Susan, Flora, Celia, Joan, Doris and Edna) were motivated to become teachers by a love of children, as well as by their awareness that Aboriginal children needed Aboriginal teachers (Celia, Flora, Joan, Doris). As Susan said, when asked what appealed to her about being a teacher:

I think it’s the way, um, when you see kids and the kind of respect that they have for somebody who is teaching them, and what the teacher can do for that student as far as just opening their minds up to everything; to everything around them and to everything that’s out there. I could see the kids. It’s in their faces. That’s the first thing I thought of when I thought of becoming a teacher, is seeing all these eager little faces? I thought, if I could do that, to kids, then I would like to.

When asked the same question, Doris had a similar reply, saying “I enjoyed being around kids, not only just in being around them, but enjoyed a lot of the challenges that they can give you.” Similarly, Joan said “I enjoy working with young people and in the back of my mind has always been that desire or ambition to become a teacher...” Celia responded

...the fascination of seeing or helping children to learn, is, like it’s so rewarding in itself, you know... That to me is appealing and it also gives me at the same time a chance to learn. I enjoy learning, and so I think those are the strong points... to be able to help children learn...

Flora, Celia, Susan and Clara were motivated to seek learning which would increase their understanding of children or, as Clara said, “...to try and figure out the reasons why they’re doing what they’re doing.” These participants wished to gain knowledge and skills in order to work with children more effectively. As Flora said

I worked with children in [a First Nation community] for more than ten years, and working with them I noticed a lot of problems, and everything seemed to point me to the fact that they couldn’t read. And I used to be so frustrated that they didn’t know how to read because I thought if they knew how to read then everything else would sort of fall into place and they would be able to learn a lot better. So I remember always saying “I wish I was a teacher and I could teach them how to read. I wish I was a teacher!” And I used to always say that.

While all six women indicated that they were furthering their education for the benefit of the children whom they were working with or would teach, Celia, Doris, Flora and Joan indicated that a primary reason for wanting to teach was their specific desire to serve the needs of Aboriginal children as Aboriginal teachers in their own communities. Celia’s awareness of
Aboriginal childrens’ need for Aboriginal teachers led her to pursue teacher education:

I’d seen the opportunity there and the need for – because at that time I think there was, predominantly there was two, three Native teachers in our school out of maybe six positions. (KATE: Wow.) You know and that’s, to me it should be more than that. (KATE: All the kids are Native.) Yeah. There’s a very low percentage of non-Native kids. But I think – that was one decision too, to see that there was a need for [pause] to have Native educators.

This concern for the children and desire to serve came as a result of the connection and sense of responsibility these participants felt for their Aboriginal community – as Joan expressed it,

...and I also have this great desire to, as it were, leave something with the young people and to be a part of their learning experience to help them in their learning environment. And because I work with the young people and I know them really well here I thought that, well, if I get my teaching certification, then I would be able to help them even more than I am now.... I thought if I could get into a teaching position – had my teaching certificate, I would want to be able to do some of those things to help the Native children. And because I see more Native children, some of them are losing... we’re losing them, you know, because they are not getting what they should be getting in terms of their teaching and so forth. So I thought if I could be part of that group or have an influence on them; anything that makes the education of the young people better education for them, that certain something I would be working for.... And I thought that if the Native teacher programs could do this, more of positive things of teaching in their graduates then we would be at least reaching some of our students and making sure that they receive the type of education that should be given to them so that they are aspiring to something, you know, specifically. The whole thing is that kids are good at one thing or another, and to work on that and make them feel that they’re part of society, that they are giving to society.

For these four women the perceived need of Aboriginal children was a powerful motivator.

Education was viewed as a way to address community problems. As Celia said,

like self esteem in kids... They are always so down here, you know? We’ve got to start bringing them back up here, so they become strong again... because they’re the future leaders and what’s it going to be like seven generations from now, you know, if we don’t start making them strong? And we have to start healing our communities. It’s not going to happen over night but... I think that if we remember where we come from and if we can build upon that and start building, then the healing is going to happen. More and more people become strong again, strong communities that are proud of who they are and, and know what they want and where they’re going.... The ultimate for me is to see no alcoholism or drug abuse or sexual abuse or any kind of abuse or wife battering or anything, or child – you know, that would be an ultimate thing to see. But I think it’s going to take a long time. But if we, we can be proud of those things that we already know and who we are, that is where the strength is going to come from....
All six participants viewed teaching as an activity which would benefit children in some way and wished to become a teacher for this general reason.

1.1.2 The Influence of Family and Friends:

Family or friends influenced Doris, Clara and Edna to enrol in teacher education. Edna remembered her father’s influence saying

...I was a teacher’s assistant for one year. And at that time I was at a stand still when my father approached me and asked me what I wanted to do, if I had any plans... he had asked me if I wanted to upgrade myself or to return to school to get my degree, and then go on for my teacher’s, teacher’s certificate and education degree. So what, at that time what was appealing to me was my father’s encouragement and the idea of wanting to become a teacher.

Doris was motivated to teach by childhood aspirations. These aspirations were stimulated by her mother who was herself a teacher. Clara recalled how her decision to apply to the program was influenced by other people, saying “Well I have a lot of friends and family who were also interested in it, and I guess maybe they had some influence.”

1.1.3 Lifestyle and Career Considerations:

When asked about the most important factor involved in the decision to come to a program of teacher education, Susan, Doris and Tania indicated that they were motivated to choose teacher education because a career in teaching offered a lifestyle which would benefit their families. Among the most important factors in her decision, Tania listed financial security and a lifestyle which suited family life. She said

Security. If I were able to do this I would be, um, my family would be secure.... Financial security.... There’s a lot of fringe benefits like going to work at the same time as my kids are going to school, having some time off in the summer to sort of regroup and relax and do some nice family things without the high pressure courses. You know? Working close to home. I wouldn’t have to go far. I could... yeah, it would have to be job security, you know, ‘cause my husband was laid off....

Susan stated that she was motivated to enrol in a part time program which would allow her to work at the same time and thus maintain an income. Similarly, when asked why she chose to enrol in this particular program, Doris said

I think that it was going to be offered right here on [mentions name of community] and my family at the time, and, um, my present job. If I was able to work at the same time. ‘Cause financially, my whole situation – my spouse is unemployed, so I have to be the one bringing in the money I guess.
Celia, Doris, Edna, Flora, Joan, Tania and Clara mentioned career interests as motivators for their decision to pursue teacher education. Clara said she wanted to improve her skills in doing her present job, which involved teaching — “...to know how to do that aspect just in case. Because we’re such a small staff here and a lot of times we require any staff member to talk to [visiting students] about their culture. And so... I thought it would be good, an asset.” Tania said “I wanted to work with kids, either emotional or behavioral problems” and felt that teaching was the right career for her. Edna was influenced by previous work experiences, saying I truly enjoyed the time I spent supply teaching at the school and I thought I wanted to do more than I was doing. It’s like, I wanted to know how the lesson plans were set. It was the whole idea was just appealing to me, just spending the time with the students.... Also, I was very much interested in education of Native people, and the children.

Participants were motivated to enrol in the program by a number of factors, some of which are discussed in further chapters. Of all factors, those which could be linked to relationship-oriented concerns were named by all eight participants.

1.2) Relationships and Adult Learning — Motivation to Enrol in a Post-secondary Education Program: Discussion

Learning (and any other behaviour) is essentially an attempt by the person to satisfy his needs as he perceives them.

- Roby Kidd

Participants in this study were like other adults in having more than one reason for engaging in a learning activity. Alan Tough (1979), who studied adult learning projects, observed that while adult learners are most frequently motivated by the pragmatic desire to apply the knowledge or skill, almost everyone he interviewed about their learning project had more than one reason for learning (pp. 38, 51).

Like other adult learners (Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980; Cross, 1981; Kaplan, 1982; Kolb, 1984) study participants were particularly interested in completing their teacher education program because doing such would be useful to their lives. My findings pertaining to lifestyle and career considerations support the literature (Griffin, 1977; Kidd, 19xx; Kolb, 1984) which indicates that adult learners have a pragmatic approach to learning, and that learning is enhanced when it is viewed as relevant to their lives. Griffin (1977) points out that adult learning is enhanced when people’s expectations are that the learning outcomes will have meaning for them
and their lives. There must be congruence between learning goals (which are relevant and useful to the learner’s lives) and learning outcomes. Kidd (19xx, p. 7) speaks of “the three R’s,” relevancy, relatedness and responsibility. He says that adults engage in study when they feel that the area of study is part of their life and destiny, and when they understand how what they are studying relates to their experience and who they are. Kidd (19xx, p. 7) also contends that adults have a responsibility to act on such learning once they have acquired it. Participants’ interest in attending a program which would better equip them to work in Aboriginal education was linked with their view of themselves as Aboriginal community members with a role to play in education.

Significantly, six women indicated that a strong motivator was their love and concern for Aboriginal children. What struck me about participants’ comments here was the great expression of commitment from these women for their communities’ well being, and how rarely I have encountered such a pervasive expression of commitment to community in my own experience with non-Native teacher education students. Similarly, a review of related literature revealed that such an overarching commitment is not represented in the literature on motivating factors for adults returning to school. While there is general agreement that adults return to school because they are motivated to do so (Cross, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Knowles, 1978; Morstain & Smart, 1977), the literature gives varied accounts regarding the reasons for personal involvement and motivation in learning. Morstain and Smart (1977) identify five types of adult learners: the non-directed; the socially directed (those for whom school provides a social forum); those looking for an outlet and/or stimulation; the career-directed who choose education for utilitarian and occupation-oriented reasons; and those looking for a change in lifestyle. Houle (in Cross, 1981, p. 21) identifies differing motivations depending upon the type of adult learner: goal-oriented learners are motivated to complete a series of learning episodes in order to reach a predefined end, while activity-oriented learners are motivated to learn for the sake of doing something, and learning-oriented learners wish to engage in learning for its own sake. Kaplan (1982), who did a study of women over thirty in graduate or professional programs found that the real objective of these women was to change their identity and to develop a previously neglected part of themselves whether intellectual or vocational. Cleave-Hogg (1985) found that adults who attended full time university programs were motivated primarily by the need for intellectual stimulation and vocational accreditation. Patricia Cross (1981, pp. 54-57) notes that survey data documents differing motivations correlated with levels of education and socioeconomic status, saying “As one proceeds up the educational and socioeconomic scale, the dominant orientation changes from
a strictly utilitarian emphasis to a greater stress on knowledge having value in its own right" and also, that "learning what will improve one’s position in life is a major motivation" (p. 96). From these few references it becomes apparent that adult learners return to school to meet a variety of needs both externally dictated (such as the need to become more prepared in one’s vocation) and internally dictated (such as the need to expand and develop the self).

Those occasional references which address my findings (that these Aboriginal women were motivated to enrol, graduate, and apply their teacher education program learnings for the betterment of Aboriginal children and their communities) include Roby Kidd’s discussion (1973) demonstrating that there are two main views of human motivation: "need reduction" and "positive striving" (p. 101). The efforts of my participants to become agents of positive change through education could perhaps fall under the heading of "positive striving." Their motives were also similar to those identified by Solman and Gordon (1981, cited in MacFarlane, 1991, p. 17) whose study of adults involved in post-secondary education revealed that one of the three most common motives was “to help others in difficulty,” while the other two were “to be an authority in my field” and “to develop a philosophy of life.”

Focusing on personal applicability, David Kolb (1984) says succinctly that adults ‘pay attention to what interests them’ (p. 108), while Ingalls (1973) points out that “adults are ready to learn something which will help them solve basic problems arising from their work and social roles.” Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) note that “adults are highly motivated to learn in areas relevant to their current developmental tasks, social roles, life crises, and transition periods” (p. 103). For study participants, their perceived social role was to work for the well being of their communities which were of great personal importance to them.

Roby Kidd (1973) says that “Learning (and any other behaviour) is essentially an attempt by the person to satisfy his needs as he perceives them” (p. 129). Jacka (1997) states that once individuals identify a need or a problem and a way to address it, “there is a strong driving force set up in the individual to resolve the problem” (p. 12). For these Aboriginal women, there was a need to follow a profession which would satisfy their community needs, their career needs, and/or their financial and lifestyle needs. Seeking teaching qualifications in response the relationship-linked concerns of their lives was one way in which participants in my study took action to satisfy their needs as they saw them.
2.1) **Relationships and Adult Learning — Family and Community Support: Findings**

"...my Mom was probably the most supportive person in my family as far as school goes, you know. She just understood.

- Tania"

2.1.1) **Positive Effects:**

The value these Aboriginal teacher education students placed on interpersonal relationships was also apparent in their comments about factors which affected their learning and success as adult learners. Judging by the frequency of mention, support was an especially important factor contributing to the survival and success of these Aboriginal learners in their post-secondary program. The importance of support in its various renderings was mentioned so many times that it has been included in several separate sections of this thesis. All told, participants made support-related comments a total of one hundred and forty-four times.

Positive relations with significant others outside academia such as husbands and family were mentioned by five participants as factors assisting them to succeed in post-secondary education. The support of husbands was especially important for four participants. As Celia noted,

"...I think my spouse was a real good influence too. Because he always, he always knew the way I talked and he said... "You want to go into education – go for it!" And I thought that was really neat because I was afraid that he wouldn’t... uh, agree to it? So, and like he’s been really – there have been times – but most of the time, the majority of the time he’s been really supportive and has carried on the household chores while I was gone...

Support or the lack thereof came in the form of concrete acts such as assuming additional household and child care responsibilities. Support also came in the form of the husband’s attitude toward his wife as student. Edna mentioned attitudinal support, saying her husband had expressed “how glad or happy they are that I’ve come so far.”

Susan indicated that family helped her get through her university program, saying “...one of the most important things ...in knowing that I’m almost nearing the end of the course has been the family support.” Being an extended family member, in particular a daughter was important to many of these women. Five women mentioned their awareness of this family role. Tania recalled

"...my Mom was probably the most supportive person in my family as far as school goes, you know. She just understood. She never once challenged the fact that I already had a job, that I already went to college ten years ago. Um, she never challenged that. She just accepted it. This is what I wanted to do, and she never tried to persuade me that it was too difficult or I had other things to do or that I had kids, a husband, a house. Gosh. She just accepted it, where I didn’t have that type of feedback from a lot of sisters and brothers. I
have a big family and a lot of them, even now, I can’t talk to them about school because we
don’t have school in common....

Susan also mentioned that her mother’s attitude helped her. As she said
My Mom also was or is very helpful and always giving me little encouragements here and
there. My Mom has got a, I think she’s got grade three education. She was in a residential
school. So she had very bad experiences. But she, she’s never discouraged any of us from
school. And you know, she’s just been quite the opposite in giving us, all of us,
encouragement, and the encouragement I guess to keep on, keep on with your studies and
get as much education as you possibly can.

Susan’s mother’s perception of her influenced her own sense of self in a way which helped her
stay with her studies. As she said
My mom always told me I was a very determined person and also very stubborn. If there
was something I wanted, she said if there was anybody who could do it and who could go
through and get it, it was me. And, she told me this I think when I got out of high school.
And I’ve always remembered that. And maybe she is right. I am very stubborn, and I am
very determined when I want something, I will do my best to get it or to achieve it, so.

Celia, Flora and Joan indicated that they were sustained by the communities which they
were investing their efforts in. The importance of a bond with community was apparent in the
comments Celia made when she was asked what furthered her learning in the program. She said
[the] support of my community, like um, the administration, the Chief and Council, um, my
education counsellor.... When you’re doing something you don’t realize how nice it is to
hear people talk or say well, they’d like to extend congratulations to our future teachers and
that’s going to be Celia, or something. And it was such a good feeling to hear that at the
Education Awards [banquet], and wow, you know it’s almost a reality and they’re already
congratulating you, you know! So I mean, I think it was ‘cause all the kids were there too,
and there was positive feedback from them, like they were clapping and stuff and that really
makes you feel good. And so I think support was a really, you know, and I – if it wasn’t
for the band supporting you and... the outlook of our Chief [who says] “I don’t think that
we should hinder anybody or try and make education hard for anybody.” You know, so
that to me... is a good thing.

Without the type of community support extended by participants’ superiors at work and
in band government, attending school was a much more difficult undertaking. As Flora said when
describing her process of deciding to come to the program,
...I went to my Chief and I said “Do you support me? Because if you don’t I’m banging my
head against a wall and I don’t need to.” And he said yes. So I guess, ah, support from my
Chief was also very helpful.
Reciprocally, participants felt the need to 'give back' in some way. Doris noted that her community had invested in her education, and she felt a responsibility to provide reimbursement. As she said

Luckily [the First Nation Education Authority] were supportive of us.... But I'm hoping later on... I'll get a teaching job and get a better pay. And I'll end up paying them back some of what they forked out.

As well as 'giving back' in monetary ways, participants stressed the importance of investing themselves and their talents for the good of their communities. In Susan's words,

...if there's something I could do for my community, then that's where I would like to be. I would like to remain working for the People.

Other participants were inspired to succeed by remembering that their efforts were for the good of their families. As Tania said

...thinking of the benefits to me and my family over all, long term, helped. You know, even if it was hard to leave and hard to get out and get these things done, you know, I was never, ever doing it just for me because I'm not a single, I don't want to stay single. I don't exist just for me. I've got four people attached to me. You know? So because I have this, my family, it's helped knowing that I'm going to.... in the long run it's going to help all of us. So I have that in my mind whenever I would hear, you know, "Why are you doing this?" I would immediately respond "It's for us, it's not for me, it's for the family." It's because I want to improve [my son's] life that I'm leaving him now, so I could go and finish that last lecture and come back. So that helped.

The presence of significant others impacted upon participants' educational efforts. In particular, the many informal ways in which support was extended to participants through their relationships with others provided encouragement and strength as they navigated through their two year program.

2.1.2) Negative Effects:

Conversely, valuing community and interpersonal/intrapersonal relationships threatened participants' success as Aboriginal adult learners in some ways. Participants mentioned other people and negative community influences which hindered them schoolwise.

Negative community influences were perceived as interfering with participants' education, with two participants stating that band politics had discouraged them in education. Due to such politics their funding was somewhat threatened which caused them anxiety. One participant recounted an incident in which she was discouraged from taking an educational program in another school as a staff person there did not get along with her family. One
participant felt that “success depends upon who you know” and saw admission to university as dependent upon the administrators in that institution. Four women stated that there were individual(s) who had discouraged them in school. Two were concerned that their education program was inferior based upon comments others had made about it, while one of these stated that the negative perception of others had created difficulty in her work and hindered her learning. She said

...if things don’t go smoothly right away, then if things don’t work out, if I have a little bit of difficulty in the program. I mean it’s going to come back and say “Well you should have taken that in teachers’ college” or “You should have gotten that,” or, like I don’t think [school staff are] going to be as supportive as if you went to the regular – maybe because they have to go to the regular teachers’ program.... I found it really hard to take that they were criticizing this course...

In these concerns, participants expressed an awareness of the power of others in moulding their lives.

Other hindrances to learning included the stress and demands on participants because of work as well as family responsibilities (discussed in section 4). While finances were not mentioned as a barrier to learning (perhaps because all participants had Indian Status and may have received funding to attend school from their education authorities), six of the eight participants were employed while attending the program.

Three participants commented that lack of support or the demands placed upon them by their family hindered learning as they were expected to be primarily a wife and mother rather than a student (two participants) or had this expectation of themselves (one participant). When asked what hindered her learning, one participant said

Well basically my husband hindered me.... He was never, ever really supportive of [me pursuing my teaching credential] and he never, ever thought it would materialize.... He never helped. I would still have to get supper if I’m in the middle of something.... And every time I went out it was a big problem for him and he let me know by his facial expression.... he made a big deal about it.... Well, the same way the kids helped the kids hindered. I may have had the long term goals for them but on the other side, their needs, and I missed a few classes because [my son] was sick or [my other son] hurt himself, or I had to rush [my son] to hospital because he cut his finger.... So just motherly things. That being pregnant was a definite hindrance! I wasn’t feeling good, you know?

For some participants, success in school came despite obstacles which were presented to them by others who touched their lives in a regular or intimate way, and did not value their efforts as students.
2.2) **Relationships and Adult Learning – Family and Community Support: Discussion**

*The most important aspect of our world is people, and it is with and through people that our most important learnings are achieved.*

- *A. W. Combs*

The literature on adult learning has frequently acknowledged the importance of relationships in ways which study participants’ experiences corroborate. Both positive and negative impacts were honestly explored in our discussions, and find corresponding echoes in the research. With respect to some of the negative impacts reported by participants, the literature indicates that for adults in particular, there are a number of outside-of-school factors which may impede learning. Relationship-linked barriers to learning may include such problems as lack of adequate financial support, day care problems, resistance from other family members, or personal feelings of inadequacy (Cross, 1981). For study participants, these “situational barriers” (Cross, 1981) created obstacles to learning in some cases. Women’s struggles over conflicting norms are reported by many researchers (Chickering & Havighurst, 1981; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Rockhill, 1991) and are discussed more fully in section 4. For these participants, their roles as family members both helped and hindered their learning.

Family connections were very important to participants, who mentioned the roles mothers, husbands and extended family played in supporting their learning efforts. Aboriginal educator Sandra Delaronde says that “it is important to acknowledge and develop the role that extended families and kinship ties have to play in all aspects of education.” She states that education “occurs not just in schools, but home in the community. A holistic approach to education is necessary” (National Round Table on Education, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, First Draft, July, 1993, p. 3). Support is recognized as important to educational success by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), which mentions the need to include “Aboriginal support systems – peer networks, family activities, financial, personal and academic counselling, or day care services” (p. 501) in education offerings for Aboriginal students. The Commission points to the need for more linkages between the home and the school, as well as recognizing the primacy of the community collective in Aboriginal initiatives.

Scholars on women’s learning ventures (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Hayes & Flannery, 2000) point out that “Women’s learning cannot be understood if the social contexts in which it takes place are not taken into account. These contexts offer complex and sometimes conflicting learning opportunities for women...” (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 91).
Correspondingly, participants emphasized the various aspects of their social contexts including relationships, which impacted on educational endeavours both positively and negatively.

3.1) **Relationships and Adult Learning – Mentors and Role Models: Findings**

*I just think it's really, really important that we have a lot more [Native] people in education...It's very important that those children see good role models in the school. Good ones...*

* - Flora

Another example of the high value which these Aboriginal participants placed on interpersonal relations is found in the many references they made to role models who had inspired their lives in a variety of ways, and to their own perceived responsibility to be a role model for other Aboriginal learners.

3.1.1) The Importance of Mentors in Their Own Lives: Findings

Six of the eight participants (Celia, Joan, Flora, Clara, Doris and Susan) mentioned that role models and mentors had encouraged them in their own roles as students. These role models were other Aboriginal women, teachers, an Aboriginal librarian, and Aboriginal professors who encouraged them either directly or by example. Aboriginal role models who had successfully completed post secondary education programs themselves provided inspiration. Celia described how an Aboriginal mentor had made a difference in her life, saying

...she was from [an Ojibwe reserve] and my mother was from [a different Ojibwe reserve] and they both lived in [the same city] and we always used to go over to their house for dinner and visit. And I remember she had a piano and just a house full of books and... her mannerisms were so gentle and kind. And you know, she was always willing to – well you know how kids are, they want to play the piano and they want to play whether they know how to play or not! And she just always had so much, yeah, so much patience. And then as I got older, like I never thought of her for a long, long time until I started going to school and I had to go the library and, lo and behold, there she was, you know! Like through my high school years I didn’t even think anything about her. [It wasn’t] until after I had graduated from high school and was into university and college that I realized you know, how important she was to me. And when she spoke to me she always asked me about my family and you know, she thought it was just really great what I was doing... As far as a role model, yeah, as far as a Native role model, I would... say that she was influential. Because it was always non-Native, majority non-Native people living, well – in the cities that I came from, you know there was all kind of different racial people, different racial backgrounds. But she, like to relate to your own, your own ancestry and to see somebody that, that is successful at what they are and enjoy what they’re doing is, like it never really dawned on me until I was out of high school how much I enjoyed her company when I was
small, you know, growing up. Yeah, so I think it was influential to know that, you know, that she was doing something like that and to see that role model...

These six participants mentioned nineteen times that role models had inspired their own life choices. Doris said

I chose to be a teacher, I guess looking at my Mom, my Mom being a role model, and throughout the years she’d always get me to help her out. And she’d get me and she’d always bring me up to the school and like, help tidy her files. And I always thought being a teacher was a pretty neat job to do, and I enjoyed working with kids as well... I liked being the leader I guess.

Joan’s approach to education had been affected by role models -
I can already see myself going into another program or another avenue of education and trying to pick up more knowledge and skills, because I think the better prepared one is, then the better teacher that you are. And I see this from the role models that I’ve been in contact with over the years where they never stop learning. It’s always an ongoing process and I think that if you stop learning or if you stop participating in education programs, then I think you’re depriving your students of something.

Joan also indicated that her decision to become a teacher was inspired by teachers who had been her mentors. She said

I was seventeen when I first went to boarding school. But even before that I think, we had several excellent teachers on the reserve, and I remember even back then thinking this is something I might like to do, to be involved in the education system. Maybe not specifically a teacher at that time, but working again with young people. That’s always been uppermost in my mind is working with young students. So when I went there, and like I said, I saw some role models there too, I think I kind of reinforced my own thinking that eventually some day I would like to be a teacher or instructor. They did influence me a lot, and, uh, I could say I thought about it a lot. And when I went to work as a counsellor I knew I would be dealing with students, but that was still in my mind, that somewhere along the line when the right time came I would take it upon myself to see if I could enrol in a program. I think... teaching or instructing young people has always been something that’s always been there....

KATE: What influenced your decision to come to a program of teacher ed.?
JOAN: I guess I’ve had role models in teachers, and I do work in the three or four different Boards and I noticed teachers who are really exceptional teachers and, uh, they have been very good role models for me. And if I wanted to become a teacher I would want to be able to do what they have accomplished with their students.

Doris’s future educational plans were presented in the context of another family member who served as a role model. As she said
I figure if I don't get that [job] then I'll try for my Master's. My sister's getting her Master's through [a university]. Right now. So she's working on that now. So I'll just try to follow in her footsteps.

After Clara became an adult, one significant person changed her long-standing negative attitude to school. Describing this person, she said

...we used to live with this older couple, and she was a teacher, a very dedicated teacher and... she was always learning. And she was always taking courses. And I think it was from listening to her saying, oh, she said she will always take courses, and how she seemed to look at it. Like that it was so exciting. And I think maybe that's kind of where I changed my attitude.

Five of the eight participants (Celia, Flora, Edna, Clara and Doris) expressed a love of learning. Some participants like Doris, whose mother had her Master's degree, had early role models who pursued learning opportunities as adults. Three participants linked their own love of learning with those who had inspired it, stressing the importance of models or mentors in this regard. Participants also noted the importance of encouraging a love of learning in students, and how role models had helped them learn how to do this. Flora indicated that such learning was one of the most significant aspects of her experience in the program. As she said

The course with [names instructor] helped me to... develop a knowledge of how to teach children to love to read. To know that, that's half the battle. Children have to want to read before you can teach them how to read. And also it taught me to develop things on my own... for an example, I'll just tell you a brief little thing that I do. Here's a short paragraph about the Grand Canyon, and it might say that the Grand Canyon is two miles down, and a city across, and two hundred miles in length. And so I just take them – I say "Can you imagine that? Just imagine there's a land, and you just go along and all of a sudden the land goes down, straight down for two hundred miles!" I say "That's really, really deep, and you go across a whole city, go from here to Toronto in length!" .... So I can take just a little paragraph and I can just take off it with. Whereas other teachers might just go ahead and read that, you know? But because of being in this course or... I guess from [names instructor], just the way she was... You had to love to learn, to love to read when she used to sit there with her book and she'd read it to us and she'd show us all the pictures. And she told us about the authors. We all know what authors to look for now... [The course was significant] Because it's been so helpful and it's made me develop all these different things. And [the instructor] didn't say "Now you take this and do this," you know? She just kind of made you excited about reading and if you get excited about reading then you can just take a paragraph and, you go!

Mentors figured in numerous other education-related capacities. Flora, Doris and Celia
stated that someone had encouraged them schoolwise. Flora, Celia, Doris and Tania indicated that Aboriginal professors had positively influenced their progress in the program as well as their sense of self as an Aboriginal educator and what was possible for them. Flora cited the presence of an Aboriginal educator as the main factor prompting her to stay in the program at the outset. As she said:

My first experience, a memorable experience, was [mentions Aboriginal professor’s name]. When he saw that I was going to leave at twelve o’clock he came in and he just started talking about all this Native stuff, and I was fascinated! And when I left the program [I thought] “Oh! I want to be a Native professor and fly from province to province, where like [mentions Aboriginal professor’s name] to me is, oh!” That was very memorable. Just seeing [mentions Aboriginal professor].

KATE: Is that the reason you stayed past twelve o’clock?
FLORA: Um hmm.

The significance of mentor teachers is discussed further in Chapter Five as related to program features.

The challenges which participants faced in becoming students and teachers were mitigated by those Aboriginal individuals who had gone before them and showed them the way. Their mentors, many of whom were also Aboriginal women, guided them and gave them examples of how to be themselves. References to their mentors are of particular interest as they provide examples of model Anishinabe women in these participants’ eyes. Other Aboriginal people who were teachers and learners positively influenced participants’ attitudes and decisions regarding education.

3.1.2) The Importance of Acting as Mentors for Others – The Teacher as Mentor: Findings

Just as having mentors and role models was important to them personally, so these Aboriginal women acknowledged the importance of serving as mentors for the next generation of Aboriginal students. The impact of other Aboriginal role models on their own lives inspired them to serve as mentors for others. As Aboriginal educators, they saw themselves as potential role models and agents of positive change within their own communities. Celia spoke of her position as both mentored and mentoring in this regard, saying:

I think it’s... Native education for Native people by Native people. I guess that’s probably a cliche that we heard a lot of times, but I think there’s some truth to that, you know? To know, like you have your role models, just like we are for the kids in our own communities; that people are going to be more accepting of their proteges or their role models saying “This is what we offer and this is what we’d like to have you teach and, or this is what we’d like to have you learn.”
Flora had this to say:

I feel more strongly now than ever that we need more Native people in the school.... I wish that there was more Native teachers. I wish that I would be able to somehow let them know that... that they're able to do it.... it's like I'm given this training; how many years do I have? It's like I don't have enough time. I don't have that many years to give, whereas if I were to do that when I was younger I would have had more years to give. And I don't have all those years. And I just think it's really, really important that we have a lot more [Native] people in education.... It's very important that those children see good role models in the school. Good ones....

Seven of the eight participants indicated that their decision to enrol in a teacher education program had been influenced by the recognition that Aboriginal children need Aboriginal teachers and role models, and their wish to address that need by becoming a teacher.

Four of the six participants (Celia, Flora, Joan, and Doris) who mentioned having mentors who influenced them also saw themselves as mentors or role models or wished to fulfill a leadership role. Celia learned the importance of becoming a role model herself from her own experience in having a role model who was influential in her life. As she said

....as a Native role model, I would, yeah, I would say that she was influential.... And that's how I see that the kids, um the kids today need that too, and like in their schools, their Native educators to be there for them.... because most of my teachers were non-Native teachers from other – I don't think I've ever had a Native teacher – besides my mother [laughs], you know. Like in the school setting, never, never. It was always non-Native teachers or from other nationalities....

Of the six participants who thought that they could be changed by others’ influence, Flora, Susan, Celia and Doris believed that they too could change others by their own influence. For Clara, one individual could exert a powerful influence. As she said

...the teacher can make the difference. And depending on their perceptions toward it and where they come from, if they found learning to be exciting, they're going to carry that on - or pass that on to their students. Or if they know how to get the students to change their attitude.... I guess it does have to do with their personality. But I think if they, maybe if they learned from those kind of teachers, maybe they would have changed their attitude.

KATE: So what you're saying is their experience and their personality influences
CLARA: how they teach.

Mentors provided examples of skills which could be used in teaching. As Celia reflected, I think back when I was in school and how much, like there are a couple of teachers that I can think right off the top of my head who are really influential to me, you know, and, it wasn't necessarily in a school setting either though, you know. It was people that, that I
met on the outside that also taught me, like the Elders and my grandmother and, just to be able to have the patience to, to do that and to appreciate, you know, to appreciate to see the children learn and help them along the way and to help them to grow in their thinking. And hopefully what you said or what you helped them to do will always be something that they’ll reflect on too.

Doris, Celia, Flora and Joan stated that they believed it important for Native community members to teach children in their own community. As Flora explained it,

I want to be encouraging. I want to be a role model in the school for the kids. Most of the kids live on the Reserve and they don’t see any of the outside life and, um, they don’t see any Native people working in the school. They don’t see Native people working anywhere else but on the Reserve. And by being a teacher in the school I’m showing them, and they also know that I’m going to school, so they know that education is a life-long experience and I want to show them that. And, show them that learning can be fun and, I’m helping to build up their self esteem and, um, giving them interest in education.

For Flora, the awareness that there aren’t a lot of Native teachers and that as a teacher education student she was a role model to the students on her reserve helped her to succeed in her education program. Like Flora, Doris hoped to model positive attitudes towards education for her students, saying “You have to have incentive to keep going. And that’s, and I think I have it, and I’m hoping I’ll be able to offer that to the kids, to really to love learning and to keep on going I guess.”

Doris and Clara, who both felt that it was important to know themselves as Aboriginal and viewed education as a way to do this, also stated that they felt it possible to instill a stronger sense of self as Aboriginal in their students. In all, six participants (Doris, Clara, Joan, Flora, Celia and Edna) looked to themselves as Aboriginal teachers to add their own Aboriginal culture, learning styles and traditions to classroom content. This was a role which could not be filled in the same way by a non-Aboriginal teacher. As Edna described it

...they require someone from... their own culture to start relating to them in other ways.... These [Aboriginal] students, they have English as their second language. And there were ways that, there were barriers, like the teachers were, their teaching methods were great.... I learnt a lot from the teachers that I worked with, but yet there was still a barrier. And probably a barrier between the teacher and the students.... I’d say I wanted, I felt that I, myself would at least be able to help at least some Native students as best as I could.

Celia echoed Edna’s sentiments, saying

Yeah, and that I can bring [cultural content] and being of Native ancestry that I, you know, that I would be able to bring that to them, through that channel of being a Native teacher.
And that, to me is important, you know, I think, when I look back at my own education to see that people like, there is a librarian that I, that I have encountered, she is a friend of my mother’s and she’s always a real influence to me because of what she did and that she was Native and she was the librarian, I thought it was so neat! [Laughs.] ... to know that you can help the kids like that, you know that you can be their – I don’t know, ‘cause when you’re working in the school you see them and they’re so receptive to their own, to their own people. And to know that you’re from their community and what you’re there for, that it’s really true friendship that develops before anything else, with those kids, and I think that’s really important to have too, as a teacher, to make sure that you’re their friend before you expect anything out of them, you know, that you – they have your trust and all those things of significance.

Five participants were already consciously acting as role models through their own activities as teacher education students which showed others how to be students. Susan and Clara were particularly cognizant of the impact their role as student would have on their own children and made a point of emphasizing this role. Susan was aware of the example she and her husband provided to their son and others, who saw them as students. As she said

I always used that excuse on my son. “Mommy still’s in school and Dad’s going to school.” You know, stress the importance of education... ‘cause right now he’s so lazy to do his homework. And, “Well, look at me, I’ve got to do my homework and Dad’s doing his homework.” He looks at us and then he gets to work [laughs]. So that kind of helps, you know that he sees us that we’re still in school plugging away at our studies. And it also motivates him as well....

Flora, Celia, Susan and Doris felt that their role as students and educators might have an impact on the Aboriginal children they worked with, or other Aboriginal children who watched them fulfilling these roles. As Susan said

There have been a number of times when a student has asked me “Are you taking courses?”...They question it. And I always tell them that it’s so interesting. You know, to find out what’s out there. It’s so interesting to find out about the world and what you can do, and so I use that a lot.

Commonly, participants understood the ways in which acting as mentors were important in encouraging and strengthening their students’ efforts to succeed in school, to continue in school, and to make positive choices for their future. Participants were aware of the roles they could play as Aboriginal teachers in strengthening Aboriginal culture, and made sense of that effort in terms of what it could offer for others and Aboriginal community to come.
3.2) **Relationships and Adult Learning – Mentors and Role Models: Discussion**

...the importance of mentorship in helping students learn and apply the rules of the culture of power. These rules must be specifically stated and students must then be supported as they practice applying these rules. My research supports Gee's (1989) claim that mentorship is needed for students to become insiders in a Discourse.

- Celia Haig-Brown

Participants in my study are like other adult learners in valuing interpersonal mentoring relationships. The positive influence of mentors on life choices and learning has been explored by many authors (Daloz, 1990; Fagan, 1987; Sheehy, 1976) examining different professional venues. Daloz (1990) notes that “the relationship between mentorship and learning is a crucial one for educators...” (pp. 205, 206). Much of the literature on mentoring concentrates on institutionalized roles (Cohen, 1995) rather than on the informal mentoring relationships which develop outside academia or the work place. However, those acting in formalized mentoring roles who “empower their students by helping to draw out and give form... call out the best parts of their students” (Daloz, 1990, p. 206) may serve a similar function to informal mentors who inspire others.

Mentors played important roles both in providing knowledge and in modelling behaviour which participants aspired to. Like mentors in formal learning contexts, participants’ role models served “as midwives or guides rather than solely as sources of knowledge” (Daloz, 1990, p. 206). Aboriginal role models inspired participants’ life choices and demonstrated options which they subsequently chose for themselves. Significantly, the majority of mentors for these female participants were themselves women. Authors (Hayes, 2000; Berry & Traeder, 1995) indicate that mentors may be particularly significant for women as they negotiate the roles in their lives, especially if women are to challenge traditional gender-based roles. “Relationships with women are especially important because we need other women as models, models whose circumstances are close to our own... We look to women and their experiences in order to start defining ourselves as human beings” (Berry & Traeder, 1995, p. 4).

In showing a preference for learning through observing role models, participants were honouring traditional Aboriginal ways. In its discussion of the ways in which traditional knowledge is passed along, The Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) states “Traditional knowledge is also transmitted through one-to-one instruction and by modelling correct behaviours” (p. 526). Participants’ observations coincide with Stairs’ (1994) findings about the importance of modelling as an Aboriginal approach to learning. As she says “The learning often occurs without
conscious intention or awareness... Learning seems to take place through observation...” (p. 9). Stairs (1994) describes teaching approaches of Indigenous teachers, which often involve more use of personal narrative, less question-and-answer, and more opportunity for learners to observe the activity being modelled by the teacher and engage at their own pace, and to develop particular relationships one-on-one with the instructor.

The importance of a good teacher, mentor or role model is recognized by numerous authors (Cathro, 1993; Daloz, 1986; Gee, 1989; Haig-Brown, 1995; Rose, 1989) as important in providing guidance, challenge and support as adults negotiate their learning tasks. Rose (1989) notes the importance of having mentors who give access to new ways of being in a ‘power with’ rather than ‘power over’ (Griffith, 1987, p. 59) mode, encouraging growth rather than established dominance. Participants were aware of the ways in which other Aboriginal adults had shown them the way. They also realized that as students and teachers themselves, they provided examples of how to participate in school to their own Aboriginal children and students. Cathro (1995) discusses this dynamic, stressing...

...the importance of mentorship in helping students learn and apply the rules of the culture of power.... mentorship is needed for students to become insiders in a Discourse.... If, as Gee (1989) states, and my study supports, mentorship is important for entrance into an academic Discourse, then my study has implications for all instructors, tutors, counsellors, administrators and curriculum developers who are working with students, specifically students who are encountering a Discourse for the first time. Instructors must be mentors and that requires respect and time... (pp. 228, 229)

Study participants also had a clear understanding of the importance of their roles as Aboriginal leaders for those to follow. This understanding is shared by other Aboriginal people across the country. Richard, a participant in Celia Haig Brown's (1995) study of an Aboriginal-controlled school in British Columbia puts it this way --

...the reason to get this degree or whatever I want to get is not for my own benefit. It is for my own benefit in a way, but it's going to benefit the people. And it reminded me that -- well, it's not my community, it's not my own reserve, I mean - but it is my community. It's my people.... in a way, I think maybe we're the trail breakers... It's like in the winter when you're in camp and you have to move to another place where the hunting is better or there's more firewood. Usually the strongest people go ahead... just to break through the deep snow.... That's sort of what I mean as a trail breaker. It's hard going, but it's good because other people won't have to work so hard. (p. 188)

The participants in my study reported a desire to serve as a ‘trail breaker’ for others in education, in order to benefit their lives.
In acknowledging the importance of mentors for themselves, and in wishing to be a role model for their own students, these Anishinabe women were honouring Aboriginal traditions and working to support cultural continuity. As the RCAP (1996, Vol. 3) points out, the teacher as role model is a concept which finds its roots in the teaching traditions of Aboriginal people:

Teaching is a complex transmission of values, behaviours and knowledge. If we recall the teaching traditions of Aboriginal nations, elders are respected teachers with access to knowledge that extends back through countless generations. In oral traditions, stories are a particularly important medium for transmitting knowledge. They contain layers of meaning that listeners decode according to their readiness to receive certain teachings. In the classroom and out on the land, the teacher conveys to students the acceptable rules of behaviour and the values to be honoured through subtle verbal and non-verbal communication. Education is holistic and addresses not only the intellectual but the spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of the individual. The teacher is a role model whose own behaviour and attitudes are absorbed by students. At the same time, the teachers encourage each individual to use the special gifts they have been given and to do so in a way that benefits everyone, not just themselves. (p. 491)

An unanswered question, requiring further research, is whether the prevalent perception of the importance of acting as a mentor which these participants presented is common among non-Aboriginal students studying to be teachers. For the majority of participants in my study, mentoring was an important role which they associated with teaching and learning.

4.1) **Relationships and Adult Learning – Multiple Roles of Self: Findings**

*I was a mother, I was a grandmother, I was a wife, I was a teacher, I was this, I was so many things to so many people, there was no time for me. It was like "Where am I?"*

- Flora

The women who participated in this study had lives involving children, husbands, work and school: seven had children, four had extended family responsibilities, seven were married and one separated, and six worked while attending school. These roles impacted significantly on their student life. References to a sense of self as a woman and a student were made primarily in conjunction with the multiple roles participants filled as wives, mothers, extended family members and working women and how these interfaced with the role of student. While a student, all of these women had a sense of themselves as holding other roles simultaneously, including the role of family member (seven participants), mentor or role model (four participants), leader (one participant), teacher (seven participants), social worker (four participants), Aboriginal educator (seven participants), Aboriginal community member (seven participants) and Queen’s student
(four participants). Participants spoke often of family responsibilities and of mothering their Aboriginal children (six participants).

For some, holding roles simultaneously proved to be very challenging. As Tania put it ...oh, I had one joke with one of my friends at school. I said about a week before [my baby] was born "Well today's Monday – let's see, we've got that research paper due on Wednesday, that Psych. exam on Thursday, I'm going to have the baby on Saturday, yeah, next Tuesday, next Tuesday's good!" [Laughter.] It was an ongoing thing. I said, have a baby, write a research exam, you know. Yeah, that put a damper on, you know! I had to drop a couple of courses and I didn't graduate [as soon as expected].

When asked what advice she would give herself if she had to do it over again, Flora declared ...I would say "Don't be married, don't have any kids, don't have any other life!" [Laughter.] Because it's going to take up all of your time. [Laughter.] I can remember going through that, you know. There was: I was a mother, I was a grandmother, I was a wife, I was a teacher, I was this, I was so many things to so many people, there was no time for me. It was like "Where am I?" I didn't count for anything, anywhere! I was too spread out and I was too tired and wore out...

Flora, Tania, Susan, Clara, and Celia (all of whom were mothers, and all but one working women) noted that there was a shortage of time to devote to educational pursuits as the other things in life including parenthood impinged. Addressing work and family obligations sometimes created situations where conflicting responsibilities impeded success in school. As Clara said ...because I'm working at the same time and have kids, I found a lot of the time assignments isn't what I really would have – I would have rather put more effort into it. But because we're pressed for time, and you have other responsibilities you know, [pause] you don't do as much as you wanted to do. Or as well as you wanted to do them.

KATE: Because of conflicting responsibilities (CLARA: Yes) you were pressed for time?
CLARA: Yeah.

Their role as family member was particularly central in some participants' lives. Two participants indicated that they were opting for a teaching career as it suited their family lifestyle and needs. Four participants (Clara, Celia, Tania and Doris) chose the particular program partly because of family and work considerations. Clara mentioned that she chose this particular program "...because I have two children and I find it too difficult to go back to school full time.... it was close and... I didn't have to leave the family.... and I could work at the same time." She also said that knowledge gained in the program helped her understand her own children better.

Four participants spoke of close family ties. As Susan said "...my family's very
important to me. I have a very big family, so they took a great amount of time, to visit all of them and just to... be around home.” Maintaining home and work responsibilities while being a student sometimes placed high demands on these adult learners. Flora aptly summed up this commonly held sentiment when she said

I think it’s really difficult for women [pause], married women...women in general, to go on to teacher education. Because women have so many things to do, you know. Their job as a woman and a mother and a wife.... So, like Native women, or just women in general, I think it’s really difficult to, to be, unless they do it as a young person. Maybe you shouldn’t do it when you’re older [laughter], ‘cause maybe when you’re young you don’t have all those responsibilities.

For participants in my study, assuming multiple roles was done as a matter of course. None of the participants reported reducing the number of roles they held while attending their program of post-secondary education even though five of the eight participants reported experiencing a strain in trying to meet the demands which holding multiple roles placed upon them.

4.2) Relationships and Adult Learning – Multiple Roles of Self: Discussion
...the bind of the double day

- Kathy Rockhill

The literature on women’s adult learning corroborates the sense of self as juggling multiple roles which participants reported. Rockhill (1991) refers to women fulfilling multiple roles as “the bind of the double day” (p. 337), while Hoschild (1989) talks of such multiple roles in referring to women as having “a briefcase in one hand, and children in the other” (p. 22). Like Belenky et al (1986) these authors note that many of the women they interviewed view their lives as “juggling acts” (p. 151). As far back as 1981 authors report that for women especially, attending school as adult learners may be difficult as a result of gender and the associated social expectations (Chickering & Havighurst, 1981, p. 33). Bepko and Krestan (1990) also note how societal forces have socialized women into believing it is woman’s responsibility to work the “second shift” in fulfilling their roles, and to feel guilty if they are not juggling multiple roles.

Belenky et al (1986) chronicle “women’s struggle to claim the power of their own minds” (p. 3) and the influence of factors such as family and school which both promote and hinder women’s development. In her study involving two Aboriginal women enrolled in the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan, Cathro (1993) indicated that one major
implication of her findings was that

...those in power as agents of the institution must recognize and appreciate that many students and staff, particularly women, fulfill multiple roles. Lana, Carol and I in this study brought successful experiences as mothers, employees, and community workers to our student role. Often, these diverse experiences and multiple ways of viewing content were not respected.... The intense juggling of responsibilities displayed by Lana and Carol suggests the ability to complete several tasks at once. Surely, that is a main requirement for leadership in any profession. These organizational strengths have not been recognized or valued. That must change. (pp. 236, 237)

Like women discussed in the literature, study participants portrayed themselves as women and students in conjunction with the multiple roles they fulfilled as wives, mothers, extended family members and working women. Like other women who are adult learners, some participants reported tension related to how these other roles interfaced with their role as student. Participants reported not having enough time for everything, including themselves. They were like other women Hayes (2000) portrays in stating that

Women’s opportunities for learning can be affected by conflicting demands across social contexts. The tensions experienced by women between their family roles and learning in higher education provides a particularly prominent example of the gendered nature of these conflicts. Rosalind Edwards (1993) describes both the family and higher education as “greedy institutions” demanding total commitment of time and energy from women.... To meet the demands of both institutions simultaneously would seem to be impossible, and yet that is the position that many adult women find themselves in.... As ludicrous as it sounds, recommendations for time-management workshops, as well as other strategies for educating women in how to better control their time, are not uncommon. Women’s stories suggest, however, that their organizational abilities are not the crux of the problem; rather, their difficulties are in the social organization of family and education and in the extent to which women’s time is controlled by the demands of others. (pp. 47, 48)

For the Ojibwe women I interviewed, responsibility to family and community was very important, and perhaps because of this, participants did not endeavour to reduce the number of obligations they held in order to have more time for school, even when carrying so many responsibilities was difficult. Participants accepted their multiple roles as necessary. Perhaps they realized that, as Anderson (2000) says

Another way that Aboriginal women become involved in community development is through the enactment of our age-old responsibilities to create and nurture.... Nora Bothwell, formerly the Chief of Alderville First Nation [Ontario] suggests that “Native women traditionally were the teachers. I believe that they have to be the initiators and motivators as well. Women have the quality that they can do a hundred things at once. You
have to when you have kids and have to run a household on a limited budget. Women can push.” (p. 214)

While all participants showed a great deal of self-reliance, they were also keenly aware of their connections and responsibilities to others. For these women, programming which allowed them to complete many of their school responsibilities in class could have been helpful in reducing strain outside of class where conflicting responsibilities of school, work, and home and the accompanying shortage of time made it difficult for them to complete their study responsibilities.

5.1) **Relationships, Teaching and Cultural Continuity: Findings**

...if there's something I could do for my community, then that's where I would like to be. I would like to remain working for the People...  

- Susan

The most striking thing about the recorded interviews was how much all of the participants talked about themselves and their experience in relation to others. These Aboriginal adult students highly valued interpersonal and community relationships, as evident from the frequency of mention. The theme of relationships emerged more frequently than any other, with all participants making comments in this area and with the frequency of comments exceeding those under any other theme, at four hundred and one instances of mention. Therefore, while various aspects pertaining to the importance of relationships in participants' lives have been explored in the sections above, it is appropriate to include here a general discussion on relationships.

Relationships factored in every aspect of participants' lives. From the interviews emerged an overwhelming expression of community connection. Mentioned by all participants and expressed more frequently than any other single concern was a sense of community responsibility and ties. All participants had a desire to make a positive contribution to their community. A sense of community responsibility took the form of concern for the children, concern for the well being of the people and for future generations of Anishinabe.

While still preparing to be teachers, participants had clear ideas about how they could benefit their communities and students. When asked what they envisioned as their contribution to teaching, no one hesitated in answering the question. Joan wished to support children in
becoming able to contribute to society. As she said

...if I was a teacher I would want to be able to leave something behind that would have an impact on the students’ lives not only academically but socially, physically, emotionally, that they would do better because they had interacted with me as an instructor, as a teacher, and that interaction would be more positive than it would be negative. I would like to be able to see a young student go through life being better equipped to deal with life, to deal with their academic life and to be able to graduate, to be able to be a positive contributing member of society.

Like Joan, Flora also intended to encourage Aboriginal students to go on in education. She wanted to be a role model for Aboriginal children, and show them that learning can be fun, and how to love learning. She had hopes for their future, saying

But I know that it’s important for me to try to get them to go as far as they can in education,... when I was the education counsellor none of the kids had any motivation, and none of them had any dreams or goals or ambitions or anything. And this year when I went into the gym, one of our Grade Eights, she’s not my student, but I’ve watched her. She said she had a big piece of paper on the gym wall, and this must have been their dreams or their goal, and she had that big “M.U.” on hers. Her dream was to go to Michigan State University... Oh wow! That’s what, you know, that’s what it’s all about. It was really good.

Doris saw herself as one who could “bring more of the Native culture and traditions back into the classroom” and involve Native parents and community in the school to a greater degree.

As she said

...I think even if [the program] didn’t have a little bit of our culture and traditions I probably would have put those in [my classroom] myself in being a teacher.... I figure there’s got to be a way that you can get parents involved right in the classroom.

Edna saw her contribution to teaching as raising the awareness of other teachers regarding Aboriginal childrens’ learning needs and different learning styles. In addition, she hoped to address some of the problems she had witnessed among other Aboriginal students. As she said

I was starting to learn that, especially with Native populations, Native children, as experienced myself, are not getting the full benefit.... of the education system. And we’re really not grasping the knowledge as well as we should have been.... And I found that as I did more research... there were different ways of learning for Native people. And that got me more interested in Native education itself. And I knew there was more that I could do, that there was more out there.

She and Clara hoped to develop curriculum to address Aboriginal student needs.

Flora and Celia stated that they wanted to bring their own knowledge and experiences to
the children. Celia, Doris and Joan noted that they wished to motivate students to learn about themselves as Aboriginal and about others as Aboriginal. Celia indicated the importance of such a task when she said:

I was thinking about the culture that’s being taught in the school, how we’ve come five hundred years, it’s taken us five hundred years as Native people to get where we are and some people aren’t just going to want to turn right around and be able to accept the culture back in the school, that it’s going to have to take time and unfortunately that time is also going to lose a lot of things. So, I think, you know, we have to really rely on our Elders to bring that to the school, or to the children in some way. And then it’s always changing… as far as teaching goes and, and then if you remember um, one important thing is to always remember where you come from and who you are. I think you have to look at that too for the children, because there’s going to be so many children that are so different in where they come from and who they’re about… and to appreciate who they are…

Joan talked about future goals, saying “...I would like to be able to focus on the teaching of my language and my culture to the young people.” When asked what she hoped to contribute, Susan said “…the kind of knowledge that I have gained from [teacher education] or in some of the other courses that I have taken, I want to be able to bring that to my community.”

Tania said this about what she hoped her contribution would be:

...to motivate [students], to get them interested in something... if I teach on my Reserve, to get them interested in who they are, and how important their life is, and that they matter. That we’re not just doing this to hassle children for eight hours a day. Like they’re going to get something out of it…. If I’m working in the city as a Native teacher… then I hope I can transfer the richness of my heritage to other teachers and to the kids. Whether they are Native or non-Native. Everybody should know… that there isn’t just one view of the world, that you know, the continent didn’t start in 1492 and never existed prior. Like if I can share positive information about who I am and who Native peoples are, with other teachers or non-Native students, and give them a different light on that story, then that would be great. Or if I can do it on a Reserve in such a way, where the students just know that it’s their heritage. I don’t want to really teach it to them. I want them to live it, you know, as students. It’ll just be part of our every day. Put it on the board in Ojibway, you know, like it will just be part and maybe become natural to them...

Celia wished to

...contribute what I know, my experiences, and relate my experiences because I think that’s probably, as a person that’s all you can do for someone else…. and to give them inspiration to go on. I think that’s really needed, especially among the Native children, to know that there is something that they can shoot for, you know, that they have the ability to do that and they really want to do that (KATE: yeah) and to let them know that…. I hope my contribution is one that will help the children to make their decisions and their choices in a
realistic way, you know, not to be narrow-minded or hard-headed and think their way is the only way...

When discussing their intentions upon graduation, seven of the eight participants expressed commitment to their community by indicating that they intended to stay and use their new expertise in their home communities. (Note: Since the time of the interviews the eighth participant, Tania, has returned to her home reserve to teach.) Six of the participants intended to teach upon graduating, with Clara intending to work in an education-related field in her community.

For some, a sense of responsibility to individual communities was extended to include a sense of responsibility to the broader Aboriginal community in general. Celia indicated that she saw community as extending beyond her own reserve, beyond her own First Nation, and beyond Aboriginal people to encompass humanity in general. As she explained it...

...the first teaching I learned was that you accept another person no matter what race, creed or colour they are, and that you accept them for who they are and um, other things, you know like um, you don’t treat people like that, you treat people like that and it’s going to come back to you. You know, those teachings that the Elders have given us.... treating a person kindly and you know, kindness and with respect and with love and you know the seven gifts that, you know, your Creator has given you, I think those are the really strong influences.

(Tania, along with Celia and Edna mentioned the ‘seven gifts’ or the ‘seven grandfathers teachings’ as providing guidance for their own conduct. Several of these teachings refer to ‘right relations’ with others. These teachings are provided in Appendix D.)

Significantly, none of the participants mentioned a purely individualistic motivation to become a teacher.

5.2) Relationships, Teaching and Cultural Continuity: Discussion

We produce life. Because of the fact that we are mothers, as a whole, we are responsible for the community. We have a community responsibility to ensure that these young ones are all taught the same responsibilities to the overall community and nation.

- Andrea Chrisjohn (Onya:ta'ka)

Relationships with family, community, and Aboriginal students were foremost in participants’ lives. These women had a shared perception of their communities and children being at risk, and of education as a tool which could help to alleviate the social and cultural problems
they faced. Through the avenue of education, participants sought ways in which they could exercise agency in identifying and creating learning conditions which foster Aboriginal cultural sustenance and growth, out of an abiding concern for their communities and children.

In reflecting on participants' concern with supporting and furthering their family and community relationships and Anishinabe culture through the medium of teacher education, it is useful to consider such an orientation within the context of historical and current cultural influences upon participants. As all participants in the study are Anishinabe kwe (Ojibwe women), it is pertinent to focus on specificities linked with Ojibwe orientations. This is not to imply that these orientations are exclusive to an Ojibwe world view, but rather to present Ojibwe examples.

At the outset of such an exploration it is important to note that the accounts and interpretations of Aboriginal meaning making vary dramatically depending upon the source. It may be said that there are three types of literature pertaining to Aboriginal people. These are: literature written by non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people from second hand experience; literature written by non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people from first hand experience; and literature written by Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people. My review of the literature has shown that those accounts of Aboriginal experience written by non-Aboriginals far outnumber written accounts by Aboriginal people. Numerous authors (Anderson, 2000; Brodribb, 1984; Clifford, 1988; Medicine, 1988; Miheusah, 1998) stress the importance of Aboriginal people themselves becoming published authorities on their lives and experience. In keeping with this belief, I have endeavoured to use the words of Aboriginal, and particularly Ojibwe people themselves in presenting aspects of Ojibwe culture where possible.

5.2.1) Historical Perspectives on the Nature of Ojibwe Relationships:

Upon reviewing such literature and talking with Ojibwe teachers, I found numerous references to the nature of relationships from an Ojibwe perspective. Such references demonstrate the pervasive importance of relationships, emphasizing the relations of equality and a recognition of interrelationships. Teachings about right relations extend beyond those referring to human relations to include the natural world as well. Drawing from my own experience, I remember Fred Wheatley, a respected Ojibwe man and teacher of the Ojibwe language at Trent University telling me over a decade and a half ago that 'even the stones deserve respect as they too are part of living creation.' Mr. Wheatley's contemporary comment is echoed historically in the writings of well known historian Diamond Jenness (1935) who said that in the past the
Ojibwe person believed that

all objects have life, and life is synonymous with power, which may be directed for the Indian’s good or ill. the Indian should treat everything he sees or touches with respect befitting a thing that has a soul and shadow not unlike his own. (p. 21)

When asked how non-Native and Native people differ, Vema Patronella Johnson, a member of the Cape Croker reserve, of Ojibwe and White ancestry had this to say:

...I think their relationships to nature are different. Indian people don’t go around cutting trees down for nothing, and they don’t go out and kill animals for sport, only when they need food. They are very conscious that they are part of the world; they don’t separate themselves from nature. They are part of the land. The land is their mother. (cited in Vanderburgh, 1977, p. 182)

In a recent lecture, Dr. Cecil King mentioned that the views of Ojibwe and other Aboriginal peoples contrast with the Western view of man’s place in the order of things. In the Western view, human beings are placed at the top of a hierarchal pyramid of creation, superior and apart from the rest of creation. In the Ojibwe view, human beings are least necessary to and most dependent upon the rest of creation, which will exist without humankind, while humankind cannot do the same. This fundamental difference in the perceived place of humankind in the natural order means that according to Ojibwe beliefs, respect and honour must be shown to all, of which we are a part (from notes taken at lecture given at O.I.S.E. by Cecil King, 1992, Winter).

In discussing traditional Ojibwe beliefs before European contact in his book Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes, Christopher Vecsey (1983) cites numerous references, including some of the very earliest Jesuit records. These references illuminate the primacy and pervasive nature of Ojibwe relations of equality, fitting into, rather than having dominion over a universal order where all animate beings – humans, plants, animals, and natural entities including rocks and trees were believed to possess personal souls (p. 62). These natural entities were viewed not as foreign objects, but as kin to humans.

Traditionally, this non-hierarchical view of the world was echoed in Ojibwe social structures. As Jenness (1932) reports

...each [Ojibwe] band had a nominal leader, some man who through courage, force of character, or skill in hunting had won for himself temporary preeminence. theoretically every individual in a band was equal to every other, [and the band’s] leader enjoyed few or no privileges and held his position only so long as he could win popular support. (p. 120)

The continuance of the belief in equality and respect for the whole is still exercised in a
variety of ways among contemporary Ojibwe people. For example, Verna Patronella Johnson still believes as they did in the past that it is important to share one’s goods with others both to ensure that all are fed and in order not to accumulate more than others. As she says “[Ojibwe] are generous with one another” (in Vanderburgh, 1977, p. 136). Ms. Johnson speaks of this value when she says

...the money value is different. Indians shared everything, so they didn’t have to hoard, they didn’t have to put money in the bank for their old age; they knew they would be looked after by the younger people. A lot of Indians still don’t hoard money. Even some of those with steady jobs are broke at the end of the month because they share their money. I do meet more and more Indians today though who have taken on the white value of hoarding money. (in Vanderburgh, 1977, p. 182)

Ms. Johnson’s words are confirmed by my own experience. Ojibwe people I have known actively uphold the tradition of sharing. From my own experience, I recall Ojibwe Professor Fred Wheatley warning me not to admire the possessions of an Ojibwe person, as this person might then feel required to give these possessions to me. Once, later, when I absently admired the earrings of my Oji-Cree co-worker, she promptly took them off and gave them to me. Embarrassed and too late I remembered Professor Wheatley’s admonition. Yet my co-worker did not seem irate, but happy and proud that she had been able to share her possessions with me.

Some of the Ojibwe people I have known are among the most generous people I have ever met, sharing their food, their homes, their knowledge and their good fortune with me and others too. In contradiction to Irving Hallowell’s (1935) sour implication that Ojibwe people were motivated to act as they did because of guilt feelings or fear of jealousy and reprisal by individuals or spiritual beings (p. 148), Johnson’s comments (in Vanderburgh, 1977) and my own experience suggest that in sharing there is an awareness of give and take, and of benefiting the whole. From my own experience, I have noted signs of joy and pride expressed by those who are able to share what they have with others. Poelzer and Poelzer (1986) mention that the tradition of sharing is also valued among the Cree Metis women they interviewed, and explain

the high value they place on interpersonal communication... the importance of relating to others and conversely... of not being friendless... are probably reasons why... a non-material orientation is also part of the values of the native culture. (p. 5)

Another example of the belief in equality and respect for all is found in the consensual decision-making practised at the many meetings which I have attended with Ojibwe people over the past decade. Ojibwe people I have known rarely act in an authoritarian manner, and consider
it rude to tell another person what to do. My own experience is corroborated by Hallowell (1955) who indicates that Ojibwe people suppress “any impulse to tell someone what to do,” saying “In short, no one was in a position to order anyone else around” (p. 135). Again, while Hallowell (1955) attributes this characteristic to fear of retaliation, my own experience suggests that such behaviour is more an exercise of the belief in relations of equality and respect.

Along with a sense of being related to other beings in creation is the idea that all creation is interconnected. The Ojibwe self was not conceived of as autonomous and separate, but rather experienced as part of an interconnected web which encompassed one’s community and the rest of creation (Danziger, 1990; Jenness, 1935; Vecsey, 1983). Diane Hill (1999), Aboriginal adult educator, recalls a conversation with Jim Dumont, well known Ojibwe professor and scholar who indicated that

In formulating an understanding of themselves and their world, the ancestors of today’s Aboriginal people reasoned that “all life exists as an interconnected reality” that was “designed by the Creator to function in a state of balance, harmony and interdependence” (J. Dumont, in Hill, 1999, p. 116)

Today symbolic representation of the interconnectedness of all creation is found in the works of Ojibwe artists Norval Morrisseau (Sinclair & Pollock, 1979), Alice Williams (1989), and others. In talking about the symbol of the circle in her work, Williams says

This symbol helps me to recognize and be thankful for the gifts of life that have been given to me. It represents the teachings of respect which are embedded in our Anishinaabe culture. ...Lines that radiate from the “Pimaatisiwin Wheel” [Williams calls “Pimaatisiwin” the aim and hope of living a good life on this earth] tell us that each Being in the creation affects all that comes into contact with her/him. The centre, where all the colours touch, is the soul. The belief is that all Beings, all animate objects, have a Soul or Spirit. The Mother Earth circle represents the physical existence of all things. The lines radiating from the physical circle show that we have a physical effect on our surroundings, while lines from the centre, the Soul, show that our Souls also have just as great an effect on all things that touch our lives. (p. 49)

Much of what I read and gathered from my Ojibwe teachers suggested that there is much emphasis on the interconnected whole or the collectivity. The individual’s place in the whole serves to recognize and support the inter-relationships which exist, and to further the whole. This is contrasted with an individualistic orientation which serves to advance the autonomous and distinct over the collective. Jack Mezirow (1978, p. 108) uses the terms “organic mode” and “contractual mode” to distinguish between these two fundamental orientations. In the “organic
mode” a predominance of organic unities such as family, class or caste, and local community mean that the individual is psychologically assimilated by the values, rules, customs and expectations of the community. Such cultures are contrasted by those favouring the “contractual mode” where social relationships place greater emphasis on the individual rather than the primary group and on contractual rather than organic relationships. It could be said that Ojibwe culture historically and presently favours an organic mode.

5.2.2) Aboriginal Women’s Historical Roles as Educators and Community Builders:

Accounts of Ojibwe women’s lives historically are useful to relate as a backdrop to the present. Various authors (Benton-Banai, 1988; Brant Castellano, 1989; Danziger, 1990; Densmore, 1929; Hallowell, 1955; Jenness, 1935) report that in the past, the Ojibwe were hunters and gatherers who migrated cyclically with the seasons, living during the winter in small extended family units and gathering in the summer months in larger tribal groups. Women and men had differing roles which ensured the survival of the group. Noted Aboriginal researcher and educator Marlene Brant Castellano (1989) states

....In Ojibwa society there was a clear distinction made between male and female roles and public recognition went almost exclusively to the activities of men. The exploits of the hunter, warrior and shaman were celebrated in stories told in the lodge. The legends recording encounters with the supernaturals deal with the affairs of men. The role of women was to send men on their journeys with proper ceremony, to welcome them back with appropriate mourning or rejoicing, to hear and applaud the accounts of their achievements. Ojibwa women were more, however, then passive complements to the life of their men. They were essential economic partners in the annual cycle of work.... It was the recognition of their economic contributions which gave rise to the one rigid prescription imposed on Ojibwa women: that they should marry.... The very fact that Ojibwa society’s expectations and rewards were focused so predominantly on men meant that women were free to deviate without censure from the normal course mapped out for them.... They could... shun the protection of any man and follow those masculine pursuits which were necessary to survival. Especially if the girl was the only child, a favourite or eldest child, she might be taught masculine skills of hunting or doctoring by her father. Women could acquire supernatural protection or power necessary to the practice of shamanism. If they chose to join a war party, it was assumed that they had had a vision to protect them in this pursuit and they were accepted as warriors.... While most traditionally feminine activities were carried on quietly without fanfare, some women were known to have exceptional talents and to follow their avocations with energy and devotion, in the same manner as men called to a particular career. (pp. 47, 48)

While the men were often away for hunting or warring, women in the hunting and gathering cultures of the Ojibwe were the keepers of the home. Among the Ojibwe
Girls... learned to stay at home, converting the fruits of the hunter and fisherman into food and clothing. To make wigwams and other furnishings, to chop wood and gather berries and rice and medicinal herbs, to make birch-bark vessels and maple sugar, to dress skins and sew them into clothing, to bear children and cook meals – this was woman's role. (Danziger, 1990, p. 15)

Kohl (1985) supports this statement in his historical work on the Ojibwe, and indicates that building the dwelling “is the business of the women, like all the work, heavy or light, always with the exception of hunting” (pp. 3, 4).

Historically, Ojibwe women had a central role to play in their communities, as educators, nurturers and community builders. Education was a communal responsibility, as Danziger (1990) points out in referring to Ojibwe (Chippewa) practices:

To fit the child into the proper cultural pattern was the general goal of family educational practices.... Chippewa educational practices were aimed at teaching the child the religious, economic and political practices as well as the moral standards of the tribe. Lessons were learned from all members of the household – parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters – and from respected older members of the village. (p. 14)

Yet while the extended family was fully involved in raising Ojibwe children, the women played the most significant role of anyone in the community in this regard. Due to the fact that it was largely the women who remained at home, they were also the ones left to manage and organize community affairs and teach the children.

Such teaching roles were not exclusive to Ojibwe women. Among the Iroquois, for example, Shenandoah (1992) points out that

The women of the village taught the children, everybody’s children, all the things they had to know in order to survive on this earth. They taught them how to look after one another, they taught them from a very young age what kinds of food were good for them to eat, what kinds of foods were not good for them, and they taught them medicine from a very early age. The children up to an age of, let’s say, eight or nine years were in the trust, the responsibility, of the women. (p. 37)

Aboriginal women had significant roles to play in their communities’ cultural survival and continuity. As Shoemaker (1995) summarizes

These women were grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. They planted corn, ground corn into meal, tanned hides, gathered food, traded, produced fancy quill or beadwork, and wove rugs. They were clan mothers, mothers of the nation, beloved women, medicine women, brave-hearted women, and women warriors. They were also cast in the roles of squaw and princess.... Although we know this much about the experience of Native
American women and the roles they have played, we do not know much more than this. Native women were important to their communities for more profound reasons than the above list implies. Native women maintained the cultural traditions of their people. They also, on other occasions, advocated change. They were, in short, crucial participants in the ongoing struggle for the survival of Indian cultures and communities. (p. 2)

Women served as the first teachers and purveyors of culture, with cultural knowledge being passed from mother to child. Teaching ensured “the transmission of cultural D.N.A. from one generation to the next” (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 433).

All people were recognized as having individual gifts and talents. It was each person’s responsibility to share those gifts and talents and to look for the attributes in any of the young which would suggest that they too shared the same gift. It was then the responsibility of those particular adults to nurture and develop that gift to fruition. In this way education transpired through mentoring relationships (Danziger, 1990; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Shenandoah, 1992).

5.2.3) Cultural Continuity in Aboriginal Women’s Emphasis on Relationships and Roles as Teachers:

Though there have been inevitable changes since historical times, there is also some consistency in the roles of Ojibwe women of the past and today’s Ojibwe women. In many depictions past and present, it is clear that the Ojibwe woman’s identity was not one which stressed autonomy and individualism, but rather one which was supported through a sense of connectedness with others, and was best fulfilled through relationships. In her article on women in Huron and Ojibwe societies, Brant Castellano (1989) points out that

Native women of today... are not breaking from traditions as some have suggested. They are women who share the same concerns as their mothers and grandmothers before them. They are actively engaged in the protection of the quality of family life, in wresting necessities from a harsh environment, and by infusing beauty into daily experience. Native women have simply accepted the reality that achieving these traditional goals in modern society requires that they put aside their reticence and work out their destiny in public as well as private endeavour. (p. 48)

Like the participants in this study, other Aboriginal women are also engaged in the business of maintaining their communities and cultures. Cultural continuity is apparent in the roles which Aboriginal women presently choose to fulfill, roles which suggest continuity in women’s service to the people and hence the community. Looking at Aboriginal communities it is largely the women who fulfill the roles of educators, health care providers, counsellors, child care
workers and social service workers. Statistics Canada (1991) figures from the latest available census profiling Aboriginal employment patterns indicate that the top five of twenty-two occupations listed for Indigenous women were service (27.9%), clerical (27.3%), management/administration (7.6%), social sciences (7.1%) and teaching (6.1% – tied with medicine and health). These roles stress service-providing, echoing the nurturing roles women held traditionally. Among Aboriginal teachers there are more women than men, according to the latest census (Statistics Canada, 1991).

The literature presents conflicting reports on the degree to which Ojibwe women are respected in fulfilling nurturing roles both historically and at present. When Verna Patronella Johnson was asked if her husband's strong ideas about a woman's role in life is typical of Ojibwe men in his generation, she responded "I think he is typical..." (in Vanderburgh, 1977, p. 161). In Johnson's experience, a woman was to remain subservient to her husband, act as mother and homemaker, staying in the background though furthering her husband's success. Johnson indicates that both historically and among the Ojibwe men of her generation, the idea of the male-as-dominant prevails. She says "I think it is typical of Indian men all over... It really is an Indian institution... In our old tradition women had no value at all" (p. 161).

Some authors (Anderson, 2000; Brown, 1995; Hungry Wolf, 1982, 1997; Laverdure in Wall, 1993; Miller & Chuchryk, 1997; Peers, 1997; Shoemaker, 1995) posit that such a lack of respect for the central roles which Ojibwe and other Aboriginal women women held and continue to hold in sustaining the home, family and community constitutes a break in cultural continuity. These authors suggest that demeaning attitudes towards Aboriginal women are derived post-contact, from a mainstream Euro-Canadian framework of male dominance and patriarchy which downplays women's roles generally.

Certainly, Aboriginal women's roles are downplayed in the literature. As Peers (1997) says in her article on the historical roles of Plains Ojibwe women,

Even after two decades of revisions and challenge by feminist perspectives, it is rare to find a tribal or regional history or ethnography in which women play more than the most insignificant of roles. Secondary literature on Aboriginal peoples continues to focus extensively on men and their political, religious and economic activities. In the pages of these works it is men who make the decisions, men whose words are quoted, and men's achievements that are noted. Women are virtually invisible, their voices and movements stilled by the infrequency with which their work is noted, and by the implication, when it is noted, that it was less important... (p. 38)

While some researchers (Danziger, 1990; Hallowell, 1955; Landes, 1971; Peers, 1997)
would agree with Johnson that Ojibwe women and their roles were not held in as much esteem as Ojibwe men, other authors (Anderson, 2000; Brant Castellano, 1989; Johnson, 1987; Miller & Chuchryk, 1997; Solomon, 1992) indicate how Ojibwe women are cherished and respected. Some Ojibwe men realize that, as Art Solomon, Ojibwe Elder says, “without us [men] they [women] are nothing, just as we are nothing without them” (Solomon, 1990). Ojibwe author Calvin Morrisseau (1998) states that

From an Anishnabe perspective, striking out against a woman is like striking out against everything we hold sacred; our life, our future, our customs, and beliefs, because our women represent the power which is contained within all these concepts. By weakening women, we are weakening our people. (p. 40)

Anderson (2000) reports that

As life givers, women bring children into the world, and for this they have traditionally commanded a great deal of respect. As Barbra Nahwegahbow [Ojibway] puts it: “They talk about women and the ability to give life; that is like the Creator. The Creator gives life, and women are like that. They give life. You can’t get much better than that, really!” If we can reclaim the traditional notion of woman as life giver, we can reclaim a vital sense of our power. Whether we eventually give birth or not is not important; it is the power of the symbol of life giver that is significant. (p. 164)

While the literature presents conflicting reports about the degree to which Ojibwe women were and are respected, their central role in sustaining the family and community is clear.

The education of Aboriginal children and the roles of their educators have also changed markedly from traditional to modern times, yet there are some underlying beliefs and preferences which many Aboriginal people share today. In their sense of responsibility for their communities, participants were like other Aboriginal women discussed by Aboriginal author Kim Anderson (2000). When she interviewed forty Aboriginal women of various First Nations, she saw prevailing patterns in their roles as nurturers and community builders, and concluded that Aboriginal women “not only birth the people, we have been given a lifetime responsibility to nurture the people” (p. 169). There was an awareness among my study participants (like Edna, who said that Aboriginal children “...require someone from... their own culture to start relating to them in other ways ... I learnt a lot from the teachers that I worked with, but yet there was still a barrier”) that they could and should do something to address the cultural gap between school and home. In expressing this awareness of difference and the desire to support their own ways, they were like other Aboriginal people across the country. Consider, for example, Jeannette Armstrong’s (1990) reflections:
I enjoyed my school years, but I realized at that time that there was a big difference, a huge difference between the way my people taught and how the teacher was thinking. There was a large difference between what the village people were saying and what this teacher was thinking and saying. I think that it's that background that has given me the strength to be able to find myself, my voice. My background of tradition and resistance enables me to present myself in the way that I do in my writing. (p. 25)

Participants in this study provided information which indicated the centrality of their concern with filling roles as nurturers, community builders and purveyors of cultural knowledge through education. Their comments revealed patterns of enduring cultural roles. Participants’ desire to further culture through the activity of teaching is an expression of cultural continuity. (Recall that when asked what motivated them to become a teacher, all eight participants expressed a sense of community connection and responsibility and a wish to contribute to their Aboriginal community in particular and/or to the broader community in general. Six of the eight participants indicated specifically that they were furthering their own education for the benefit of the Aboriginal children whom they were presently working with or would teach.)

As it was historically for Aboriginal women, all of these participants portrayed theirs as an interconnected world where the importance of relationships, their community and culture is central. An example of cultural continuity is found in participants’ permeating emphasis on relationships and maintaining strong community connections. As it was historically, participants have a desire to ‘give back’ to the community. In expressing a sense of purpose rooted in the work they do to ensure that the culture survives, and in their desire to ‘give back’ to the community, participants are continuing the role of the Anishinabe woman as community sustainer. This work has been passed on through generations of women who have done the ‘work of the People.’ As in the past, this work is not exclusive to Ojibwe women, but carried on by Aboriginal women of other First Nations as well. Ivy Chaske (Dakota) says

I grew up with a sense of women’s responsibility for all the people. It’s not just women’s responsibility to the children – we have a responsibility to all of the people. We have to. We are the life givers. We are the life force of the nation. Our responsibility is to everyone; male and female, young or old, because we are that place from which life itself emanates. And there is nothing greater than that. (in Anderson, 2000, p. 169)

In recognizing connections between historical Ojibwe practices and the present, I was reminded that while culture is resilient as Aboriginal people are resilient, it is not fixed and static. The nature of relationships and the concomitant roles that Ojibwe women play in education today may be the same in essence, but due to the complexity of society, the roles have also
become more complex. More research is needed to determine if Ojibwe women generally perceive themselves as holding primary roles as nurturers and teachers still, and if so, how they negotiate these roles at present.

Conclusion

...it has been the struggle of those women who survived somehow against all odds to bring healing where they could to their families and nations. It has been through the struggle of these women that we have maintained some balance, so that our children could survive and contribute to our peoples. It has always been the women, the mothers, who provided that chance. We find our strength and our power in our ability to be what our grandmothers were to us; keepers of the next generation in every sense of that word – physically, intellectually, and spiritually.... It is the spirit of the female, holding in balance the spirit of the male, in a powerful co-operative force, that is at the core of family and community.

- Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan)

For all participants, relationships with others and with their communities were highly regarded and had a central impact on their lives as Aboriginal adult students. Participants were deeply involved in family and community, demonstrated notable social awareness, and had a sense of themselves as cultural and social agents with the potential and the responsibility to initiate positive change through education, for the benefit of the children and their communities.

Some perceptions and experiences reported by participants echoed those addressed in the literature, including the importance of mentors, the value of support in successful educational endeavours, and the multiple factors motivating them to complete a program of teacher education. References to a sense of self as a woman and a student were made primarily in conjunction to the multiple roles participants filled as wives, mothers, extended family members and working women and how these interfaced with the role of student. The challenges these Aboriginal women reported in carrying multiple roles are also reported by other adult learners who are women.

Other perceptions, however, were unique. Most outstanding was the sense of community and children being at risk culturally, and desire to gain and use an educational credential as a way of addressing community needs in this area. The literature on adult learning did not present information which suggested that a sense of social responsibility shown by all participants to such a large extent is shared as a great motivating factor by other adult students. My findings support Anderson’s (2000) findings with regard to participants’ concern for Aboriginal children. She said

Native women are now reclaiming the centrality of children in their lives and in the life of
their communities. For many, caring for children is the first truth.... Children are at the heart of the community, and are precious spirits over whom we must watch. (p. 162)

The sense of urgency participants conveyed is echoed in the words of Eddie Benton-Banai (1988), Ojibwe educator and Midewiwin priest, when he says “...it is up to those of us who have, in whatever measure, the teachings, philosophy and traditions, including the rituals to work for their revival and continuance” (p. 51).

As it was historically for Anishinabe women, relationships and community were centrally important for all of the women in this study. Relationships factored in participants’ comments about their reasons for applying to a program of teacher education, in their learning and success while in the program, and in their intentions upon graduation. Participants reported ways in which their lives were affected by others as well as ways in which they saw themselves as agents who could affect others. The strong emphasis on relationships and interconnections demonstrated by these participants is supported in some of the literature which explores cultural characteristics of Anishinabe people specifically, and Aboriginal people in general. In her recently completed Master’s thesis in adult education, Diane Hill, a Mohawk educator, reports a personal conversation she had with the well known Aboriginal educator, R. A. Antone, in which he said:

In Aboriginal thought, a human being must learn how to function within a ‘total environment’ of ever expanding circles of relationships. Beginning with one’s family, the human being’s interactions will extend into his/her clan, community, and nation; will move outward to other nations and races of people; and extend further still to include the global environment and all the Universal elements within the Creation. A disruption in any one of these circles impacts on the whole (in Hill, 1999, p. 31)

Aboriginal women are referred to as particularly concerned with relationships and interconnections. As Cruikshank (in Cruikshank, Sidney, Smith & Nedd, 1990) says in referring to Aboriginal women’s stories, “The recurring theme is one of connection – to other people and to nature. Connections with people are explored through ties of kinship; connections with land emphasize sense of place. But kinship and landscape provide more than just a setting for an account, for they actually frame and shape the story” (p. 3).

Through seeking to serve the educational needs of their communities, these women were not only culture-sustainers, but also culture-creators. There was a sense among these participants that they were striving, through education, to fulfill “the right of females to be what we fundamentally are – insurers of the next generation” (Jeannette Armstrong, cited in Miller & Chuchryk, 1997, p. xi). The Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) states “the destiny of a people is
intricately bound to the way its children are educated” (p. 433). Participants understood that they could be agents of positive change for the future through education. Teachers were perceived as able to foster positive Aboriginal identity. As Celia said, reflecting on the work of her Aboriginal role model,

...he turned it around and made it positive for us, you know, to say that these ... heroes are things that we need to teach our children, because it’s so important to be proud of who you are and where you come from ....

Participants in the study echoed the attitudes of others in their expectations of education. Like other Aboriginal people, they saw education as a way to meet the needs of their communities. As the Royal Commission (1996) reports

For more than 25 years, Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. (Vol. 3, p. 434)

These participants were looking at ways in which they may assume proactive, pragmatic roles to ensure that culture may be passed on through the education system. As such, they joined with a larger movement in Aboriginal education which seeks to reclaim self-determination in education. Statements made twenty-five years ago in a paper produced by the National Indian Brotherhood are still held today and indicate enduring beliefs about education.

Aboriginal control of education and parental involvement are two principals first advocated in the National Indian Brotherhood’s landmark paper, “Indian Control of Indian Education.” Many Aboriginal leaders speak of resuming control of education, since First Nations and Inuit exercised complete control of education for countless generations. Rather than being a new responsibility, self-determination in education was practised by families and communities in earlier times. (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 468)

Participants’ further reflections on education and their orientation to it will be presented in Chapters Five and Six.
CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM FEATURES IDENTIFIED AS FOSTERING SUCCESS IN
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I present comments participants made in response to the interview questions “What has helped your learning?”; “What has hindered your learning?”; and “What has been most significant to you during your program of teacher education?” The eight Aboriginal women I interviewed had much to say about what assisted them in their studies and helped them to graduate. Participants made valuable contributions in identifying their needs as teacher education students, and in naming and assessing program features which addressed or did not address these needs. When asked what, if anything, helped these participants in their learning while in the program, they specified four main things: community-based delivery of the program; course content and process; personal motivation; and support. Of these four things, personal motivation and support were partially discussed in Chapter Four as they pertained to relationships and community. Aspects of these two categories, personal motivation and support, are discussed below as they pertain to program features. While not all participants directly associated their in-school success with the degree to which their post-secondary program honoured their personal and community connections, it became clear as the interviews proceeded that this was an enduring theme which was prevalent in their comments about success. The findings and commensurate discussion, below, present reflections on aspects of post-secondary education specific to the program which participants were enrolled in, and explore program features which participants identified as important enhancers of success.

As found by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), Aboriginal teacher education programs have registered some important gains in the past decade, yet the need for further progress is real. The Commission reports that “Since the first programs were launched in Ontario and the Northwest Territories in the mid-1960s, there have been at least 34 Aboriginal Teacher education programs across the country, many of which continue today” (Vol. 3, p. 491). Further, largely as a result of these programs, the number of Aboriginal teachers is increasing. “In 1981, about 4,490 Aboriginal people were in teaching and related occupations. By 1991, there were 8,075” (Vol. 3, p. 491). However, the Commission goes on to point out that “while there
are many more Aboriginal teachers in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school systems than a decade ago, the numbers remain far too low relative to the current and projected need” (p. 491). RCAP (1996) findings indicate that to advance graduation rates for Aboriginal students, there is a need for increased numbers of Aboriginal elementary school teachers, particularly in the school systems that serve Aboriginal children. In addition, the Commission reports a pressing need for secondary school teachers of Aboriginal ancestry, for secondary school is a time when many Aboriginal students drop out, and “...the number of Aboriginal teachers certified to teach at the secondary school level is abysmally low” (p. 493).

As an adult education program planner who agrees with the RCAP (1996) statement that “educational institutions have a pivotal role in transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society” (Vol. 3, p. 515), it was of particular interest to me to hear what these Aboriginal adult learners had to say regarding what such institutions may offer to benefit them. One of my assumptions is that program planning which accommodates the needs of Aboriginal teacher education students may enhance these students’ chances for success. Creating suitable program offerings is a first step in addressing the pressing need for more Aboriginal teachers. It is therefore of value to inquire of Aboriginal students themselves what their needs may be.

This study does not attempt to make generalizations about all Aboriginal adult women learners. Rather, it provides one more contribution to the small but growing pool of knowledge about Aboriginal adult learners. At the same time, while the study presents a small sample, I found that participants’ concerns echo those of many other Aboriginal people in education. In this particular context, teacher education, it is hoped that findings presented here will add to the growing body of information which ultimately may contribute to increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in all sectors.

**Organization of the Chapter**

Sub-themes under the general theme of program features which fostered success are presented and discussed below, as follows: (1) affirmative action admission policy: findings and discussion; (2) learning with a pragmatic focus: findings and discussion; (3) course content relevant to Aboriginal students: findings and discussion; (4) course process relevant to Aboriginal students: findings and discussion; (5) community-based delivery of the program: findings and discussion; (6) the importance of support from program staff, instructors and peers: findings and
Program Features: Findings and Discussion

1.1) **Affirmative Action Admission Policy: Findings**

*I just thought there's no way I could ever get into teaching...*

- Tania

Participants were enrolled in a program which utilized an affirmative action admission policy. Four women (Celia, Doris, Edna and Tania) mentioned this program feature under the general category of support. The policy allowed Aboriginal candidates with grade twelve or equivalent to enter teacher's college in a diploma program which, upon graduation, would qualify them to teach in the primary and junior divisions. Candidates who subsequently completed a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree after graduation from teacher’s college could have their diploma exchanged for a Bachelor of Education. (Those candidates entering with a B.A. or B.Sc. received a B.Ed. upon graduation and were qualified to teach in the primary and junior or intermediate and senior divisions depending upon their study focus.) In addition, the minimum grade point average normally required for admission was removed, while some prerequisites usually required for admission which were changed to exit rather than entrance requirements. Credit equivalency was granted for fluency in an Aboriginal language and demonstrated expertise in the arts.

This policy provided the encouragement some participants needed to attempt post-secondary training. Participants mentioned that they had been turned down in previous attempts to gain admission to teacher’s college or that they had been deterred from applying as they expected to be turned down. Tania described how she felt deterred from her personal goal of becoming a teacher saying,

I just thought there’s no way I could ever get into teaching... Because I didn’t think I had enough... I just didn’t know if I could do it because in my mind teachers were, you know, way up here. Teachers had a lot of education, they came from middle class families, that they had everything sort of done for them.... I didn’t believe I, I could do it I guess at the time, you know? I didn’t believe – ‘cause I had been a secretary for so many years, and when you’re a secretary you’re basically at the bottom of the totem pole.... I did a little bit of inquiring and I heard it was like 88% was the average, the cut off, so I thought, there’s no
way I'm going to ever, you know, I'm a 'B' student but I'm not like an 'AA++,' there's no way. So I just didn't think it was possible. And, um... I was talking to my counsellor on the phone and I told her “Well I'd really like to try to get into a teacher [program]... but I don't have a chance.” I said “There's just no way; it just won't happen....” My chances of ever getting in, you know, against six thousand other people, coming from my background, my marks, just no way.

Edna described the difficulty which many applicants experience in attempting to gain admission to teacher education programs when she said

...a year before I came to [this] education program, I had applied for teacher's programs at other universities and that was, that was quite ah, I don't know how you'd say. It was difficult to get into an education program. And I went through a lot of conflict to attempt to get into a program; that's why I had to spend a year deciding... Most of the time I was at a stand still wondering if I'd be able to get into an education program.

When asked why they chose to apply to the particular teacher education program they were enrolled in, Doris, Flora and Tania stated that their perception that they would gain admission through an affirmative action admission policy for Aboriginal students had influenced their decision. For Doris, “the fact that I got accepted in a teacher education program was [of first importance over community-based delivery in choosing to come to the program]... because I had so many struggles in the past.” Clara stated that both the opportunity to be admitted and the availability of the program in her community had prompted her application.

1.2) Affirmative Action Admission Policy: Discussion

Any policy changes that have the effect of limiting Aboriginal people's access to post-secondary education must be promptly counterbalanced by policies to secure access, if equitable participation of Aboriginal people in Canadian society is to be achieved and maintained.

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Numerous reasons have been cited to explain the small percentage of post-secondary admissions for Aboriginal students. Among these reasons is the fact that a lower percentage of Aboriginal students graduate from high school compared to non-Aboriginal students (RCAP, 1996; Statistics Canada Aboriginal Peoples Survey 1993) resulting in fewer Aboriginal candidates who have the academic qualifications to meet standard university admission requirements. Similarly, Aboriginal high school graduates are sometimes disadvantaged in their efforts to gain admission to university because their marks are not high enough, again often due to systemic
barriers. As a result of numerous factors, the percentage of Aboriginal candidates graduating from university is disproportionately low compared to the percentage of non-Aboriginal university graduates ("around three per cent — one-quarter of the proportion of non-Aboriginal persons who receive a university degree" — RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 500). One of the Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) recommendations to improve educational services for Aboriginal students is that

Public post-secondary institutions in the provinces and territories undertake new initiatives or extend current ones to increase the participation, retention and graduation of Aboriginal students by introducing, encouraging or enhancing... (g) admission policies that encourage access by Aboriginal applicants... (p. 515)

Comments made by the Aboriginal students I interviewed supported RCAP (1996) findings that admission policies which encourage post-secondary access are one way to increase Aboriginal student participation. Numerous post-secondary institutions have recognized the importance of affirmative action admissions policies with the realization that Aboriginal students number among the disadvantaged in their opportunities to attend university. However, it is dangerous to assume that affirmative action admission policies alone will address the problem of low Aboriginal student enrolment in post-secondary institutions. The Royal Commission reports that "Over the past two decades there have been positive advances in access to education for Aboriginal students" (Vol. 3, p. 512). For Aboriginal students, many other barriers to successful completion of university still exist, as evinced by low graduation rates. In the light of my participants' many comments regarding the importance of relationships, Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) observations, below, on economic opportunities, could easily be applied to educational opportunities —

Policy makers and the general public have tended to assume that the economic problems of Aboriginal communities can be resolved by strategies directed to individuals thought to be in need of assistance.... Typically, the problem is defined as Aboriginal individuals not having access to opportunities for educational employment or business development in the larger Canadian society. This approach ignores the importance of the collectivity in Aboriginal society (the extended family, the community, the nation) and of rights, institutions and relationships that are collective in nature. It also overlooks the fact that economic development is the product of the interaction of many factors — health, education, self-worth, functioning communities, stable environments, and so on. Ultimately, measures to support economic [or educational] development must reach and benefit individuals, but some of the most important steps that need to be taken involve the collectivity. (p. 7)

All participants in my study named multiple program features which encouraged them to seek admission and aided their success in post-secondary education. Some program features aided their
success because such features acknowledged the importance of the collectivity – for example, community-based delivery, and aspects of course content and process pertinent to the needs of Aboriginal students in the communities participants would serve. The first step, gaining admission, had to be augmented by other program features which supported participants' efforts throughout the duration of their program to ensure success. These features are discussed below.

2.1) **Learning with a Pragmatic Focus: Findings**

*I knew it would ...help my job*  

- *Susan*

Participants were motivated to enrol in and complete a program of post-secondary education because such an endeavour was seen to have pragmatic applications and outcomes. Attending a teacher education program was viewed as useful because it would increase participants' knowledge and skills as educators. In addition, participants were interested in gaining program credentials which would increase their future employability. All participants intended to use their education in practical application, a factor which spurred them to continue to learn.

2.1.1) Increasing Knowledge and Skills:

As mentioned previously, all eight participants had a sense of community connection and responsibility and wished to contribute to their Aboriginal community in particular and/or to the broader Aboriginal community in general. One way in which participants demonstrated their community connection was through their desire to acquire useful knowledge, practical skills and positive attitudes which could be applied to their work in education-related positions in their Aboriginal communities. In terms of their expectations of teacher education, seven participants expected to gain or increase the skills needed to operate a classroom and teach children in their Aboriginal communities. A program which emphasized utility for Aboriginal community application appealed to study participants and increased their motivation to enrol and succeed.

Four women mentioned that one of the reasons they had come to a program of teacher education was a desire to become better equipped to do their current job through learning new skills. Flora said that one of her reasons for coming to the program was “it would make me a better teacher, it would give me the knowledge and skills of how to teach them [Aboriginal students] in a better way.” Among the reasons cited for enrolling in the program, Clara and Flora mentioned pragmatic goals of learning how to teach children. Joan mentioned increasing her skills.
Clara indicated having a self-expectation that she would learn “how to handle a class” and “gain more understanding of children.” Susan said that she had active encouragement to become better equipped to do her current job, saying

One of the things that I knew it would be doing for me would be to help my job. Because like I said, I was teaching the guidance program and the board... the Board of Directors I guess, gives you words of encouragement. And one of the things that they, they felt that there should be a qualified teacher. So that kind of helped as well. Like knowing that when I get out of this program I will be qualified to go into the schools, so that was one of the factors. I knew it was going to help my job.

When asked to identify the most important things they learned in teacher education, six of the eight participants (Celia, Doris, Susan, Clara, Flora, Tania, and Edna) mentioned the tools, techniques, attitudes or skills they had learned as being important by virtue of their utility in enabling them to be better teachers. Teaching skills were important to Doris, who said

...to use a variety of teaching methods too is one that really is important to me. To not just to stick to one, year after year. That you put variety into it. Use a different learning style and different method to teach.

Celia, Flora, Edna and Joan mentioned positive teaching attitudes of caring, adaptability and understanding which had been demonstrated or supported in the teacher education program as being important, again by virtue of their practical utility in enabling them to be better teachers. When asked “What’s the most important thing you’ve learned in teacher ed.?”, Flora gave this response.

[Long pause]. To be a good teacher. Not like one of these young screaming [audio recording unclear] teachers. Be kind and caring and considerate, and really consider the students. KATE: Hmm. That’s the most important. FLORA: Um hmm. KATE: Okay. That kind of leads into the next question. Um, describe your idea of the ideal teacher.

FLORA: Me. [Flora and Kate laughing as Flora is deliberately making a comical face].... A person who considers the students, um, [pause], how they, how they are like, mentally. Like you don’t just start screaming at them for no reason. Maybe there’s a reason they’re acting the way they are. To be generous and genuine and concerned about the child. To be a combination of all the professors that we’ve had [laughs]. Like that’d have to be a super, super teacher, but if you could draw on all of their best qualities, to practice everything that they’ve told us about, that would be the ideal teacher. Somebody like, who really cares about the students and to look at all their needs, not just their educational needs, their personal needs too.... Just to look at the student as a person.
Edna learned “to always keep an open mind. That you can approach other colleagues or students, approach them and also be open to what they have to offer.”

This focus on positive teaching attitudes which could be practically applied emerged again when participants were asked what they hoped their contribution to teaching would be. Seven of the eight participants (Celia, Joan, Flora, Susan, Tania, Edna and Doris) mentioned that they would like to effect a positive attitude toward learning, life and/or self in their students. When asked what she hoped her contribution to teaching would be, Joan spoke of the importance of a teacher’s attitude in fostering students’ success, saying

I think when one treats another human being with respect, with love, with caring and understanding, I think that goes a long way to making that person feel good about themselves, feel that they’re capable of reaching the highest levels of excellence. And I think when you impart that kind of a feeling to any individual, whether it’s a young person or an old person, you’ve given them hope, I think. And I think that’s one of the things that I would like to be able to do is to impart some hope to the students that I teach, that it’s not the end of the road at grade eight, grade nine. Whatever they would want to strive, they would always want to strive for something better than what they are.

Clara, Edna and Doris also mentioned specific skills they would like to contribute to teaching, specifically in the area of curriculum/program development which would acknowledge Aboriginal culture and perspectives. As Edna said

...[I would] like to be able to make some kind of awareness to other teachers that there are different – that Native children do have different learning needs, different learning style needs.... I’d like to make some sort of influence on that part. ‘Cause I do find that even some of the teachers of Aboriginal people, they are getting caught up in the traditional teaching methods and they’re forgetting specifically why they went school is to teach Native children. And I’d like to be able to, in some way, make some kind of contribution to teaching Native children. I think a lot of knowledge that I have gained... will contribute to my developing the best curriculum that I can.... Actually I’d like to be able to incorporate all subject areas.... I’ll give you an example. If I were to incorporate the arts and math into teaching language arts... integrating...

Doris hoped to offer innovative approaches to teaching.

I can offer what I was given through my university and through this teacher education program here.... my experience through the practicum, my own personal experience teaching before.... something different... more life than what the traditional teachers that have been in there for years and years that just repeat it over and over again....”

For all participants having a practical application for knowledge and skills increased their desire to learn and succeed in the program.
2.1.2) Increasing Employability:

Another factor contributing to the in-school survival and success of these Aboriginal learners was the awareness that they were attending a professional school to gain accreditation toward the concrete goal of a career in an education-related position. The program was perceived as assisting participants in achieving their career goals, including bettering their knowledge and skills as they applied to a current job, or as they applied to gaining a new education-related job. While some participants were currently employed in the field of education and wished to upgrade their qualifications (Flora, Joan, Susan, and Clara), others were working towards obtaining a job in education (Doris, Tania, Edna, and Celia), or changing from one education-related job to another (Flora).

Along with choosing a community-based program because it would enable her to be a student without leaving home, Celia stated that she chose a program which would qualify her to teach and thus further her opportunities to work in education in her community: "...working in the community I guess, was one of [the reasons for choosing the program, because I was already employed as a tutor escort [tutoring a student in a First Nation school]]."

Increased employability and the benefits this would provide was a pragmatic outcome of attaining the teaching credential, and a feature which both Susan and Tania valued as it would benefit their families and lifestyles. Edna, Flora and Susan said that they were especially proud to be a student of a prestigious university which was considered difficult to gain entry to. Susan said

...what really attracted me was that when I heard the course was going to be offered I thought, "Boy this is great, worth getting to" ... and then when I heard it was going to be from [names university], well... [names university]. really has a – around here is quite known I guess.... Um hmm, brings a good high caliber of students out in their programs, so I wanted to be one of those students.

Participants valued pragmatic learning because such learning was useful in their daily lives. For these participants, pragmatic learning was that which helped them to deal effectively with employment-related challenges, and with the requirements of their lives with loved ones and community.
2.2) Learning with a Pragmatic Focus: Discussion

*We pay attention to what interests us.*

- David Kolb

Participants in my study were like other adult learners in valuing learning endeavours for the ways in which these endeavours lent themselves to practical application. Various authors have shown that adult learners have a pragmatic approach to learning, and learning is enhanced when it is viewed as relevant to their lives. As Kolb (1984) says "We pay attention to what interests us" (p. 108). Tough (1968) says that "...there is nothing wrong with learning for practical reasons; we should be careful to avoid assuming that "good adult learning occurs only because of a thirst for knowledge, a seeking after truth, or some such thing" (p. 53). Indeed, he points out that while there are many reasons adults pursue learning, saying "Many learning projects are carried out for highly practical reasons..." (Tough, 1979, p. 1).

Griffin (1977, O.I.S.E. photocopy) points out that adult learning is enhanced when people's expectations are that the learning outcomes will have meaning for them and their lives. There must be congruence between learning goals and learning outcomes. Study participants were like other adults in the ways in which they sought out learning which would apply to their concerns and roles in life as Aboriginal educators and community members.

Kidd (19XX, p. 7) also contends that adults have a responsibility to act on such learning once they have acquired it. This responsibility was keenly felt by participants in my study, as shown in Chapter Four on relationships.

3.1) Course Content Relevant to Aboriginal Students: Findings

...we have to be able to tell it from our own point of view...

- Celia

An important program feature which supported success was course content focusing on Aboriginal issues and culture. The fact that the program had an Aboriginal focus was noted by all participants in one way or another as suiting them and giving them a sense of belonging in the program. The importance of learning more about Aboriginal culture and traditions was mentioned by all eight participants at different points in the interview. Comments relating to culture and heritage were made a total of seventy-six times, making this a pervasive theme for all.

Four of the eight participants (Celia, Joan, Doris, and Clara) mentioned that a major motivator was the appeal of learning more about their culture and traditions through schooling.
Four women (Doris, Edna, Joan and Tania) found it appealing to teach using Aboriginal community resources. Celia, Joan and Edna were motivated to apply because it was a “Native program.” Three participants (Doris, Edna and Celia) looked to the program to increase their knowledge of Aboriginal culture and ways of educating Aboriginal students.

In general, cultural content was valued as it enriched their own experience as Aboriginal learners, and as it was perceived to equip them better to work with their own Aboriginal students. Joan, one of five participants who expected the program to offer Aboriginal content, referred to the need for such content because of its usefulness in preparing teachers to work with Aboriginal students. She said

I have looked at other programs and I just didn’t feel I that I wanted to be part of that because they didn’t seem to be addressing those things which I thought were important, that teachers should have, and in this particular one I had talked with a number of people and asked them what they thought about it and they all thought it was going to be a great program... and I guess the one thing that really struck my mind was the fact that there was going to be a lot of Native content, and I think if that hadn’t been there I wouldn’t have applied.... it just seemed to be the thing to be able to be part of, so that I would be able to use those tools and skills that I had learned in order to address those things which I felt needed to be addressed even in small part, like, to teach.

KATE: So, um, tell me if I’m understanding what you’re saying – for about five years you had been thinking about applying to a position in a teacher ed. program... and when this program came along, you had that interest already but it was also the features of this particular program and Aboriginal content, or Aboriginal focus that made you choose this?

JOAN: Yes, and then it didn’t take me long to decide that I wanted to be part of this if I could.... My expectations were that it would be a program which would focus on the Native aspect of teaching and how it might be different from the teaching in a non-Native environment as opposed to a Native environment. And, uh, the skills and the knowledge that’s necessary to be able to function in that environment, because I think most of the participants want to be able to teach in their own Native environment. And I think when you look at it and want to see what you are going to come out with, I think the cultural aspect of it, I think was, had a large part to play in deciding that this was the program.

Edna also wanted to equip herself better to teach Aboriginal students. In identifying one of the most important factors in her decision to come to a program of teacher education she said

Native children – I’d say I wanted, I felt that I, myself would at least be able to help at least some Native students as best as I could. By that time I knew, there was, there needed to be more developed for teaching Native children.... Actually I had been informed about the program and I researched the program, and because it was here for Aboriginal populations.

KATE: Hm. That’s how you chose it?

EDNA: Um hmm. That it would be set up to gear me to, to help me familiarize and also
open doors for me to find, um, teaching routes that were geared to Native children.... but also at the same time being able to teach non-Native children.

Joan also valued the chance to become qualified to teach both Native and non-Native children, saying

I thoroughly enjoyed the content... and it had just, I believe, the right mix of Native content so that we are learning about say, curriculum development, in a very Native-oriented way but we are also learning how we could use it if we are teaching in a non-Native environment.

Like Doris, Edna, Tania, Clara and Joan, Celia was pleased to learn Aboriginal content which she could pass on to her students, and such learning stimulated her interest in attending the program. When asked what were the most important factors affecting her decision to attend the program, Celia said

My thoughts were “Oh no, what am I getting myself into?” [Laughs.] ....when we first started the program I remember that [feeling of] coming back into a morgue; [then] it was like “Oh!” the very first program was the culture one, was like “Wow!”....Just learning the things that we learned.... It seems so new, and you’re always going to keep learning more.... like I mean how could you take this whole piece of history that’s been really downright degrading and depressing and overwrought for all the Native people... and change it into something positive? But it was, you know! It was turned around and it was like well, here we are today five hundred years later, and here are our social issues, these are our problems... but we still have to find Native heroes for our kids, you know, and that to me was a real positive thing.... Now I don’t know if I would [have enrolled in the teacher education program] because I didn’t want to go. But when I knew it was going to be a Native teacher education program with Native people – All right! You know? [Laughs.] So I think that changed my perspective from the beginning, like after – the second time we went to the first course, to realize, “Wow, this is pretty neat....”

Edna and Celia also noted that enrolling in the program was inspired by the fact that it fit with their values. As Celia said

...the Native content, that was the strongest thing....we have to be able to tell it from our own point of view.... and I think that was the most important thing that I thought would be a good thing [about this program].

Some participants also valued cultural content for the ways in which such content enriched their experience as Aboriginal learners. Tania felt a need to learn more about her own heritage through education, and noted that the opportunity to do so had not been provided during her undergraduate program. She enrolled in the program because
...it was available. I could tap into it.... And the Native influence. There isn't a better program that I could have taken besides this as far as Native influence goes.... I was missing that. I searched at [my undergraduate university] for Native courses. There was one year three course in Soc. That was it. And it was a half credit course. And as I got finished with year three I realized "Wow, I don't have enough basic information about, about, you know, my people, about my heritage." You know? I know enough just from me, from reading, from my Reserve. But I thought, at the same time my sister was finishing her B.S.W. and her courses were all, you know, relevant Native material, and I really felt, I want, I want that information. I really want that.

Doris was also looking for such learning, and planned to incorporate it in her own work as a teacher –

...for me, mostly too, was finding out more about my culture and traditions, because I never grew up learning that. I guess I found out through my university.... That's where I learned about that and that's what I thought, I want to bring back some of that to the school.

For these participants, education which included Aboriginal content was a tool for strengthening their own and others' positive sense of Aboriginal identity.

3.2) **Course Content Relevant to Aboriginal Students: Discussion**

_The dominant Discourses valued in schooling are based on the language and beliefs of powerful groups. Discourses of marginalised students are rejected or devalued._

- Dorothy Lorraine Cathro

Participants referred to their efforts in finding course content of relevance to Aboriginal people and their delight in finding such content which was missing from their earlier education experiences. Celia, Joan, Tania, and Edna all described experiences which demonstrated to me how education is often a reflection of the dominant society's values and does not serve the needs of Aboriginal students. As Cathro (1993) indicates

Powerful groups have more of what the dominant society values and considers to be important. Powerful groups are usually representatives of the dominant society. Specifically, powerful groups are able to use dominant Discourses effectively and appropriately to produce, consume and disseminate knowledge. The dominant Discourses valued in schooling are based on the language and beliefs of powerful groups. Discourses of marginalised students are rejected or devalued in schooling. (p. 41)

(Note: Cathro refers to a "Discourse" as defined by Gee (1989, p. 7) as follows – "Discourses are ways of being in the world... A Discourse is a sort of "identity kit" which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize.")
The absence of Aboriginal content from school curriculum used with Aboriginal students can have the effect of rendering Aboriginal learners ‘invisible.’ Delpit (1988) refers to such devaluing of marginalised ways of being as “the Silenced Dialogue” (p. 281). Where cultural experience is silenced or replaced by another cultural experience, disorientation often occurs. For Aboriginal students, this silencing is prevalent throughout all levels of education where the teachers are primarily non-Aboriginal, the course content does not usually address Aboriginal concerns, and the underlying assumptions sometimes contradict Aboriginal values and processes (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, 1996). If not only the teacher but also the texts are non-Aboriginal and play the dominant role in classroom relations, then the culture which dominates in the classroom will be largely non-Aboriginal. Add to this the fact that most classes for Aboriginal students in Canada are conducted solely in English, and another pervasive non-Aboriginal influence is present. As Jerome Bruner (1986) says

I shall begin with a premise that is already familiar: that the medium of exchange in which education is conducted – language – can never be neutral, that it imposes a point of view not only about the world to which it refers but toward the use of mind in respect of this world. Language necessarily imposes a perspective in which things are viewed and a stance toward what we view. It is not just, in the shopworn phrase, that the medium is the message. The medium may create the reality that the message embodies and predispose those who hear it to think about it in a particular mode. (pp. 121, 122)

Where Aboriginal students must endure a language of instruction different from their own, different approaches to teaching and learning, role models who are not Aboriginal, and different sets of values and beliefs which often reflect those of the dominant culture and effectively silence those of the minority culture, a sense of displacement or “cultural discontinuity” (Ogbu, 1982) may occur. RCAP (1996, Vol. 3) findings indicate that

Rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth. Those who continue in Canada’s formal education systems told us of regular encounters with racism, racism expressed not only in interpersonal exchanges but also through the denial of Aboriginal values, perspectives and cultures in the curriculum and the life of the institution. (p. 434)

Comments about factors supporting in-school success for Aboriginal children could easily be applied to Aboriginal adults as well. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 3, p. (p. 454) reports that

The success of transition to the more regimented school system depends, in part, on the continuity between the child’s home environment and the classroom. The elements of this
continuity include language, the presence of familiar respected persons, and the consistent application of values that govern daily life. Values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and nations are diverse, but there are common elements that often conflict with those dominant in the conventional classroom. For example, Aboriginal children may be raised in a home environment where co-operation and non-competitiveness are emphasized. They may be taught that intellectual and other gifts are meant to be shared for the benefit of others rather than for personal gain. In some Aboriginal cultures, the principle of non-interference predominates; the child's will is respected, and adults do not interfere in the choices made by the child. The imposition of the adult's will on the child is considered inappropriate except, of course, in instances where the child may encounter harm. By contrast, the regimentation of the classroom experience, the emphasis on individual achievement, and the exertion of the teacher's authority constitute a rupture with the child's home environment.

For participants in my study, attending a program which included Aboriginal content and acknowledged the importance of "telling it from our own point of view" was an important factor, furthering their chances for success by positively addressing cultural discontinuity in schooling. Including such content ensured the Aboriginal 'voice' was recognized and respected in a context where unequal power relations persist, frequently resulting in the omission of Aboriginal content from school curriculum. Like others in Aboriginal education (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3) participants in this study contemplated issues pertaining to culture and education and had "an image of themselves as participants in a political process of recovering Aboriginal... culture, and gaining control of Aboriginal education" (Friesen & Orr, 1996, p. 110). By their efforts in education, participants were "contest[ing]...Eurocentrism and making space for more Aboriginal ways in schooling" (Friesen & Orr, 1996, p. 110).

Participants in my study were keenly aware in their own lives of the ways in which their educational experiences had marginalised and intimidated them. Some participants actively sought out a 'Native' program in order to expose themselves to a more positive and relevant educational experience. Participants are not alone in being thus motivated. As Hill (1999) quoting Thomas (1997) states

Thomas states that "most Native adult students do not successfully complete post-secondary studies for a number of reasons. These range from personal factors to other factors such as lack of finances, lack of support systems, and inadequate preparation." Thomas goes on to say that most Native people have been unsuccessful in their earlier education for a variety of reasons. Many of them have developed negative attitudes towards the educational system and most have not completed high school. Many of these people return to their home communities and most, if they decide to return to formal education, will look for a "Native" program which will help them to reclaim some of their traditional knowledge and with it, their Native identity. (p. 28)
Participants expressed delight and gratification at course content which addressed Aboriginal concerns and portrayed Aboriginal history in new ways. Learning more about Aboriginal culture, issues and values was an empowering experience which strengthened participants’ sense of positive Aboriginal identity. As found in other studies (Freeman et al., 1995, p. 43) “identity finds a particularly deep focus in issues of meaning and cultural values.” Participants benefited from cultural content and expressed their desire to provide such content for their own Aboriginal students.

4.1) Course Process Relevant to Aboriginal Students: Findings

....you can learn through somebody almost like preaching to you, but.... You have to have ‘hands on’ and practical experience to be able to really get a good idea of what you’ve been taught... You experience a lot ‘hands on.’

- Doris

Course process was important to participants too, who indicated their personal preferences for certain ways of learning course content. In-school approaches to learning were understood to contribute to participants’ survival and success as Aboriginal learners. Beneficial learning processes utilized in courses and on practicum included those which encouraged learning from experience, supported self-directed learning, stimulated a love for learning, expanded participants’ views of learning, and incorporated learning from peers. Especially favoured were heuristic methods of education, i.e., those methods which prepared students and provided opportunities for students to learn by finding things out for themselves.

Edna, Celia, Doris and Joan mentioned that program aspects which encouraged learning from experience were beneficial to them because this learning approach suited them. As Celia said

I guess in my experience um, I always thought – well, let me tell you how I think learning – or how I thought it was. The way I learned it in school was like, you learned it by drill and drill and drill and drill. Well, in a sense you do learn that in real life, but I think you learn best when you really like what you’re doing, so learning to me should be a positive, good experience.... teacher education at [names the school] has been really hands on, and that has helped a lot. You know, it wasn’t all theory out of a book or, you know, we had a lot of activities, and I thought as far as teacher education, that was positive, for us to experience that....

Celia also said “it’s important...especially with Native kids, like they do hands – a lot of them do hands-on learning too...” Doris noted that learnings in the program which most stood out for her were ‘hands on,’ that is, experientially based. She said
...you can learn through somebody almost like preaching to you, but I think [it's more useful] of you learning more ‘hands on.’ You have to have ‘hands on.’ You have to have ‘hands on’ and practical experience to be able to, to really get a, a, good idea of what you've been taught, I guess. You experience a lot ‘hands on.’

Celia, Tania, Doris and Susan all mentioned that the experience they gained through their practice teaching placement was highly significant for them. Joan noted the importance of the practicum in affording the opportunity for ‘hands on’ learning, saying

I also believed that you actually learn more ‘hands on.’ You actually learn right in the classroom rather than in the program. But the program just gives you the basics to be able to operate and manage a classroom. The skills...

Doris commented that the practicum had helped her to mature, saying “I specifically think of practicum experiences.... They've given me experience I'll never forget. I know that. And I think they increased my maturity level quite a bit about being ah, going into the teaching area.

Celia and Doris valued self-directed learning and commented that in their view, ways of delivering courses in the program encouraged such learning. As Doris said “...you also have to be able to...challenge yourself and be able to go out and learn stuff on your own independently too.” Doris indicated the ways in which her development as an independent thinker were encouraged through self-directed learning. In her words

But also what stands out through this program.... It’s introducing you to a lot of things, but it’s up to you too to go out and get the actual experience, or get more of what they introduced you to. Really with all the courses that’s what I found. You know about them, you’re introduced to them, now it’s up to you to get out and find more about them. It’s up to you to actually use them in the classroom.... I think what I’ve learned through this program is... listen to somebody, but think for yourself too to make up your own mind what you want to use, what you want to try – and don’t let anybody say “That doesn’t work.” Try it out and if it doesn’t work then at least you’ve tried it out for yourself. But don’t get stuck in one routine I guess, is what I found in this program. Not to have a.... preconceived [notion]. I guess I would look on students that are coming up – like everybody has a difficult time and you can’t say “Little Johnny’s always going to be that way.” He'll have a fresh start. And you’re going to give him hope, I guess.

Educational activities which fostered or enhanced a love of learning and which were enjoyable were also named as beneficial program features. Five participants (Celia, Doris, Edna, Flora and Clara) expressed a love of learning. Celia and Flora indicated that a love of learning was one factor which motivated them to apply to teacher education. Course processes which nourished this love included activities emphasizing that learning can be fun. Susan mentioned that
"...we use laughter a lot." For her, Flora, Celia and Clara, humour they shared with others during the course helped in their learning. Susan said

What has helped my learning? ...one of the things that we do a lot in the course, is that we make it fun, and we make it, we use laughter a lot. (KATE: Um hum.) And there’s nothing better, I think, to many, than having that... it adds to your interest in what’s going on. At certain times. So I would say those two things are very important. The peers, and the laughter that we have.

Doris and Clara mentioned that they had learned to love music and reading in the program. As Doris recalled

...something that really stands out is learning to love reading, and music... I’ll never forget that and [the professor’s] use of music. That was a real enjoying time for me... I learned to really love reading, reading all kinds of books, not just age appropriate for myself... but reading children’s books now. I read to myself, my daughter, but reading to older kids as well too. So I think that’s what really stands out is that you can learn a lot from reading, but not only that it’s a good thing to do, but just to love it.

Celia and Flora also commented that they had learned to love reading in the program. Celia stated that she learned that she could write a book, as the instructor had done, and intends to do so.

Celia, Doris, Flora and Edna understood that a love for learning can be nourished and stimulated by the choices teachers make and the methods used. Celia gave an example from her own life, saying that other than one high school course

I don’t remember any art, you know, and I think it was probably because I felt I wasn’t good enough to do it or, maybe low self-esteem or something, you know? But I think – I remember music in eighth grade, and I had a really nice teacher. She always gave you the opportunity to be able to – if you couldn’t do something she always said, “Well, that’s okay, maybe if you come back to it you can.” You know? Which kinda gave you the feeling like “Okay, well I can’t do it right now but maybe I can do it after.” So I think that learning should be a good experience, and it’s something that doesn’t happen overnight either – for some people it doesn’t – so I think you have to reinforce that learning. If you can take it into different areas that you know children can enjoy or adults can enjoy then they’re going to learn it more...

Doris said

I guess I learned through the program that you can learn to love, love learning, I guess... you can do it in a fun sort of way that it’s not made to feel like you have to do it but that you want to do it.

Doris, Flora and Clara said that they, in turn, had learned to encourage love of learning in
others while in the program by using teaching processes which they had experienced themselves as learners. As Clara said

...I think what this course has done it actually showed me that learning can be exciting and not only for the person who’s ready, but for children who come – how to make it exciting for them.

For all four participants, learning to love reading and music as well as how to pass a love of learning along to others was inspired by course process, and especially by the instructors’ approach, who modelled a love for such things in their own lives. Enjoyable experiences during courses contributed to participants’ survival in the program.

In response to the interview question “How do you view learning?” seven participants (Tania, Clara, Joan, Flora, Edna, Doris and Celia) stated that they viewed learning as a life long activity and themselves as life long learners (although Doris and Edna understood learning to apply primarily to school). For some participants, new course processes they experienced had encouraged them to view learning in broader and more positive ways than they had before. Tania spoke of how a more relaxed class atmosphere which included Aboriginal perspectives and less lecturing had encouraged her to broaden her understanding of what constitutes learning. As she said

Even though learning is all around us you know, everything you do, every new day, every experience, um, see I was quick to grab my pen and paper and my clipboard because I was used to doing that for all the years I was in school. And you know? Learning takes place in every setting....

KATE: ...I’m wondering if your view is changed since the beginning of the program?
TANIA: I guess somewhat, in that learning takes place in other settings, ah, other traditional settings in school, like not just listening to the professor and writing the notes down. It can happen sitting around, you know, at break time, or lunch time or supper time, some good information is passed that we’re not assessing but that we can all share. And that’s important I think in this course.

KATE: So when you said “I was quick to grab my pen and paper and my clipboard” before, does that mean that at one time you thought learning was taking notes and
TANIA: Oh yeah! Because if I missed certain things that the professor said I could lose twenty marks on that exam. You know? Like coming from a student’s perspective at [name of university where she did her undergraduate degree], you know, sleeping the first ten minutes, there goes 30% of my mid-term! You know? So, having learning assessed and evaluated so rigidly at university that’s, you know, you always have to be on your toes. But here it’s, you know, they’re not walking around analyzing everything I’m saying. Not usually. Or, except for now! [Tania and Kate laughing.] Sorry Kate! [More laughter.] I think so. I learned so much. I think because I know that learning happens all the time,
maybe I didn’t really apply it to every scenario in everyday life ‘cause I was so busy at school and stuff. But, but since this course, um, I see the value in just being, and just letting things flow, and sharing. There's a lot of valuable learning taking place in just doing that. You know?

KATE: Okay. I wonder if I should ask a little more about that. What do you attribute that change to?

TANIA: Well, I think I would attribute that to the nature of the course, having the Native perspective. Um, and I would attribute it to having so many people come from so many different parts of Ontario so there’s a lot of, you know, personalities and life styles and social norms that are different for all of us, so that when we get together, you know, it's nice to hear.... So I think that’s important, and it’s things that, I don’t know, it’s not right or wrong to assess what learning has taken place. It’s just sharing it as learning.

When asked how she would describe learning now, Tania said

...the one word that comes to mind, is a ‘process.’ I view learning as a life long process. I think it’s never alone. You never learn by yourself I don’t think. You learn in spite of, in spite of situations a lot of times, or maybe students would learn in spite of themselves if they’re not interested. I don’t know. Learning ... every day, every place, all your life..... I personally, obviously I’m in this course, but there’s so many things I have in the back of my head that I want to learn. You know. I think, just life, in that we’re heading into the twenty-first century, learning [audiotape recording unclear]. I don’t know what else to say. It’s everywhere. It’s everything you do and say. It’s my children; it’s what I say to them at night, to questions they ask me; it’s in them. It’s the sparkle in my students’ eyes. It’s, you know, knowing that I want to know wood working, I want to learn how to knit, I want to learn how to garden. I want to learn, you know, all, all these things I have on the back burner. (KATE: Um hmm.) Watching my kids do something wonderful, or mastering something.

Sharing their experiences with other students in formal and informal settings enriched the learning for all participants. A program feature which encouraged such sharing included scheduling which time tabled courses over full days and three day weekends in a secluded, homey setting. In such an environment, where students ate meals together and had both in-class and informal time with one another, learning from one another was nourished. Another program feature which encouraged the kind of collaboration necessary to peer learning included courses which built group discussion and partnered assignments into the learning process. Such activities, which encouraged learning contributions from other people, were highly beneficial for most participants. For example, when asked what was most significant for her in the teacher education program, Joan mentioned her peers, along with others, as being most beneficial to her learning process:
...the most significant things are...the quality, the commitment of the people that I’ve been associated with, whether they were instructing me or whether they were part of the group that’s learning, I think the specialness of each of these individuals certainly has helped me in my learning process. They’ve played a very important part in the two years I’ve spent, and I think it’s something that probably will always be there. (KATE: Umhum) Because it’s been that significant, it’s played a very very important part in my development as a person and as a prospective teacher. (KATE: Umhum) But also, I guess the – the specialness, I guess, of these people. And that it’s not something that has just come and gone, it’s something that is going to be there, and if I wanted to get some information, or some help in, in whatever, not only education-related, I have a few that I can always count on this for. That they’re a telephone call away. You know, that they have added something to my life.

KATE: When you say, these people...who do you mean?

JOAN: Well I’m talking about everybody that was associated with the program, whether they’re teachers, students, resource people, the whole gamut (KATE: Good – I understand. Thanks.) and I think it takes in everybody.

Edna responded to the same question in a similar fashion, saying that what helped her learning was “...the students themselves, because...it seemed we have worked as a group, we always shared the learning and not keep it to ourselves. It’s just overwhelming in a way. Shared the information that we have.” Later, when asked what was most significant to her in her teacher education program, she said

First of all I think would be the people involved in the program. The whole, ah, all the staff and teachers and the people you have been learning with, the students. And the information that every one of those people have brought in. Actually that’s been very significant.

KATE: Yeah Okay. So the people involved in the program and that means the staff and...

EDNA: And that means everybody....

KATE: ....how has the information that they brought, that the students have brought been significant?

EDNA: I think it’s cause they’ve delivered what my expectations were.... I think they bring in the cultural component.... The cultural component plus the knowledge or information they have learned from other people, or some information they have learnt along the way. They were quite willing to share it.... I think even the feedback the students have given to the staff and professors. It’s the delivery part of the program was significant. ‘Cause in some ways the, it seemed like we have been separated or whatever, the program has been delivered to us the way we wanted to.

Flora also mentioned that collaborative learning activities with peers assisted her learning. As she said “What has helped?....The class, working together and being able to cooperate has helped me.” The opportunity for in-class discussion was important to Joan, who said “...that we could
have the time to be able to absorb what we learned and also to be able to interact with each other. I think one of the biggest things I’m finding myself is what I enjoy most is interaction with other people. And how people’s conceptions of... one conception of it might be different from mine and we learn from each other.” Similarly, the way the courses were offered including dialogue with others was important to Tania, who said “I liked all the courses the way they were. I don’t know. The set up, the sharing, all the professors were approachable and easy and professional.” When Clara was asked what, if anything had helped her learning, she responded

What has helped is uh, [pause] the, knowing the other students and they’re, a lot of them are in the same position you’re in. Sharing a lot of their experiences.

KATE: During the courses when you’re in small groups and that kind of thing? Or informally, or...

CLARA: Both.

Course processes which facilitated learning with others, fostered a love of learning, and built knowledge from personal experience were most valued by participants as beneficial to their learning and success in the program. Such processes were appreciated as acknowledging Aboriginal perspectives. As Joan said when asked what helped her learning:

...the support from the presenters, the teachers who have taught us, who have uh, really I think, come out of their own standards or sense of standards or way of seeing things, to accommodate our way of looking at things. And I think that’s, that’s one of the very key things, because for me, having worked both in the Native and the non-Native part of society, I’ve always felt that the non-Native people had not really taken a hard look at what it is, or all about. But in the program I find that they have made extra effort to understand where we come from and how best to teach, to instruct parts of the program, and, uh, I think that’s been a big, big plus...

4.2) **Course Process Relevant to Aboriginal Students: Discussion**

*The values reinforced by the teacher, the inclusion or exclusion of Aboriginal materials and perspectives in the course, the type of interaction in the classroom... will all affect the comfort of the Aboriginal student.*

- *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*

Like other adults (Jacka, 1997; Kolb, 1984; Keeton & Tate, 1978; Smith, 1999; see also Chickering, 1977), these participants valued the first-hand knowledge they could gain through ‘hands on’ or experiential learning. Kolb (1984) insists that learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes. “Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (pp. 26, 27). All learning is relearning, with experience modifying
previously held concepts to form new knowledge. When knowledge comes from experience, it is invested with personal authority. Defining learning as such holds implications for course planning. Kolb (1984, p. 28) suggests that everyone enters a learning situation with ideas about the topic at hand. He states that courses which best facilitate a learning process encourage learners to bring out their beliefs and theories, examine and test them, and then integrate new, more refined ideas into the learner’s belief system, based on experience.

John Taylor (1996) points out that “a high context communication is one in which most of the information is in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of information is vested in the explicit code” (p. 223). Taylor goes on to say “traditional Native Canadian culture is a high context culture while Euro-Canadian society relies on low context communication. The extent of culture shock is greatly increased when one culture is high context and the other is low context” (p. 223). For study participants, hands-on/experiential learning processes afforded a high-context setting which they preferred.

Participants’ comments about the value of concrete, contextualized experiential learning rather than abstract learning from textbooks and drill also corroborate what researchers (Hill, 1999; Stairs, 1994) have found about other Aboriginal learners. As Stairs (1994) points out...

...we have seen many studies focused on the “how” of learning, particularly interaction and communication patterns, rather than only on the curricular “what” of education that dominated earlier work in indigenous and minority schooling. Many have noted that indigenous students around the world experience common difficulties with the formal education model. These include... non-comprehension of decontextualized verbal instruction... (p. 12)

In a study of Aboriginal adults enrolled in post-secondary programming, Hill (1999) reports learner preferences similar to those of my study participants:

We found that teachers who have a tendency to want to lecture often find a [learner-centred] pedagogy difficult to grasp. However, in our experience with Aboriginal adult learners, we have found that they prefer teachers who can facilitate a learning process, who can design tasks and activities for self-teaching and exploration, and who can engage them in a discussion and analysis of the topic at hand for the purpose of assessment and evaluation. ....Also, we have found that Aboriginal adult learners, who are encouraged to do their own research on the subjects and aspects that interest them and that are in some way related to their topic of study, are more highly motivated to complete their studies and their individualized educational program objectives.... (pp. 99-101)

Celia, Tania, Doris and Edna indicated that they found learning via formal lectures less rewarding.
Like the older adults Smith (1999, p. 199) studied, these women preferred classes where there were opportunities for discussion and asking questions. They enjoyed experiential teaching methods where they had the opportunity to participate actively. Although sometimes lectures were described as interesting, especially if the professor had a sense of humour, participants did not believe they were good learning experiences. Lectures did not allow participants to interact with the material in a meaningful way.

Participants' comments corroborate Munson's (1992) statement that “Although lectures reach large numbers of people effectively, the lack of listener participation encourages mind wandering and impedes learning” (p. 5). Participants (Susan, Flora, Tania, Clara and Celia) mentioned the importance of humour in assisting their learning. I observed that humour was threaded throughout the interviews and a pervasive element during class sessions which made the learning process more fun, and promoted conviviality with other class members. Humour was largely facilitated in settings which encouraged interpersonal interaction rather than in formal lectures. For these women, as for other adults (Barreca, 1991), humour played an important role in social situations.

Findings indicate that for some participants, course learning was most effective when it was self-directed. (Brookfield, 1984, defines self-directed learning as “...the intentional pursuit of clearly specified learning goals with the learners exercising control over content and method of learning” – p. 67) Participants were like those adult learners Knowles (1970, 1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1978) refers to when he says

1) Adults have a strong need to be self-directing.  
2) Adults have much greater experience behind them and increasingly define themselves by this experience rather than by external sources.  
3) Readiness to learn... is based, for adults, more on a question of ‘need’ related to current projects and roles than on questions of ‘ought’ as in school learning. 
4) Adult orientation to learning is problem or project-centred looking to immediate application. (1974, p. 303)

It is useful to note here, however, that not all participants indicated a preference for self-directed learning. Some authors (McCarty et al, 1991; More, 1984, 1988, Stairs, 1994) caution against labeling Aboriginal students' approaches to learning too narrowly, or using what Stairs (1994) calls “two column” schemes characterizing indigenous learners as “visual rather than verbal, holistic rather than analytic, self-directed rather than teacher-oriented, and even “right-brained” rather than “left-brained” (p. 13). Stairs (1994) says

Without negating the value of this learning style work in alerting non-indigenous teachers to alternative modes of human learning, there is danger underlying this direction in indigenous
educational development. Students tend to be labelled with fixed traits, a static model of identity foreign to many indigenous cultures. This emphasis on “cultural compatibility” may also mean that students are offered a relatively narrow and unchallenging education inadequate for strong competence in both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. Further, the importance of the learning context, the subculture of the classroom, has been underemphasized in relation to learning dispositions or styles of the students. (p. 13)

More (1980, 1984, 1988) claims that while cultural differences may have an impact on learning style, differences in learning “are not found with sufficient consistency to suggest a uniquely Indian learning style” (1988, p. 17). Even in the small group of Aboriginal learners which I worked with, I noticed a great deal of variety among individuals and a flexibility of approaches to learning depending upon the nature of the task to be accomplished.

Finding learning processes which were comfortable to them assisted participants in succeeding in the program. Such processes may have reduced the cultural discontinuity school often creates by providing ways to learn which were preferred by these adult learners. Approaches which emphasized experiential learning and thus made room for knowledge generated by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people may have helped to empower students and thus to reduce feelings of inequity reported by many other Aboriginal learners. Cleave-Hogg (1995, 1996) states that in education “it is the norms of the institution that are taken as acceptable and it is the non-traditional student who requires examination” (1996, p. 24). Issues of inequity in the production and validation of knowledge are summarized well in the background paper Indian and Metis Education

At the heart of the problem is the continuing dominance within the Universities of an academic methodology in which the experiential is under-valued. Field-based work and their relationships with the community are not held in esteem. Aboriginal educators have also expressed that their traditional methodologies are treated more as “curiosities” to be studied rather than as knowledge-producing. (cited in Cathro, 1993, p. 46)

Experiential and self directed learning helped to validate the authority of the learner and endorse a perspective where Aboriginal knowledge was valued and substantial. Reflection on experience assisted participants in “authoring their own learning and professional development” (Lyons, 1998, p. 250). In discussing factors which contribute to in-school success for Aboriginal learners, the Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) comments on the importance of including Aboriginal perspectives, saying “...the inclusion or exclusion of Aboriginal materials and perspectives in the course, the type of interaction in the classroom, and the relationship between teachers and parents will all affect the comfort of the Aboriginal student” (p. 498).
Participants also appreciated course processes which encouraged collaborative learning activities, and which allowed for informal discussions in and out of class. Hill's (1999) findings complement my findings regarding the importance of interactive discussion –

Because Aboriginal teachings stem from an oral tradition, the use of dialogue plays an extremely important role in traditional Aboriginal learning processes. Small group discussions, individual interviews, and activities that encourage questions and answers are used... Engaging Aboriginal adult learners in dialectical discussions and public presentations helps them to reclaim their skills for oration and story-telling – two of the most vital elements of a traditional educational practice that is based on oral tradition. (p. 101)

Other sources (for example Battiste & Barman, 1995; Grant, 1996; RCAP, 1996) indicate an Aboriginal learner preference for holistic and collaborative learning processes. Take for example the Island Lake Tribal Council education mission statement which mandates, in part, that "education must be 'holistic and realistic' in that it relates not only to academic development but to our spiritual, emotional, psychological and physical growth" (Grant 1996, p. 213). Grant states that here "learning is indeed, holistic, and collaborative learning is the norm" (p. 214).

In valuing collaborative learning, participants were like other adult learners reported in the literature on adult education. Topping (1997) discusses the ways in which adult learners benefit from 'peer tutoring' (defined as "people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by teaching" – p. 107). Pine and Horne (1969) say that situations which enable people to become open to themselves, to draw upon their personal collection of data, and to share their data in cooperative interaction with others maximize learning (p. 110). Robinson, Saberton, and Griffin (1985) stress the importance of learning partnerships in enriching adult learning. ‘Learner - learner interaction’ has been identified as a feature which encourages adult learning. As Combs, Avila, and Purkey (1982) state

It is a mistaken notion that learning is a solitary matter best achieved in isolation. The most important aspect of our world is people, and it is with and through people that our most important learnings are achieved. (p. 97)


In good conversation, the participants profit from their own talking... from what others contribute, and above all from the interaction – that is to say from the enabling effect of each upon the other. It is for these reasons an important mode of learning. (pp. 139, 140)
While Brookfield (1990) warns about accepting anything without critical examination, he notes that “Of all the methods most favored by adult educators, it is discussion which has perhaps become enshrined as the adult educational method “par excellence” (p. 187). He criticizes the ways in which discussion may be used, under the guise of encouraging democratic participation, as a manipulative tool to bring learners to address problems and find solutions prescribed by the instructor. For Brookfield (1990) the “overarching purpose of discussion is to help learners to explore their experience so that they become more critical thinkers; that is, to help them to become contextually aware, to develop reflective skepticism, to be able to unearth and analyze the assumptions informing their values, beliefs and actions, and to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting” (p. 192).

Several educators (Brundage, Keane & MacKneson, 1988; Griffin 1975, 1988; Taylor, 1978; Thelen, 1960) have developed models or ways of thinking about teaching and learning in educational settings which foster supportive environments and incorporate the social communication dimension as a central feature. Such literature recognizes that learners value interpersonal relations and communication among learners increases the learning. Brundage, Keane and MacKneson (1988) have outlined ways of increasing the opportunity for peer learning through open ended discussion to occur, as follows:

1) have small groups of learners interview each other to help identify learning goals;
2) organize time for learners to talk to one another in small groups of shifting membership;
3) use names in class gatherings and find ways to remind and reinforce use of names ongoingly; and
4) allow opportunities for individuals to share their personal learning goals for the course with others. (p.85)

For participants in my study, opportunities which encouraged interaction and developing relationships with other class members helped and enriched their learning. Like other adult learners, participants valued course processes which were ‘hands-on,’ permitted self-directed learning as well as learning with peers, endorsed the authority of the learner in generating knowledge, and acknowledged a variety of perspectives in the learning process.
5.1) Community-Based Delivery of the Program: Findings

...those teacher education programs that are community-based, that respond to the needs of the communities I think are the most, are the best programs, because you’re not getting your teacher education certification or skills or knowledge in isolation of the community...

- Joan

Community-based delivery of the program was important to the majority of participants in my study, many of whom were working mothers and active community members. Five participants (Joan, Susan, Celia, Clara, and Doris) indicated that the fact that the program was delivered in their own area was appealing for a variety of reasons, but especially for the freedom it gave them to continue with their jobs, raising a family and community responsibilities. For these women, community-based delivery was a program feature which influenced their decision to choose this program over others. This feature, allowing them to stay connected with their community life, was appreciated and recognized as unusual. As Susan said

...I would thank that I was able to have been given this opportunity you know, to take the course. Especially, you know, there’s not, I can’t think of any other place that would bring the course right into the community like [mentions university name] has, so... it was really good to have something so close like this. Yeah.

If attending school had meant moving away from home, Celia, Susan and Clara would have been deterred from pursuing teacher education. As Celia said

I didn’t want to leave the community so when I heard about this program I thought, “Well I want to try for that”.... I have responsibilities for my family and, you know when you’re married and stuff you can’t just get up and leave whenever you want to [laughter]. It’s a lot different from being single, so... that was, I think, one of the things that really influenced my decision about the program.... I didn’t want to leave my family after we just began, you know [laughter]. Like, that was our first year since me and my husband and his son got married [laughs] our son got married. So it was all an adjusting period for us too, and um ... I think it would have been a crucial thing if I were to have you know, had to leave, it could have been... a hard thing on all of us, and especially the little guy too, because it was like the first time in his life that he’s had true stability, so that was important to me. To make sure that I was there for him and to do those things.

Continuing to hold down a job while attending school was important for Susan, Flora and Clara.

When asked what contributed to her decision to attend a program of teacher education, Susan said

I think because I could continue working and go to school at the same time which was really a drawing card for me.... I’ve worked for thirteen years. Ever since I got out of high school and college, I was always working. So having that regular pay cheque coming in, is, you’re used to that type of... comfort, or safety in some way, like security, I guess. Knowing that
whatever you’re going to need while you’re working... the money is coming in.

Joan valued community-based program delivery because she believed that this was a more effective way for students to acquire skills suited to their own communities. As she said
...those teacher education programs that are community-based, that respond to the needs of the communities I think are the most, are the best programs, because you’re not getting your teacher education certification or skills or knowledge in isolation of the community; of the community of the whole society. Because you’re learning and you’re acquiring these skills but it is in relation to the needs of the people who you’re going to be teaching, or people who you’re going to be interacting with.

Three participants (Edna, Flora and Joan) said they appreciated that the design of the program had taken the students needs into account through offering community-based delivery and including Aboriginal-specific resources and content. These women indicated that such features had increased their sense of belonging. Celia and Flora said that they felt more comfortable because of the physical classroom setting in which the courses were held off campus, and described the courses as having ‘a welcoming atmosphere’ which helped their learning.

Of all the participants, only Doris and Susan speculated about whether it would have been better to attend a program on campus, because of the freedom to immerse themselves in school full time. Doris also indicated that in her community, completing a ‘regular’ full time teacher education program on campus was held in more esteem.

5.2) Community-Based Delivery of the Program: Discussion

If the number of Aboriginal teachers is to increase, community-based education will be an essential facilitator.

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Programs which include features such as community-based delivery and cultural course components, and which were devised in partnership with Aboriginal representatives have received recognition and praise among Aboriginal people (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 495, 496). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples commends those efforts of educational institutions to deliver teacher education in Aboriginal communities. Such delivery is recognized as one way to extend accessibility to teacher education programs for Aboriginal people who cannot pursue post-secondary education by conventional means (1996, Vol. 3). The Commission reports that for a variety of reasons including family and financial obligations “many Aboriginal
adults simply cannot relocate to the urban centres where most post-secondary education opportunities are available. Offering studies in the community or closer to home has been one way to improve access” (p. 510).

Community-based delivery also helps to address problems of cultural discontinuity identified by numerous authors. As Jerome Bruner (1986) says “The language of education is the language of culture creating, not of knowledge consuming or knowledge acquisition alone” (p. 133). For Aboriginal people, attending post-secondary education often means facing not only geographical but cultural displacement. This is no departure, however, from their elementary and secondary school experience. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 3) reports that “Aboriginal parents say they are excluded from their children’s education. There is a gap between the culture of the home and that of the school” (p. 438). Most Aboriginal youth in Ontario grow up with the majority of their classroom experience involving instruction provided by non-Aboriginal teachers in English (RCAP, Vol. 3). This trend continues in university, with authors including Cathro (1993) pointing out that

In addition to coping with what Frideres (1987) calls “foreign values and ideas” (p. 287) in mainstream society, Indigenous students usually have to leave their home communities and their familiar Discourses to attend university. Although many non-Indigenous students must also leave their communities, the disparities between the Discourses in the students’ home communities and university life are usually much greater for Indigenous than for non-Indigenous students. (p. 46)

Geographical and cultural displacement may result in a loss of belonging and a sense of marginalization from the rest of the group in university. Barer-Stein (1988) points out that “Movement from one cultural group to another whether permanent or temporary provides a shudder of shock to one’s identity and sense of belonging” (p. 40). The importance of the familiar in contributing to a sense of feeling ‘at home’ in educational ventures should not be underestimated. As statistics show (Statistics Canada Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 1993), completing post-secondary education programs is a challenge which few Aboriginal people attempt compared to the general Canadian population. One of the reasons given for Aboriginal underachievement in education is the cultural disparity between Aboriginal and mainstream worlds. For some students, it is difficult to negotiate both simultaneously. On campus at many universities, Sarris (1990) reports that

The foreign world of Dick and Jane continues in college with a sociology professor’s definition of the nuclear family as that family comprised of mother, father and siblings. The culturally diverse student, and many other students for that matter, are forced to negotiate
the discrepancies between home life and that which is found in the classroom. Too often students become disaffected, unable to deal with the conflicts, or they successfully learn to operate from one side of the chasm, repressing their life experience as it may interfere with what is happening in the classroom. These latter students accept the words and ideas of texts and professor as authoritative and tend to see their lives in terms of the texts, never considering the possibilities of seeing the texts in terms of their lives. (p. 173)

Scholars (Armstrong et al, 1990; Cummins, 1986, 1989; Mehan, Hartwick & Meihls, 1986; Rhueda, 1987; Trueba, 1989; Trueba, Spindler & Spindler, 1989) have shown evidence that minority students experience stress in school and have documented the devastating impact excessive stress can have on these students, including high drop-out rates. This stress is associated with such factors as the conflicting social norms encountered in moving from one cultural group to another.

For study participants, community ties provided a source of support, a meaningful context for their educational pursuits, and a place to sustain Aboriginal identity. Community-based delivery was an important program feature named by participants largely because it allowed these ties to community, work and family to remain strong. Study participants are joined by other Aboriginal people across the country in favouring community-based program delivery. Agnes Grant (1996) points out that in Saskatchewan “There are still very few Native students who graduate from the on-campus program but that is largely because most choose to train through the TEPS [community-based teacher education programs]” (p. 210). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommends that Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments provide support to increase the number of Aboriginal people trained as teachers by “(a) expanding the number of teacher education programs delivered directly in communities; and (b) ensuring that students in each province and territory have access to such programs” (RCAP recommendation 3.5.16). The Commission report (1996, Vol. 3) states

We urge the continuation of such programs and encourage post-secondary institutions that have not already done so to consider this form of delivery. If the number of Aboriginal teachers is to increase, community-based education will be an essential facilitator. (p. 496)

With the implementation of various Aboriginal teacher education programs and other Aboriginal access initiatives, it is hoped that the number of Aboriginal teachers will continue to increase, which in turn may assist in furthering Aboriginal student success rates in the elementary and secondary grades.
Certainty for some participants in this study, community-based delivery made the
difference between being able to enrol and thrive in a teacher education program or not. However,
additional work remains to be done in determining whether Aboriginal programs including those
offering community-based delivery are more effective in addressing the needs of Aboriginal
students overall. As the Commission report (1996, Vol. 3) states

As data indicates however, there remains much work to be done in evaluating the success of
Aboriginal teacher education program offerings, and in finding ways to more quickly
address the needs of Aboriginal students at all levels of education. Unfortunately, there has
not been much systematic evaluation of teacher education programs for Aboriginal people.
As a result, it is difficult to comment on the comparative quality of programs or on the
degree to which specific teacher education programs have developed specialized curricula to
train Aboriginal teachers. (p. 47)

6.1.1) Program Personnel who Provided Confirmation and Support: Findings

How important it is to... how important it is to care.

- Celia

The attitudes and approach of personnel working in the participants’ teacher education
program made a sizable impact on participants. All eight women referred to the ways in which
program personnel had confirmed and validated them in their educational efforts. Such personnel
included secretaries, program staff and course instructors. Mentioned in relation to program
features were: the importance of Aboriginal staff (ten times); the importance of close contact and
getting to know instructors (eleven times); and the importance of support from instructors
(thirteen times). While some comments relating to support and relationships with others have
been discussed in Chapter Four, those comments regarding support and program features are
presented here.

6.1.1) Confirmation and Support from Program Staff:

One program feature which aided success was found in the type of personnel which the
program made available to students. The presence of school staff including secretaries,
administrators and registrarial personnel who were friendly and encouraging benefited students.
Support of school staff was important to five participants, as was having a 'welcoming
atmosphere/ safe environment' in which to attend school. Celia recalled conversations with
secretarial and other program staff and noted their significance, saying

...the extra, extra stuff that everybody took for us... That made me feel really special to
know the things, the sacrifices that everybody involved made for us, [laughs] you know? I
think that’s a real important thing to recognize too.

Support from staff came in different forms, including verbal encouragement, staff contact with students during and between courses, personal and career counselling, assistance from program staff with the practical aspects of sorting out administrative problems, extracurricular activities while students were on course, and general attentiveness to the needs of the students. Edna said

The staff have been significant because they want to, they want to know how they can make it, how they can deliver a program well or if they’re going in a right direction and if they’re on their toes, things like that. It’s just been delivered so well, and [pause], takes us into, the staff takes us into consideration very much so.

6.1.2) Confirmation and Support from Instructors:

...the teacher can make the difference. And depending on their perceptions toward it and where they come from, if they found learning to be exciting, they’re going to carry that on – or pass that on to their students.

- Clara

Just as support from staff was valued, supportive or close relationships with professors were mentioned by all eight participants who noted that such relationships had increased their enthusiasm in learning, and assisted their success in the program. When asked what helped her learning, Clara immediately answered “...most of all of the teachers... I found all of them to be excellent in their field. They’ve given you a lot... or sharing a lot.” Doris, Tania, and Joan understood that such support would be available to them as teachers even after the program was completed.

Developing close, supportive relationships with instructors was beneficial in assisting participants to feel more comfortable in the program. Four participants specifically contrasted such support with earlier post-secondary experiences which were less positive, lacking in real connections with professors. Celia recalled her undergraduate experience, saying

How important it is to [pause] how important it is to care. I think because... to me, that’s what all our professors have done, you know... When I went to school for [my B.A.] it wasn’t there. You know, there was only one person that I met and... he taught us “Research in Education,” and he was really the only one that I felt was down to earth that you could talk to. And you know, as a result, I got a really good mark in that course! [Laughs.] You know?!

Echoing Celia’s sentiments in describing her experience with instructors in the program, Edna said
"It's just so overwhelming. They’ve been so open and, it's just different from what I've been [used to].... They’re open minded, cooperative. They’re not intimidating.” Similarly, Doris mentioned the close relationships she had enjoyed with program instructors who came to the community to teach, as contrasting with her undergraduate university experience:

That’s what I enjoyed too about this program is the close contact with the other students and with all the teachers. I think we were lucky in that sense to be given that opportunity to have them right, right here [in the community]. And with my experience with university, you never had a close relationship with any of the professors. They’re there, you listen, and they’re gone. But it was through this program all the teachers were great and I enjoyed close relationships with all of the teachers.

It was this kind of support from a teacher which had turned the experience of school into a positive thing for Flora, and allowed her to succeed. She described her early school experience, during which she felt that she was ‘dumb’ and could never succeed. After dropping out before graduating high school, having an encouraging teacher when she returned as an adult was particularly important for her success. As she told it

I have a very difficult time in school and I really thought I was a really, really dumb kid [laughs.] (KATE: Hm.) But later on in life when I was older I found out that I’m not, not dumb at all. (KATE: Yeah.)

FLORA: Or I had a teacher give me that [pause] and [pause] it feels good to give that to these kids.

KATE: Um Hum. You had a teacher eventually who was able to show you that you weren’t dumb.

FLORA: Yeah. ...well, I was an adult, so I didn’t have as – I think social – emotional problems when I was a child, so as an adult I didn’t have those outside problems. I knew how to focus? And I tried really, really hard because [laughs] I was living in the bush and it was like – I had always gone to school an’ gone for training, an’ I was getting money for it, and so sometimes I just kinda went just for the money, but I, I must have liked it for the schooling ‘cuz I was always in school! ....so then I found out that there was a school, a chance to get my grade twelve, but I had to ride on the bus to school. Every day was this twenty miles with the kids, with my own daughter I had to ride! (KATE: Hmm!) And I went in to school every day, and I studied all the way in to school and all the way home. ‘Til three o’clock in the morning... But this teacher, she was really good. She gave out incentives, like if you were stuck at thirty-five words a minute and you had to type fifty words a minute and she had these mugs from the high school, the [names school team] mugs. If we did it three times in a row real fast you know, increased our speed, we got a mug! And then there was a little bit of competition there because my sister-in-law and I were in the course and if she got a mug I had to hurry up and type faster and get my mug! [Kate laughing in background]. But here was this teacher that was, you know, giving us all these incentives, and if I gave my book keeping mark in, an’ it said “Your penmanship is
beautiful. Any auditor would love to work in your books” oh, well then I had to be even more careful because she said it was really good! She was just really encouraging. (KATE: Yeah.)

FLORA: So I’m [long pause]
KATE: Turned the experience of schooling around. FLORA: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Feeling comfortable as a student was important to these participants, who mentioned various factors which increased or sustained their comfort level. The most important program feature which fostered a sense of comfort for participants was the presence of other Aboriginal people involved in the program. Five participants mentioned that it was important to them that there were Aboriginal professors in the program, which gave them a sense of pride and belonging. While some of the participants viewed these Aboriginal professors as role models (as discussed in Chapter Four in the section on mentors) for other participants, the presence of an Aboriginal professor simply seemed to increase their sense of belonging. Like Flora, who did not quit out of fear her first day in teacher’s college because of an Aboriginal professor who inspired her, Celia, when asked what was significant for her said

There was something significant... that determines the outcome of this program, and I think that was having someone like [the Aboriginal program director] in that position. You know, a Native person doing the program for Native people... that to me is a positive thing that helped the whole program along.... to actually have these students come together and actually have a Native person there saying “Well, this is how you’re going to do it” as opposed to a non-Native person... like in all these other programs. I think that was... a good thing to have.

Celia noted that the presence of another Aboriginal professor was important to her in terms of inspiring a sense of pride, saying

...[names Aboriginal professor], to know where she’s at too, with her experiences, was really neat. Like I remember she really stood out in my mind when we first came to [mentions place] and she talked to us and it’s like, wow! [laughs]...well I think that’s great to see, because you don’t hear about those things when you’re on the outside. You don’t hear about Native people being so [pause]. I guess maybe you do and maybe I’m just in the wrong areas all the time. In the educational field you probably do get to know all those people, but [pause] it was good to see them up there telling us “Hey, this program’s for you, and this is what is going to be happening,” and it’s like “All right!” you know? And I think it would have been so different if there was somebody [pause] non-Native at the helm or something, saying “This is for you,” you know – it’s like the old type of education where it’s the non-Native education that we’re learning.... I don’t think it would have worked.
Like the teacher who encouraged Flora, program personnel who demonstrated caring and supportive attitudes were mentioned as an important feature of the program in encouraging success. Program features which fostered a sense of support and connection with staff and instructors included community-based delivery which meant that instructors were 'in residence' for the duration of the course sessions, and thus present after hours; and a hiring policy which gave preference to personnel (both staff and instructors) who exhibited positive attitudes of caring, approachability and respect, and which actively sought out and encouraged Aboriginal applicants.

6.2) Program Personnel who Provided Confirmation and Support: Discussion

*Teachers are central to the education experience. An inspiring teacher can set an individual on a path of discovery that lasts a lifetime. An insensitive teacher can scar an individual irreparably.*

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The women in my study were not alone in valuing the importance of positive connections and support from instructors and others. In a study conducted by Haig-Brown (1995), one of the adult Aboriginal students attending an Aboriginal education program had the following to say about why she had quit a previous school program:

The instructors were somewhat distant: they just gave us what we had to do, copied off the board, and then left us alone... they never said that we could communicate with each other. It was always going to the instructor alone... the instructor wasn’t always there.... Here it’s a more relaxed area and I was more comfortable with the instructors and people with me... Here it’s a buddy system where you help each other in the class. You need help in a certain area and you know who’ll help you... And the instructor is always there. (p. 126)

Celia, Dora, Edna and Joan were not unique in recalling negative experiences they had with educational personnel. The Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) reports

There are many accounts of students feeling isolated in a hostile environment where professors and fellow students express racist attitudes and opinions. Aboriginal students are silenced by unthinking remarks in the college or university classroom: “My English teacher said, when one of the students put up her hand and asked “Are Indian people really vicious and barbaric like these journals say?”... she said, “Yes, most are all accurate and correct.... The journals are correct. Anthropologists and sociologists knew what they were saying and recording.” (p. 516)

Like participants who emphasized the importance of supportive educational personnel,
the Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) points out that ‘a system is only as good as the people running it,’ and states that positive teacher influence is crucial to Aboriginal student success:

Teachers are central to the education experience. An inspiring teacher can set an individual on a path of discovery that lasts a lifetime. An insensitive teacher can scar an individual irreparably. Teachers are so pivotal to what happens in the classroom that Ontario’s Royal Commission on Learning termed teachers one of the four engines that will transform the quality of schooling, learning and teaching. We make the point repeatedly that no positive changes to the system can happen without the enthusiastic co-operation of teachers – a central fact perversely ignored in many attempts at reform – and that teachers simply can’t be expected to perform their many functions adequately unless they are properly prepared. (p. 490)

7.1) The Support of Peers: Findings

...the thing that helped in learning was where I was located and having people that were just like you in the cause...

- Celia

All eight participants mentioned the closeness and support of other students as beneficial to their learning. Their comments in this regard are discussed in Chapter Four, but worth mentioning here because peer learning and support were features of the program which were deliberately encouraged through both in-class and extra-curricular activities. Such closeness was also fostered through a program design which emphasized intensive periods of close contact with class mates. Participants mentioned the importance of connection and support from other Aboriginal students twenty-nine times in relation to program features which helped their learning.

When asked what stood out for her in her experience in the program, Tania recalled the sense of group belonging she had felt with others in the class, and how it was fostered by a program in which the class sizes were small, and the students completed two years of course work together. She said

I think every course was valuable and important to me as a teacher and I picked things up that I’m going to use and are necessary. Again, I have to refer to, you know, the same group of people. That’s very important, ‘cause there was a connection, and everything works well when you’re part of the group.... So we’re together, I’m not alone. I have, I’m with the group. I can just, you know, hang around and relax and share and giggle and it’s nice. (KATE: Eat junk.) Yeah, eat junk food, and it’s nice. We all have a common thread and our Native background, but not even, that’s not even relevant. I mean we don’t hold that up front and walk around, you know. It’s just on the same path and therefore connected. And that stands out. I know when I get here [to class], no matter how tired I am or how hard it is for me to leave [home] I’m going to, you know, goof off. I’m going to have fun.... It’s
familiar. Familiarity, I guess, 'cause it went... like a year and a half for me, two years for the others. Yeah, that part I like. I'm not connected with people for such a long time, you know? Usually it's one course and you may never see them again because in a lot of the [undergraduate university] courses it was five hundred students, so.

Joan mentioned that the positive learning for her had been "the support from my peers in the teacher education program." Later in the interview she extended her comments to refer to the importance of support from everyone involved in the program, saying

I'm talking about everybody that was associated with the program, whether they're teachers, students, resource people, the whole gamut. And I think it takes in everybody. Because... I don't think we would have progressed as far hadn't we had those significant others in our lives at that time. Because just the way the program was set up, like it's very heavy at times, and if we didn't have the support of these people I think probably some of us would have, you know, just gone by the wayside and said well, "We can't continue" or "We don't have the wherewithal to function in this program."

When asked what was most significant to her during her teacher education program, one of the things Flora mentioned was the support of others. As she said

...the companionship that was between the students. Because if you didn't know or something, that we were able to help each other and support each other so. Just the fact that we had such excellent professors, too. They were all really, really good.

When asked what had helped her learning, Doris responded "...the program has given me a lot of support, not only from the professors but from the other students as well. It feels like a good team." Susan too, said "What has helped my learning has been the other students, my peers...."

Having a level of comfort with other class members was important to success. As Flora described it

...there's so many times in the last two and a half years that we had to go within the department or go in to this group or go in to that group. You didn't have to hesitate. "Well, I don't want to go with her," or "I don't want to go with her," or "This person's going to snub me" or... We always had a good, cooperative group.... we've had to do some stuff, and we're able to just go off and do it without feeling inhibited by who we were going to go with. So the friendship has been developed and just the closeness and the cooperation within our group has been really, really helpful and good for the course. And for myself.... Because we were able to go through the work that we had to do without worrying about who you're going to work with, the support of, for each other.

Flora and Celia had a running joke which they shared with each other whenever they had a
difficult challenge to face in their teacher education program. When challenges arose, one would say to the other “A piece of cake!” and they would laugh together. Celia described the way they encouraged each other this way, saying

I laugh about it now because you always hear Flora and I talking about “a piece of cake.” [Laughter.] And I don’t know why I ever said that but I think I said it because if you look at something as if you think it’s going to be hard, it’s going to be hard, you know. So I looked at it from the perspective that I could do it, that I was going to go in and I was going to do it! ...I remember how scary it was on the first day and how scared some of my friends were. I thought “Oh, I can’t do that to myself” and then I think that’s where that “piece of cake” came in, you know [laughs] because, not that it was... like this last paper was really hard to write, and I was worried about the curriculum one too, like that was really um, really... a tough thing to get over and wondering if you were doing it the way he wanted you to do it. But I think if I were to let myself get scared I probably wouldn’t have been gung ho about it and I was determined I was going to do it, because I had failed before and I wasn’t going fail this time! [Laughs.] You know? I didn’t want to.

Being able to network with others, an activity which had been encouraged in the program, was something which Tania, Joan, Doris, Celia and Flora wished to continue after graduation. Tania spoke of how maintaining supportive connections with her peers gave her a sense of security and could benefit her as she assumed her professional role as a teacher. Doris expressed the sentiment well, saying

I think we’ve gained friendships, like long friendships that will probably keep. But I think if we really need somebody to talk to that we know that we can call anybody up who’s been through this program and say “Hey I’m having a hard time here, help me out.” And I think any, any of them will be more than willing to help out.

A program admission feature which gave first preference to Aboriginal candidates resulted in all classmates being Aboriginal. Learning with other Aboriginal students was valued by all participants. Such learning strengthened the participants’ sense of self as Aboriginal through shared experiences with other Aboriginal learners, through a sense of belonging and mutual support with other Aboriginal learners, and through observing others’ examples. When asked what stood out for her about her experience in the program, Edna said “…the whole class relationship and that sharing with each, that everyone had information to share.” Doris said that one of the most important things for her was “…the closeness and the openness of the group.” As Susan said “What has helped is... knowing the other students and a lot of them are in the same position you’re in. Sharing a lot of their experiences.” Celia explained how attending school with other Aboriginal learners contrasted with her earlier feelings of alienation as a student in another
university program.

...it helped a lot too going to school with other Native people. Because I always went to school with majority non-Native people and I think it helped a lot being able to be around - because it helped me to learn more about culture - my culture and my heritage. So I got to learn - know a lot of people from [a specific First Nation] area and visit different reserves and... it was good, you know. I think there was more of a success there than there was when I went to school in [another program] because it was - I found... that a lot of, I guess well-to-do kids attended, and there just wasn't the same kind of feelings between the way I lived and the way they lived, you know? I didn't have very much in common with them.... and it was hard to make friends like that... to know that. I don't know if prejudice was involved. Maybe it was but I tried not to look at that because one of my best friends in college there was a black girl... and we got along really well, and I think that was um, that was because we both came from minority backgrounds and that's what drew us together. And she felt the same way I did, so - like we had a bond there, so it was easier that way....

[The reason for choosing this program] I think it was because of the Native content... I think that was the strongest thing, knowing that I would be with Aboriginal people.

Having close contact with other Aboriginal students was beneficial to participants' learning as they felt a shared identity in being Aboriginal. When asked what helped her learning Celia, echoing Edna's and Clara's sentiments, responded

I think the thing that helped in learning was where I was located and having people that were just like you in the cause, you know, that were other students. They were coming from the same situation that you are coming from and could understand. Like you've learned a lot from each other, too, hearing everybody's experiences. You know, and like everybody's talking about their practicums and that's really great to know...

This sense of shared identity did not mean that everyone was the same, however. Edna acknowledged the differences in the group when she talked about the group building and sharing which occurred in class and outside, saying

It was a building process. Like you, we might have had our own biases that we weren't aware of, or each of us might have had our own biases and we have to try to, to become aware of them. [In] the group and the class...

Participants indicated that a sense of closeness with students was significant to their learning and success. Program features which fostered peer closeness and support included small class size, scheduling which provided opportunities to get to know one another over extended time frames (such as a two year program, rather than in a single course), time built in for informal socializing, networking mechanisms for contacting one another between class sessions, a 'homey' setting for classes, and both in-class and extracurricular activities which stimulated interaction
among students. Being with Aboriginal peers was also supportive to participants’ learning, and made possible by an admissions policy which gave preference to Aboriginal candidates.

7.2) The Support of Peers: Discussion

The dominant theme across studies is that women both prefer to learn with others and prefer a certain kind of learning relationship with others, one that emphasizes mutual support and caring.

- D. Flannery

As far back as 1959, Gould notes the importance of the group in describing the learning process of adults, saying that “group support is necessary to integrate new beliefs as part of ourselves” (1959, pp. 62-63). Paradoxically, as people invest themselves in collaborative group approaches they develop a firmer sense of their own identification (Pine & Horne, 1969, p. 109). Those participants who mentioned the benefit of attending a course with other Aboriginal students spoke of how their own sense of self as Aboriginal student was strengthened through the support of and interaction with others in the group. Celia, Edna and Doris remembered a sense of feeling at home in contrast to previous educational experiences which alienated them. Those who participated in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples hearings made comments indicating that such experiences are common to other Aboriginal learners too (1996, Vol. 3, Ch. 5).

Formal and informal learning partners have also been identified as beneficial to learning (Griffin, 1985, 1988; Keane, 1985). Griffin (1988) outlines four benefits to learning partnerships: in deepening insights and converting feelings into learning; in expanding insights through sharing; in opening new directions in reading and learning; and in forming new perspectives through challenge or confrontation (p. 112). I would also add emotional support as a fifth benefit that learning partnerships may provide in offering each other the comfort of company in a shared learning endeavour. Celia and Flora had an informal learning partnership which provided an example of emotional support. By encouraging each other in difficult endeavours by calling them “a piece of cake,” they were in effect saying to each other “You can do it!” and furthering their learning opportunities.

The value of peer learning is often referred to in conjunction with group activities. Mowatt and Siann (1997) report that

Over the past four decades, many movements within education have stressed the pedagogic advantages of groups. It has been suggested that locating learning within a group situation
aids movement away from student passivity to students actively structuring their own learnings (Rogers, 1969); that working collectively stimulates and accelerates cognitive growth (Gruenfield and Hollingshead, 1993); that the experience of learning in a group situation enhances social and communicative skills (Cassels, 1990) and serves as a means of enhancing creativity (Hare, 1982); and finally, that teaching students in groups utilizes scarce teaching resources effectively (Griffiths, 1994). (p. 94)

However, this overview of the benefits of learning in groups does not emphasize affective benefits. While the literature on adult learning indicates that peer learning is beneficial (see Boud & Griffin, 1988; Galbraith, 1990; Sutherland, 1997, for example), participants placed particularly strong emphasis on this program feature. For them, a highly significant aspect of learning in groups was peer support. Being surrounded by other students who endorsed and encouraged their endeavours assisted participants in my study to feel more at home in post-secondary education, and increased their chances of success. More pertinent to participants’ comments appears to be research on adult women’s learning. Flannery (2000) reports that

The dominant theme across studies is that women both prefer to learn with others and prefer a certain kind of learning relationship with others, one that emphasizes mutual support and caring. A number of studies in different contexts describe how women learn through interacting with other people, especially in ongoing relationships (Hoy, 1989; Van Velsor and Hughes, 1990). A common assertion is that women learn best in environments that promote mutual openness and an ethic of care, cooperation and collaboration (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Melamed, 1985; Kazemek, 1988; Ravindran, 1989; Clason-Hook, 1992.) Women’s preference for this kind of supportive, collaborative learning relationship with others is documented by a number of studies. (pp. 124, 125)

In the light of such studies as those mentioned above, participants’ comments about the benefit of program features which foster supportive connections may be most relevant to Aboriginal adult learners who are women. Alternatively, those participants whose previous educational experiences marginalised them as minority students also found it beneficial to belong to the group. Authors (Cathro, 1993; Ogbu, 1987; RCAP, 1996) report that for marginalised minority students, whether men or women, support which validates alternate, non-mainstream ways of being is especially important. Other sources (Nyce, 1990; RCAP, 1996; Winter, 1996) indicate that support in various forms is a crucial factor influencing success for First Nations students.

An area for further investigation would be to explore the graduation success rates of programs which foster supportive connections among Aboriginal learners both male and female, as compared with those which do not.
8.1) Learning Challenges in a Supportive Learning Environment: Findings

*I'm not as afraid of things, I guess, maybe, of education*

- Flora

As discussed in sections 6) and 7) above, support provided by instructors and peers was beneficial to participants' learning and helped them to feel more 'at home' in post-secondary education. Ironically, challenges presented by the instructors and the program were also important in ultimately increasing participants' sense of belonging. For five participants, a sense of feeling 'at home' grew with a sense of increased competence and confidence. These women reported that their comfort level increased as they successfully met challenges presented to them in the program.

Program features which challenged participants included curriculum development assignments, essays, and practice teaching placements. The practicum was a particularly significant and challenging program feature for four participants. While Tania and Doris mentioned that the practicum was a challenging, though positive experience, Tania also concurred with Susan that the practicum stood out because of difficulties they experienced in fulfilling its demands. As she said, in reflecting on her first practicum experience:

I don’t think I was prepared for the practicum as well as maybe I could have been prepared. I don’t think I was prepared. Even though I had [mentions instructor’s name] curriculum handbook, I don’t think anybody prepared me, you know, say properly. You’re going to be, you’re not going to have any sleep for three weeks. You’re going to have fifty courses to take care of. You’re going to have to set everything up from beginning to end. Forget your kids, forget your husband, forget cooking, forget going out to take a minute’s breath; you’re going to be working! You know! Sitting over your typewriter the moment you get home until eleven o’clock at night preparing for the next day. Nobody told me that. You know. I didn’t know. I just, I thought maybe [the host teacher] was going to give me some lessons that I could teach that were already prepared... But no! I had to do it myself. And I was lugging home a math book and a language book and a phys. ed. book and a religion book, and you know, books in my hand, and in brief case and on my head [Kate laughing in the background] and I’m trying to balance them out to my car and sit down and think, “Oh where?” I wasn’t prepared!

Course assignments also posed a challenge. Flora recalled her struggle when faced with a particularly difficult essay assignment (in which an Aboriginal professor whom she greatly respected required that she express nothing but positive opinions on education). After enduring 'writer’s block' for some time, she described overcoming her struggle as follows:
...finally I just had to be really strong with myself and say “You’re not going to find any book that’s going to tell you and you’re not going to have any magic pen that’s going to sit down and just start writing this essay.” I just made myself sit down and start writing. I had to be really firm with myself and I had a lot of stuff going on, but I still had to sit down and discipline. I had to use a lot of self-discipline to get through the course. So I’ve learned that.

Participants expressed a sense of pride in themselves at having been able to face the difficulties encountered in the teacher education program. Personal qualities, particularly willpower, were mentioned by Doris, Tania, Flora and Susan, as assisting their success. Tania’s words about what helped her to succeed impart a sense of the personal strength which all participants demonstrated:

What has helped? Well, I guess my, my willpower. My long term goal has helped with the learning because I don’t think I ever lost my focus. I knew what I had to do and I knew how much I had to suffer to get there and I just took it, you know, one step at a time. So, that’s definitely helped. Long term planning. And breaking it down into just this essay. If I can just finish these last two pages, you know. Breaking it right down. If I could just read three more pages before I got to sleep. It’s eleven o’clock. You know, breaking everything down into little minutes and pages, and looking long term because if I lost sight of long term these two pages of this essay would mean nothing. You know? It would mean, there’s more important things to do, I’ve got a fourth baby, I’ve got, you know. That’s always in my mind, not to trivialize what I’m doing and not to forget that overall it’s important. It may just be thinking of some conclusion to a difficult paper. It’s by breaking everything down. Long term plans, my willpower...

Ultimately participants acknowledged the value of such challenging experiences for the learning opportunities they afforded. In successfully facing the challenges these program features posed, participants expanded their range of competencies. As Tania said upon meeting the challenges of her practice teaching placements and completing the program successfully:

The most important thing I’ve learned is that I have the tools, the documentation, and the confidence to be a good teacher. I think that would be the most important thing. To know that I can do it. I don’t have to walk out and I’m confused or I’m worried that I can’t cut it, or they’ll think I’m not doing a good job. I know I can go in there and that I have what I need, I know I have to tools necessary to, the ideas, my own strengths to do a good job.

Participants’ sense of competence increased as a result of successfully meeting the challenges presented to them. This sense of increased competence, in turn, influenced their sense of personal confidence. Whether a sense of competence had come as a result of successfully addressing the challenges of the workplace, the practicum or the courses in the program, each
participant indicated that perceiving they had learned how to handle difficult situations successfully had increased their sense of personal confidence.

8.2) Learning Challenges in a Supportive Learning Environment: Discussion

...to provide a balance of support and challenge such that our students feel safe to move  
- Lawrent Parks Daloz

Along with the importance of support discussed earlier, participants also mentioned the importance of program features which presented them with personal challenges. Successfully meeting challenges increased a sense of personal competence, which in turn, increased a sense of feeling at home in education. Daloz (1986, p. 214) points out that programs which provide adult learners with an appropriate balance of challenge and support will foster growth. Daloz' (1986) idea of support corresponds with Robert Kegan's (1982) description of the activity of holding, and involves "acts through which the mentor affirms the validity of the student's present experience. She lets him know through her empathy with his feelings or her comprehension of his world that he is understood" (p. 212). Challenge, on the other hand, involves learning activity which contests the learner's present stance, encouraging a stretching or modifying of present ways of understanding. Identifying the appropriate balance of challenge and support requires skill and an understanding of where the learner is in terms of their own development. This identification varies depending upon the student characteristics and the environment, of which the facilitator is a crucial part. Daloz' model, below (taken from Daloz, 1986, p. 214) depicts how too much challenge and too little support will cause the insecure learner to retreat to a more rigid and simplified position, while an emphasis on support and too little challenge will create stasis, where not much learning can occur.

![Figure 1: Diagram showing the relationship between support and challenge](image-url)
Kidd (1973) refers to a situation of too little challenge and too much support when he says "It is also possible, of course, that relationship with the class members may become so supporting, the attitude and experience of all class members may become so alike, that little learning is possible. There must be some dissatisfaction, unrest, desire for something else, if there is to be learning" (p. 137). Davies (1988) concurs with Kidd (1973) and Daloz (1986) in pointing out that it is important to balance challenge with the skill level of the learner; if the learner has too much skill and not enough challenge, they will be bored, but with too much challenge corresponding to skill they will be frustrated. While the Aboriginal adult learners in my study mentioned the importance of support far more often, challenges presented by the program were also important in giving them the opportunity to prove themselves and thus to increase their comfort level; growing through developing a sense of personal competence.

The literature suggests that simply attending university presents Aboriginal learners with challenges not encountered by their non-Aboriginal peers. It is my hypothesis that for Aboriginal learners, a balance of challenge and support which emphasizes a high degree of support may be needed in order to counteract some of the apprehension which Aboriginal students often associate with education. If Aboriginal students are to move beyond historically based systemic educational barriers to successfully meet challenges which adult learning opportunities present, program features which build in support may be paramount to success. Further, to best determine student needs, Aboriginal students themselves must be involved in identifying these conditions of optimum support which will improve their ability to face growth-enhancing challenges successfully.

9.1) Setting Priorities: Findings

*These are hard questions...*

* - Edna

One of the unexpected findings of the study was in participants' response when asked to list their preferences in order of priority. Those questions which asked participants to set priorities included "What were the most important factor(s) involved in your decision to come to a program of teacher education?"; "What has been most significant to you during your program of teacher education?"; and "What is the most important thing you have learned in teacher education?"
In all of these questions asking participants to prioritize their responses, I noticed that some participants had difficulty ordering items hierarchically and naming the top item. Difficulty was indicated by long pauses and then requests to repeat the question, by verbal indication that the question was a difficult one to answer, by inability to answer the question, or by answering the question in such a way that named several ‘number one’ items instead of just one. Four of the eight participants had difficulty in answering the question “What were the most important factor(s) involved in your decision to come to a program of teacher education?” Six of the eight participants had difficulty answering the question “What has been most significant to you during your program of teacher education?” Four participants had difficulty determining “What is the most important thing you have learned in teacher education?” While one participant had difficulty in establishing priorities in all three questions listed above, five others had difficulty in establishing priorities in two out of three questions. One additional participant had difficulty in establishing priorities in one question only. All told, seven out of eight participants had difficulty in establishing priorities in at least one of the three questions which asked them to do so. Comments indicating participants’ difficulty included Edna’s remark “These are hard questions” in response to two questions requesting priority ordering; Flora’s statement “It’s hard to, it’s hard to answer [very long pause] I’m trying to weigh things here;” and other comments such as “I don’t know how to answer your question;” “I don’t know;” “I don’t know if that’s answering your question.” Of the eight participants, only Clara consistently demonstrated ease in determining priorities for all three questions.

9.2) Setting Priorities: Discussion

...the capacity for all-round circular vision...

- Jim Dumont

While it is dangerous to entertain stereotypes, numerous authors have indicated that many Aboriginal people favour a more ‘holistic’ and non-linear way of ordering experience. This holistic orientation to education may be traced from early times. As the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 3) concludes “Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically” (p. 434).

Participants’ discomfort with separating elements out of the whole to label them ‘number one’ is reiterated in Rhodes’ (1988) account of a Navajo student who responded to a request to summarize the main points of the story by saying “There are no main points. They don’t make
sense without all the rest” (p. 23). Like Rhodes, other authors (Hill, 1999; Kehoe, 1984; Poeltzer & Poeltzer, 1986) have discussed ways of learning which Aboriginal students seem to favour above others. These ways include holistic and ‘hands on’ methods which complement an inclusive, non-hierarchical way of thinking reported by a variety of writers. The Assembly of First Nations (1988, Vol. 1) indicates that

The data suggests that the cultural influence of First Nations children promotes a learning strategy that tends to reflect an ability to synthesize separate elements of information into a group in order to gain a good comprehension of the matter. In contrast, non-Aboriginal children tend to synthesize information by breaking it down into very specific elements to attain their comprehension according to their own cultural influence... (p. 79)

Study participants’ reluctance to set priorities, and their discomfort with setting one factor over the other reminded me of the discussions I have read concerning ‘post-formal intellectual development’ (Kegan, 1982). While many writers have indicated that development toward maturity involves progressively greater independence, self-direction and autonomy (Angyal, 1941; Colarruso & Nemiroff, 1981; Erikson, 1959; Levinson, 1978; Snygg & Combs, 1949), others have explored notions of development beyond autonomy (Gilligan, 1982; Kaplan, 1976; Kegan, 1982, Miller, 1976). Kegan (1982) links notions of development beyond autonomy with ways of apprehending reality which some (Basseches, 1980, 1984; Gilligan & Murphy, 1979; Perry, 1970) call “a post-formal stage of intellectual development” (Kegan, 1982, p. 228). This stage is more inclusive than formal intellectual reasoning favouring exclusivity and dichotomous thinking. Whereas contradiction to one’s way of apprehending reality would formerly have triggered the pressing need for resolution, and a sense of threat to the ‘system,’ at the ‘post-formal’ stage of development the orientation seems to shift to a tolerance of paradox and contradiction, and “the relationship between poles in a paradox rather than a choice between the poles” (Kegan, 1982, p. 229). Kegan accounts for this change by saying that formal operational thought is dualistic, drawing sharp distinctions between the knower and the known, and between one object and another, between pairs of opposites, whereas, in post-formal operational thought, “the knower is seen as unified with the known, various objects (and variables) are seen as part of a continuum, and opposites are seen as poles of one concept” (Kegan, 1982, p. 229, quoting Koplowitz, 1978, p. 32).

content that mature thought recognizes that there is an interconnectedness to knowing or what Lyons (1990) calls “nested knowing” (p. 173). In contrast to knowing which involves separating out and objectifying, then ‘universalizing,’ is an approach to knowing which acknowledges context. This approach connects ideas of self, morality and epistemology and suggests “that there are intricate connections between people’s ideas of self, their ethical ideas and their relationships to others” (Lyons 1990, p. 173). Nested knowing involves a dialectic in which individuals influence and are influenced by each others’ ways of knowing, and is characterized by interdependence of self-other in a learning process (p. 174). This way of understanding reality has much in keeping with Kegan’s (1982) “Interindividual balance,” where the self-regulation of the “Institutional self” gives way to “the intersection of systems.... a counter-pointing of identities which at once shares experiencing and guarantees each partner’s distinctness” (p. 106).

Although some theorists (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982) would claim that tendencies towards thought processes favouring connectedness or autonomy, subjectivity or objectivity in self-other relations are gender-related, other factors such as stages of adult development (Kegan, 1982; Perry, 1970), class, and culture (Dixon, 1976; Harding, 1987; Hill, 1999; RCAP, 1996) have also been named. Flannery (2000) indicates that “Scholarship in different fields has offered varied explanations for the connected nature of women’s learning. These explanations are variously physiological, psychological, sociological and social-psychological, anthropological, and political” (p. 130). Perhaps, as Perry (1970) says, “To understand anything adequately, one needs at least three good theories.”

In contemporary adult education, there are numerous educational endeavours which require separating out and ordering by priority. Such endeavours include testing methods such as ‘multiple choice’ which emphasize one right answer; heavy homework assignments which require that students place a higher priority on their studies than on their home or community activities; and approaches to student performance which emphasize competitiveness for individual gain. Yet Royal Commission findings (1996, Vol. 3) pertaining to Aboriginal children could easily be applied to Aboriginal adult learners as well. The Royal Commission points out that those educational undertakings which emphasize individual competitiveness and downplay the importance of the group may be counterproductive for Aboriginal students.

Values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and nations are diverse, but there are common elements that often conflict with those dominant in the conventional classroom. For example, Aboriginal children may be raised in a home environment where co-operation and non-competitiveness are emphasized. They may be taught that intellectual and other gifts
are meant to be shared for the benefit of others rather than for personal gain. By contrast, the regimentation of the classroom experience, the emphasis on individual achievement, and the exertion of the teacher's authority constitute a rupture with the child's [or adult's] home environment. (p. 454)

The difficulty which participants had with choosing "the best" or "the most" suggests that they were not comfortable with hierarchical (and hence linear) ordering of separate entities, but tended to think in more inclusive ways. As Anishinabe educator Jim Dumont (1992) says, Aboriginal people have the "capacity for all-round circular vision" (p. 79). Such an approach to thinking may be culturally linked, and is important to think about along with other cultural influences (Erickson & Mowatt, 1982) in creating educational experiences for Aboriginal students. For example, in student counselling, some Aboriginal communities recommend group programs with little direct emphasis or reference to "self" (MacKay & Myles, 1989).

For participants in this study, as for other Aboriginal learners, learning approaches which are more holistic and include recognition of the inter-relationships involved may be more favourable. Program features which support inclusive ways of addressing learning and acknowledge non-hierarchical approaches must be tested for efficacy with Aboriginal learners. Such features could include activities which encourage peer learning and allow students to progress at their own pace in a self-directed manner. These methods were mentioned favourably by participants and may allow Aboriginal adult learners to engage in post-secondary learning activities with a greater degree of comfort and success. Other features could include non-competitive and collaborative course work. For community-based programs, providing time in class for assignment work rather than requiring these activities to be done as homework would remove situations where competing demands between home and school responsibilities place undue stress on students. Examining inclusive ways of addressing learning for success is an area worthy of further exploration.

10.1) Program Features Which Hindered Success: Findings

lack of time and resources...

- Clara

Along with program features which fostered success in post-secondary educational ventures for my participants, it is important to include an overview of features which participants identified as hindering their success. Findings included here are in addition to those
relationship-linked factors which impeded success, discussed in Chapter 4.

10.1.1) Community-Based Delivery – Detrimental Aspects:

Several participants mentioned various aspects of community-based delivery which hindered their learning, thus threatening their success as an Aboriginal learner. Five people noted that there were not enough resources, particularly library resources at their disposal at community-based course sites. As Clara said when asked what hindered her learning:

Maybe the other thing is also dealing with time, doing a good job on assignments. Because you don’t have the necessary resources all the time that you would require, so you have to make do with what’s available. [Lack of] time and resources....

Tania concurred, saying “What hindered, somewhat, not having the library materials first hand. I’m just thinking of some of the courses. I could have gone and looked up a few books and shared with the class, but unless I brought those books with me I couldn’t share. I had to use what I had. So that was a hindrance.” She also mentioned a lack of “conveniences of the university” campus such as “the technical stuff” including inexpensive copy and laminating services, fax machines and computers. Other on-campus resources she missed were a student cafeteria and student services area.

For Celia, Flora, Susan, Joan, and Edna, the combination of intensive course sessions, which were part of community-based delivery, and other responsibilities outside of school resulted in not enough time to do assignments. While Doris and Susan liked some aspects of community-based delivery, they also expressed interest in attending a full time program on campus. Doris perceived that the community-based program was not as respected as a full time program on campus because it was thought to be less rigorous and comprehensive than campus-based teacher education offerings. Susan stated that the stress and demands of her work hindered her learning. In addition, intense and compressed course sessions meant that sometimes it was hard to fully absorb course content. While some sessions were scheduled over three day weekends to accommodate these adult learners’ other responsibilities with work and family, long hours and compressed content sometimes encroached upon reflective and discussion time. As Joan said:

... there’s improvement to be made in every program.... in this particular program those [aspects needing improvement] are very minor as far as I’m concerned, and one of them is the time factor and the amount of work that is scheduled for each, uh, for each segment of the program. I think sometimes it was a very very heavy, heavy load, and there’s just a possibility that we may have missed out on getting the full benefit because of it – because it was packed into such a short time frame.
KATE: Umhum. Could you explain the time factor a little bit more?
JOAN: Um, I guess in terms of having that much to learn in that space of time was a lot, and I would like to see the program develop so that you are getting the most of whatever is in that time frame. Like if you were taking drama, for instance, that we could have the time to be able to absorb what we learned and also to be able to interact with each other.... But it’s just that there was so much crammed into each session that sometimes I think it was almost overwhelming.

Likewise, the on campus summer session was too compressed for some students. Clara reported

And then, last summer when we did that intense [summer session] like you were just swamped with information. And the class had the feeling, um, sometimes that they wondered “Are we going to be able to deal with it?” or to, just hoping to retain a lot of what they were getting.

Clara stated that the stress of the program’s intensive summer session may have contributed to her poor health and said she was not planning to attend the summer session the following year for health reasons. As she said

Yeah, they [health problems] were minor.... and then doing that intensive course.... I found it really, ah, getting more and more difficult.... just the stress of it being not finished when the day is over. You go home and you’ve got assignments to do, and that kind of thing. And then you’ve got a family too.

While four participants mentioned that their health (physical or emotional) was not good at the outset of the program, Clara stated that poor health had hindered her learning as she had not been able to attend part of the program. Two participants noted that their health was not good at the time of the interview. An additional participant noted that for a short while during the program poor health had affected her learning.

10.1.2) Lack of Preparation Time Before Practice Teaching:

Susan and Tania indicated that although being a student teacher in the classroom had been a significant part of their learning, this learning was hindered by the lack of adequate preparation time during courses prior to beginning their teaching placement. More emphasis on learning and practicing lesson planning before beginning the first student teaching placement was mentioned in particular. As Susan said “...so the next thing you know you’re in class and [laughter] you’re just “Whoa, wait a minute here!” But you have to do it! That was a bit, yeah, the lesson planning. If they had to change things I think they could have added more to the lesson planning...” For Susan, finding the time to do a practicum was an added challenge on top of the already daunting prospect of teaching in a classroom setting. While she felt confident that she could handle the
program, she said

The only part that I really felt that I couldn’t do was the placement. And that was the biggest and scariest part for me, was trying to fit in nine weeks of placement.... I still have to do half of it. So, but I know that I was told that we have another year to do that, so.... that’s the good part about it, and I’ve made arrangements to have it all finished before Christmas. It’ll be finished. That was the that was the scariest part for me was the placement because... I don’t know, just, when you go into a classroom you see all these little students looking at you and you think, “Where’s the teacher?” and then you realize, you’re the teacher! [Susan and Kate laughing.] It’s kind of scary!

Feeling adequately prepared prior to embarking on such an intimidating endeavour was important to these participants.

10.1.3) Long Commute to School:

Unlike other participants in the study, Tania commuted to the program from some distance, and stated that the distance between home and school hindered her learning as she spent so much time travelling. As she said

Definitely the distance for here was a hindrance, ‘cause I had to leave so early to get up to [name of place] ...that was a problem. The long distance travel.... Like leaving my family, that was really hard, that was hard for me. I immediately felt lonely. I missed [son’s name]’s birthday. I never missed my kid’s birthday. I had to call him. That hindered.

10.2) Program Features Which Hindered Success: Discussion

*We have not achieved equal opportunity or equal results in the post-secondary education now available to Aboriginal people. Removing barriers is urgently needed.*

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

Cross (1981) lists a variety of barriers under the headings of “situational,” “institutional,” and “dispositional” (p. 103). She insists that these barriers must be recognized by the institutions designing and offering programs, and by the individuals in assessing their own situations before they may be adequately addressed. She sees comprehensive needs surveys on the part of facilitators and at the institutional level, and sensitive appraisement of individual student’s needs by course facilitators as necessary to the process of enhancing adult learning. Participants in my study reported dispositional (health-related) barriers, situational (family and role-related) barriers, and institutional (program distance, lack of resources, negative experiences in other universities, compressed nature of community-based delivery) barriers.

Unlike some other Aboriginal women (in particular, non-status, single parent – Ontario Women’s Directorate, 1986; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993; Statistics Canada
Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 1993) the Aboriginal women who participated with me in this study did not indicate that they were economically disadvantaged. They did, however, work to meet financial obligations (with the exception of Tania and Edna, who were full time students and mothers of four and two children, respectively). They referred to the difficulties which many Aboriginal women and women in general face when they attend school as adults (Hoschild, 1989; Rockhill, 1991). While part-time, community-based delivery made it easier for them to fulfill their multiple roles as mothers, employees and students, at the same time, some participants noted that community-based delivery also made it harder as these roles were concurrent at all times, and there was no chance, as Susan said “just to engross yourself totally into something.”

Participants were able to overcome their “situational,” “institutional,” and “dispositional” barriers, but indicated that such barriers added stress to their efforts to succeed. Reported barriers to learning have implications for program planning. The type of program features offered by post-secondary institutions may help or hinder Aboriginal students in achieving success (RCAP, 1996).

**Conclusion**

*Program features which foster success and ultimately contribute to an increase in the number of Aboriginal educators are necessary to address a present and future need. Findings here are not new, but reinforce what many Aboriginal people have been saying for decades. “For nearly 30 years, Aboriginal leaders have made policy recommendations to governments, and governments have conducted internal studies.*

> - Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

A study of program features which foster success for Aboriginal learners is well worth the effort. The literature suggests that from the point of view of Aboriginal people the education question is both cultural and political. They contend that schools have not been shaped or controlled by people of Aboriginal ancestry. As Eber Hampton (1995) points out, “For most Indian students, now as in the past hundred years, Indian education means the education of Indians by non-Indians using non-Indian methods... Far too few Indian students have contact with Indian educators who are attuned to their culture and who can serve as models of achievement...” (p. 6). From early residential schools to present-day elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools, it is reported that Aboriginal students have experienced dissonance between the culture of their family and upbringing and that of the schools (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1986; Johnson, 1988, 1995; McGregor Pitawanakwat, 1989; RCAP, 1996). As well
as such systemic oppression, overt acts of discrimination against Aboriginal people have often damaged the ability of students to feel good about themselves and about participating in the schools (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill, 1987; Cathro, 1993; Delpit, 1988; Indian and Metis Background Paper, 1992; RCAP, 1996; Wilson, 1986).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, many barriers to post-secondary education still exist for Aboriginal students.

Obstacles continue to block Aboriginal people from achieving higher levels of education. Adults who left high school without graduating may be admitted to post-secondary studies as mature students, but they usually have to complete qualifying or bridging programs. Many students live in remote or isolated areas that require them to relocate for education programs; this may not be feasible if a person has family responsibilities and financial obligations. Any individual or family living at the edge of survival requires solid financial assistance to make a significant life change, and few people who live in poverty will risk taking out loans for post-secondary education. In addition to these barriers, there is the question of the training and education programs themselves. Many ignore Aboriginal perspectives, values and issues and give scant attention to the work environment in which students will use their professional knowledge and skills. In the informal culture of the institution, there may be little or no affirmation of Aboriginal identity, and the environment may replicate the negative features that led students to drop out of school in the first place. Aboriginal support systems – peer networks, family activities, financial, personal and academic counselling, or day care services – may not be in place. The lack of institutional readiness to develop these supports is a significant deterrent to the completion of programs for students who do enrol. Lack of Aboriginal control, strongly evidenced in the education of children and youth, is also encountered in the education of adults.

The program which participants attended included program features which addressed some of these barriers. Program features which aided participants in the efforts to succeed in a teacher education program included an affirmative action admission policy which eased admission requirements to some extent (although a kind of ‘bridging’ was still required and candidates were not admitted without grade twelve or equivalent). Once admitted, course content which aided success included learning which pragmatically addressed participants' needs for employment-related knowledge and skills; and that which was relevant to them as Aboriginal learners who wished to learn more about their own culture, strengthen their own and their students' positive sense of Aboriginal identity; and build on their abilities to work effectively with their own Aboriginal students.

Some learning processes utilized during courses were reported to be particularly useful. Participants preferred course processes which facilitated collaborative learning with peers, built
knowledge from personal experience, supported self-directed learning, and stimulated a love of learning. Such processes were most valued by participants as beneficial to their learning and success in the program, and acknowledged Aboriginal perspectives. A relaxed and supportive atmosphere was important in creating conditions conducive to learning. Including Aboriginal perspectives in course content and process recognized Aboriginal identity and the work environments where participants would use their skills.

Community-based delivery of the program fostered the development of a supportive atmosphere as well as providing educational accessibility to participants who were unable to leave their families and careers to attend a campus-based teacher education program. Time tabling courses to accommodate home and work schedules acknowledged family and financial obligations and assisted students who fulfilled multiple roles. Like other Aboriginal people across the country, participants valued community-based delivery for the freedom it gave them to maintain the family, work and community ties in their lives. One participant also pointed out that community-based programs are more effective in assisting students to acquire skills suited to their own communities.

The primacy participants placed on relationships with others was apparent throughout the interviews. In discussing program features which benefited their learning, relationships with others were mentioned frequently. In particular, the importance of support and close relationships with staff, instructors and students meant a great deal to all participants. Indeed, participants went so far as to indicate that without such support, success in their learning endeavours may not have been possible. Program staff and instructors, proximity to family, and a lively peer network contributed to a supportive environment for students.

Program features which fostered peer closeness and support included small class size, scheduling which provided opportunities to get to know one another over an extended time frame, free time built in for informal socializing, networking mechanisms for contacting one another between class sessions, a 'homey' setting for classes, and both in-class and extracurricular activities which stimulated interaction among students. Program features which fostered a sense of support and connection with staff and instructors included community-based delivery which meant that instructors were 'in residence' for the duration of the course sessions, and thus present after hours, and personnel (both staff and instructors) who exhibited positive attitudes of caring, approachability and respect.

Along with support, successfully meeting challenges presented by the program ultimately
contributed to participants' comfort level. Program features which challenged participants included course assignments (particularly essay writing and curriculum planning), and practice teaching placements. Upon successfully meeting such challenges, some participants reported an increase in self-confidence which accompanied their sense of increased competence.

The presence of other Aboriginal people (including students, staff and instructors) in the program increased participants' sense of feeling 'at home' in education, a new feeling for some participants who had suffered alienating experiences in previous educational endeavours. Learning with other Aboriginal students was valued by all participants. Such learning strengthened the participants' sense of self as Aboriginal through shared experiences with other Aboriginal learners, and through a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Participants also made valuable contributions in outlining program features needing improvement. Features identified as hindering their learning included lack of resources at community-based sites; course locations which necessitated a long commute; intensive course sessions which 'crammed' too much material into short time periods and did not provide enough time for reflection or discussion; and the fact that community-based delivery made the multiple demands of participants' lives concurrent with the burden of school, which included heavy assignments. Some participants felt courses should give more attention to the development of skills such as lesson planning before they went out on practice teaching placements. Other participants felt that their course load was very heavy at times.

During interviews, all but one participant expressed discomfort with those questions which asked them to order their responses by priority and choose the number one factor. Questions asking them to choose the "best" or the "most" were met with silence, long pauses, confusion, and responses naming multiple factors. This unexpected reaction to such questions suggested that participants may not be comfortable with what has been called 'linear' and 'hierarchical' thinking, but may tend to think more holistically. While further exploration is needed to determine the accuracy of such an assumption, such a finding has implications for program planning. Program features which support non-hierarchical, holistic approaches, and which participants favoured, include opportunities for experiential learning and collaborative learning with peers.

Many of those features which participants identified have also been discussed in research on adult learning and Aboriginal education. Aboriginal people recognize that one way of addressing persisting school difficulties associated with cultural discontinuity is to increase the
number of Aboriginal teachers in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. Participants in the study wanted program features which would better equip them to be Aboriginal teachers. They were like other Aboriginal educators represented in the Royal Commission report (1996, Vol. 3):

Today, the efforts of Aboriginal educators and communities are directed to restoring continuity between the Aboriginal home environment and the school. The teaching of Aboriginal languages, the staffing of schools with Aboriginal teachers, the inclusion of elders as teachers, and the development of curriculum rooted in the values, history and traditions of Aboriginal peoples are all attempts to fit formal education into a broader learning process that begins in the family. (p. 455)

It may be said that the degree to which these Aboriginal adult learners have been successful in their post-secondary education depended, in part, on program features which recognized and supported their interpersonal, intrapersonal, and community connections. Program features which encouraged participants to feel 'at home' as Aboriginal learners were especially significant in this regard.

While this is just a small study, it is hoped that participants' comments about what worked for them are presented accurately and will make a useful contribution to the knowledge in this area. The need for knowledge on the topic of adequate post-secondary education for Aboriginal students is great, as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples points out. While Aboriginal people have noted a lack of adequate response from post-secondary institutions, the need for educational services continues to grow. As the Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) reports

We have not achieved equal opportunity or equal results in the post-secondary education now available to Aboriginal people. Removing barriers is urgently needed. Over the past two decades, Aboriginal populations have been rebounding, following a growth pattern similar to the non-Aboriginal population but about 10 years behind. Between 1991 and 2016, the population aged 15 to 24 is expected to grow from 142,400 to 175,500 as the children of today’s young adults become youths and young adults. Within the next decade, they will reach an age when post-secondary education and job opportunities must be accessible. The demand is expected to expand even further until the year 2011, when the 20-to-24 age group will be the largest segment of the Aboriginal population.... Program features which foster success and ultimately contribute to an increase in the number of Aboriginal educators are necessary to address a present and future need. Findings here are not new, but reinforce what many Aboriginal people have been saying for decades. “For nearly 30 years, Aboriginal leaders have made policy recommendations to governments, and governments have conducted internal studies. The Commission examined 22 reports on Aboriginal education written between 1966 and 1992. The recommendations of these reports, many of them excellent, show remarkable consistency. Recommendations in past
reports and studies [include] Aboriginal control of education; school courses in Aboriginal studies, including history, language and culture; training and hiring of more Aboriginal teachers; inclusion of Aboriginal parents, elders and educators in the education of Aboriginal children; special support programs for Aboriginal students... training Aboriginal adults for teaching, paraprofessional and administrative positions in education... (p. 501)
CHAPTER 6

PERSONAL CHANGE

Introduction

The Aboriginal women who participated in this study reported that they had gained a wide variety of knowledge and skills while enrolled in the program. Some of what they learned and experienced resulted in self-perceived changes in themselves, which they discussed in the interviews in response to interview questions addressing personal change. Participants were asked the following questions associated with change:

1) What does the phrase "personal change" mean to you?
2) What causes such change?
3-1) Looking back, how would you describe yourself at the beginning of the [teacher education] program?
3-2) How do you describe yourself now?
3-3) To what do you attribute these changes, if there are changes?
3-4) How do you feel about yourself as a teacher education student?
4-1) How do you view learning?
4-2) Has your view of learning changed since the beginning of the program? (If so, please explain.)

After they had responded to the above questions, a follow-up question using 'active listening' techniques was asked in order to ascertain that I had understood what they were telling me, for example: "Let me see if I understand what you are telling me. Before you began the program you _____ . Now you _____ . Is that correct?" In several cases, participants added to/ revised their comments to amend my understandings. When I again repeated to them what I understood them to have said, they concurred.

Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter, participants' definitions of personal change and what causes such change are examined. The chapter then presents participants' personal accounts of changes occurring while enrolled in the teacher education program. Finally, personal change is discussed as it appears in the literature.
Personal Change: Findings and Discussion

1.1) **Participants' Definitions of Personal Change: Findings**

*It may be a very very very slight change, or major change, but I think you have to know, have to know it and acknowledge it.... I think it's a process of growing, I think it's a process of acquiring knowledge, a process of acquiring skills, and the personal interaction with other people, of other significant people who have made a difference in your life. And you are looking at things now through a different set of glasses...*

- Joan

Participants definitions of personal change were broad although some participants held shared views on the definition of change. Five participants (Joan, Doris, Edna, Clara, and Celia) associated personal change with growth. Clara said personal change is “I guess growth in somebody. [pause] Personal development. [pause] Personal change could be just another way of thinking or even physical....living in a more spiritual way of thinking, or growing....emotional or mental. Learning.” Celia said “Personal change. [pause] I guess it means [pause] growing [pause] understanding reality.” Edna responded “Personal change? That would be, ah, someone who has grown inside.” Doris described the term by giving an example of the opposite of personal change, saying

Personal change. [pause] Maybe I could use the teachers as an example there.... One of the professors said they’d been working for twenty years but they’ve done the same thing year after year for twenty-some years, so they really only have one year of experience! And I think that reminds me at first of change. You have to want it, and you have to go out there and get it for yourself if you want to succeed or advance. You can’t just be stuck, like you just can’t get your B.A./B.Ed. and think it’s all done and over with....

KATE: What is personal change?
DORIS: It's not having tunnel vision I guess and looking out, stuck on one way or one set of ideas. To explore and keep an open mind when you’re, when you’re identifying goals or whatever you have in mind. Not being stuck...

KATE: Not being in a rut.
DORIS: Yeah. That will describe it.

Three participants (Susan, Tania, and Flora) indicated that they associated personal change with something new, though not necessarily with growth. Tania said “Well it could be home, school, family” and expounded upon this idea, saying

It’s... just choosing a different path from one that you might have been on for a time; diverting — whether it’s a major, you know, three hundred and sixty degrees turn or just, you know, a little ten degree angle, whatever. Just a personal change. Whether you choose
to take up a cooking class or a child development course, choose to go out that night or stay in and study, or you choose to have another baby, or choose to move to the west end of the city, or relocate to [mentions home reserve]...

Flora called personal change

Something different about a person in the way they think or act or the manner in which they talk or behave... and the way you react too.

Susan said that "personal change to me is when you don’t have to, where you do it voluntarily; have [pause] made or changed something in your life... which you’ve been either doing or just been involved."

Joan, Clara and Tania linked personal change with an holistic view of the person. As Joan said

Personal change can mean the change within me, within one’s own world, because I think of change personally; the feelings and emotions, physical body, and uh, the mental, you know, is personal change.... I guess it’s – it’s that you consider the – the essence of you, if you want to put it that way. The real you if you want... Other factors may come into it but I think basically it has to be the real you where this change occurs.

Tania associated personal change with specific external events, as mentioned above. The other seven women indicated that personal change was largely psychologically based, linked with changing attitudes and perceptions. As Celia said

So to me, I think personal change would be realities... understanding realities.... What are you going to do? Are you going to argue and fight or are you going to work at it, you know? So that is something I’ve learned to do too... At one point in time I probably would have just picked up a bottle and started drinking them away, you know. So, and where did that get me? It didn’t get me anywhere but physically ill. So.

While six participants presented personal change as a positive thing, Tania and Celia also indicated that some personal changes could be difficult. For example, Tania mentioned that personal change could be caused by unfortunate circumstances such as job loss or lack of finances, which would make changes harder to bear.
1.2) Participants' Thoughts About What Causes Personal Change: Findings

Circumstances, lack of finances, opportunities, opportunities for jobs, lack of jobs in some cities, um, birth, a birth of babies, doors opening, availability of courses... It's um, exposure to certain materials, to certain people, to certain professors, that give you a new road to take, a new insight. Exposure to culture and your heritage. A different angle you hadn't thought about that you now want to explore that was just something that you were being taught or that you read about or listened to, but now you're going to adopt it as part of your way of life, you know, that becomes part of you.

- Tania

When asked what causes personal change, and/or to what they would attribute their own personal change, participants named other individuals (six participants); learning experiences (six participants); support from significant others such as supervisors, teachers, husbands and peers (five participants); environment (three participants); Aboriginal spiritual teachings (three participants); personal willpower (three participants); self-awareness (two participants); and 'hard knocks' (one participant). For all participants, personal change involved relationships with others in some capacity.

Interestingly, participants' comments regarding what causes personal change in general reflected those factors which had influenced change in their own lives. In response to the question “What causes personal change?” no one said “I don’t know what causes personal change for others, but this is what causes such for me.” Rather, all participants but Susan mentioned factors causing personal change which they mentioned again in response to the question “To what would you attribute these changes [in yourself]?” For Tania, the factors which influenced personal change in general were the same as those which influenced her own changes specifically. For Joan, Clara, Edna, Flora, Celia and Doris, general factors influencing personal change were included in the list of those factors which had influenced their own change, along with additional factors. For Susan, what influenced personal change was not reflected in what she said about what influenced her own personal change. Factors influencing personal change are discussed, below.

1.2.1) Positive Relations with Others and Personal Change:

Other individuals had a central role to play in the personal changes experienced by these participants. Positive relations, including supportive relations with others, were foremost in both prompting and assisting personal change. Again mentors were mentioned for the roles they could play in inspiring personal change. As Flora said when asked what could prompt personal change “Your environment, your learning experiences [pause], um, people, role models...people you respect, you might want to act like them.” For Joan, Flora, Celia, Edna, and Susan, support from
significant others such as supervisors, teachers, husbands and peers played an important role in their personal changes. Participants had these comments to make about such support.

JOAN: Well I think some of my peers to begin with [have contributed to my personal change], because they have always been very understanding, they have always been very helpful, and... in a lot of them I can see myself when I was their age... you know you can see the growth in them as individuals and you compare that with what I was like.... they have always been very supportive, they certainly have added a personal dimension to my life... by their interaction...

CELIA: Working in the school the second year there was a new person that came into the supervisory position and he was very, very supportive. He always made sure he told me I was doing a good job. He wasn’t afraid to interact with me and ask me questions and ask me my opinion and what I thought, and I worked with other people that were really positive, you know, that recognized your talents, I guess you could say, or recognized your contribution as part of staff.... because they treated you like a colleague, that you were part of the team and that your ideas were valid, you know, but, you know, you have capabilities and characteristics and all those other stuff you know, that would help you in your job.

EDNA: [when asked what helped her to change and become more open] My husband... 'cause he’s asked me what I’ve learned and he’s taught me to be a little more open. “You should be more open with your ideas the way you share them with me.” ...I think it was my husband and the people that I’ve been associated with in my learning.

1.2.2) Learning Experiences and Personal Change:

Learning experiences were important agents of personal change for seven participants (Joan, Clara, Susan, Tania, Celia, Flora, and Edna). These learning experiences were found both in school and outside of the formal learning context, at work or elsewhere. In response to the question “To what would you attribute these personal changes?” Flora mentioned learning experiences in her work setting:

Taking this course.... working with the students that I worked with for the last two years.... It’s made me see that it is possible to help them and, like even to accomplish the unattainable, because one student... she couldn’t learn anything. And I didn’t know that they had labelled her as that and she came in and she could hardly talk. I had to build up her self-esteem, I had to make her feel relaxed, and she just took off.... even though she must have found it difficult she kept going, and she finished the program.... And I can see that I can help.

Edna mentioned learning experiences within the formal learning context which assisted her personal change, saying that what had influenced her personal change in becoming stronger and more open had been “the learning process that I’ve had, ideas or knowledge that I’ve learnt in
both programs.” Tania mentioned new knowledge and skills she had learned and how specifically they had fostered her personal change, saying “I can always draw on this new material and use it. Um, that helped! It helped my confidence. It helped with knowing that I had an angle. Knowing I have a style, I have something a little different there like that I can use…”

1.2.3) Environmental Factors and Personal Change:

Tania, Celia and Flora listed environmental factors which could cause personal change. As Tania summed up:

Circumstances, lack of finances, opportunities, opportunities for jobs, lack of jobs in some cities, um, birth, a birth of babies, doors opening, availability of courses... It’s um, exposure to certain materials, to certain people, to certain professors, that give you a new road to take, a new insight. Exposure to, ah, culture and your heritage. A different angle you hadn’t thought about that you now want to explore that was just something that you were being taught or that you read about or listened to, but now you’re going to adopt it as part of your way of life, you know, that becomes part of you.

1.2.4) Aboriginal Spiritual Teachings and Personal Change:

Clara and Celia indicated that Aboriginal spiritual teachings had contributed to their personal changes. Clara spoke of benefiting from such spiritual teachings, along with a course in spiritual development, when she said

I think I’ve opened up. Like I might have had some closed ideas before. Where I think I am more, I am more open minded.... (KATE: Can you think what has contributed to that change?) One thing is getting, ah, getting involved with ceremonies and talking to different, um spiritual leaders. I was. Just talk to them. And I think, like I said, that course that [names professors] taught. Everybody thought that it was a really easy course? But I think they didn’t necessarily mean easy. I think they felt, like um, there wasn’t a lot of writing involved and a lot of, um, was just a lot of sharing.... It really helped me a lot, and the way I see things....

1.2.5) ‘Hard Knocks’ and Personal Change:

Celia pointed out that not all experiences which contribute to change are positive ones. She talked about ‘the school of hard knocks’ when she said

But I think that’s another thing too, that just being knocked down a couple of notches there made me more aware too, that not everybody’s going to be accepting of me as a person or whatever, and that I have to be prepared for that if that happens again... And how am I going to accept it and am I going to have the right kind of attitude to be able to accept? But just to be prepared for those. You know, like that was a learning experience for me. (KATE: Yeah.) You know, and if I was ever in that situation again, how would I handle it?
1.2.6) Self Awareness, Choice, Willpower and Personal Change:

Personal change was associated with conscious choice and willpower by three participants. As Doris said about personal change “But you have to sit on the edge. You have to keep, you have to want to change, not be stuck in a rut...” Joan, along with Susan associated personal change with both will and self-awareness, saying

And it is a change I think that comes about because you will it to come about, you say “Okay, I see this now and I want to change this” and I think, like you have to be in there ‘cause you have got to want to be changed and then you can. It will eventually come about... It may be a very very very slight change, or major change, but I think you have to know, have to know it and acknowledge it.... I think it's a process of growing, I think it's a process of acquiring knowledge, a process of acquiring skills, and the personal interaction with other people, of other significant people who have made a difference in your life. And you are looking at things now through a different set of glasses...

For these Ojibwe women, personal change could be prompted by both internal and external factors.

1.3) Participants' Reflections on Their Own Personal Change: Findings

If anybody'd told me that I would have said, “No!” I wouldn't have believed it. But now how I feel about myself is, I believe it!

- Tania

Seven participants said that they had experienced personal change while enrolled in the program. While the eighth participant, Doris, did not explicitly indicate that she had experienced personal change, she went on to identify changes in herself, saying “I learned a lot from the program.... I feel that I have matured a lot from the program as far as wanting to be a teacher and also having the confidence, I guess, to be a teacher.” Participants identified changes in themselves which included an increased sense of self confidence (five participants), a newly developed or enhanced love of learning (six participants); new knowledge and skills (eight participants); a deeper sense of their own Aboriginal identity (three participants); and changes in personal values (two participants).

The new experiences and learnings they had achieved as students in teacher education courses and in practice teaching, and the positive relationships with others including the support and stimulation they found with peers, supervisors, instructors and program staff were named as primary factors in their personal change.
1.3.1) Increased Self-Confidence (six participants):

Tania, along with Celia, Edna, Flora, Doris and Susan reported that she gained increased self confidence as a result of successfully meeting the challenges of her teacher education program. Along with the importance of support, discussed in Chapter Five, challenges presented by the program were also important in ultimately increasing participants’ sense of belonging. The sense of feeling ‘at home’ in post-secondary education grew with a sense of increased competence and confidence for some participants, with six women reporting that their comfort level increased as they successfully met challenges presented to them in the program. While specific program features which presented challenges and fostered self-confidence (such as the practicum) were discussed in Chapter Five, presented here are participants’ general comments regarding their increased sense of personal strength and how what they had achieved fostered that personal change.

Tania said

I knew I could handle the academia but I didn’t know how I could handle the actual teaching unless I was actually teaching. I didn’t know how it would be. Now that I’m finished it I know that’s in the bag. I know that I can truly say, and be confident and feel, ah, yeah, I’m going to be a good teacher. Yes, I can do it. Yes, I deserve to be here. Yes, this is what I want. This is the right goal. I’m right for this sort of thing. Yes.

I don’t have to [say] “Well yeah, I’m in the program but I’m not done yet. Well I hope to get into this. I want to be a teacher, I don’t know if I can do it.” Now it’s, “Yes!” Now I know I can do it. It doesn’t mean I’m not going to have trouble and hassles and meet with rotten kids. It means I’ll know how to, you know, I know I can deal with what I’m given, and if I can’t do it then I can seek out somebody who will help me deal with it. But I can do it...

...I’ve completed a major, a major, major step in my life that — had I thought I would be at this point when I first walked into [names undergraduate university] in 1987 — had I thought I’d be getting a B.Ed. from [names current university] in 1993, I don’t think I could believe it! If anybody’d told me that I would have said, “No!” I wouldn’t have believed it. But now how I feel about myself is, I believe it! I believe I can walk out of here and be a Native teacher, and that I could be a good Native teacher, and that I have what I need from my books and my course notes (if I ever organize them!) and I, I know I can do it, that I have what I need to do a good job, and to teach and not just to hand out assignments. That I can teach. I would say that I can, I can stand in front of a classroom and have the confidence and the patience to... teach effectively, whereas, ah, not having such a high degree of self esteem when I was younger... it’s really truly wonderful that I can do this now, you know, at this stage. That I know I can do it now and nobody could ever tell me that I couldn’t or that I wasn’t right for it or I should try something different or something easier or less demanding. You know? So!
When Flora, who was fearful at the outset was asked how she would describe herself as she neared the end of her teacher education program, she said

I feel like I’m a better person. I’m better able to work with the students with more confidence. Um, I have the ability to... work in a school and not... feel ah, like I’m not part of the system.... I’m somebody that’s learned ah, a lot of things in the last two years. I’ve learned a lot, and I have a lot more to learn. I know that.... Just that I’m not as afraid of things, I guess, maybe, of education. There was such a fear there before, and now there’s not.... I still have to get my B.A., so I’m not going to be afraid to do that now. Where I might’ve never even thought about... I wouldn’t even have considered it. It might have been too scary or, you know, too ominous or whatever. Now I wouldn’t be afraid to do it... And that’s come from taking this course.... and knowing that I can do it. I was successful.

Celia, Edna, Flora, Tania, and Susan expressed their pride of accomplishment in completing the program and obtaining their teaching certification. Flora said “I’m very proud that I was able to complete the course.... I’m very, very proud of myself and I’m proud of everybody in our class.”

For Edna too, the new knowledge and learning experiences, including hands-on learning, resulted in an increase in self-confidence. She described these personal changes, saying

I think I’ve become less selfish, more open minded. And I’m also willing to share.... I think I’m more aggressive... I mean in a positive way.... I used to be pretty much of a push-over [laughs]. I’ve become a stronger person for myself, and to feel good about myself in that way.... I’ve opened up. I opened up in a way where I’m not a shy person. And also I’m willing to, um, to view new ideas. [I attribute these changes to] I guess the learning process I’ve had.... I think it’s just ideas or knowledge that I’ve learnt in both programs.... People that I’m involved with....

KATE: What do you think helped you to become less of a push-over?
EDNA: Especially in circumstances that have come up, ah, even just being involved in some of the hands-on in the program. And I’m not so much a push-over, I’m not so shy to express how I feel. But I think that the hands-on has helped.
KATE: ‘Cause you had to get right in there and do it?
EDNA: Uh huh. And that has helped, and some of the conflict. Um, [pause] also, just the growth that I’ve gotten from this program itself.... And each time I came for a course it would be some member start sharing.... they’ve all got so much to share... everybody’s just so close and it will be hard to leave everybody behind.... everybody’s contributed to being so much less selfish. Not only with each other, but maybe we’ll take that in the classroom.

Susan also experienced a new sense of personal competence and associated this personal change with time and with age, increased knowledge and experience. When asked the questions "Looking back, how would you describe yourself at the beginning of the [teacher education] program? How
do you describe yourself now? To what do you attribute these changes, if there are changes?” she said as follows:

Two years older. [Laughter.] I feel smarter. [Laughter.] I don’t know. Yeah, like those are changes, you know. I do feel I have learned a lot from the program, and that I feel now that I can, I can offer experience to my students and wiser.... That would be to the credit of the program.... I think age has to do with it. I feel more competent now than I was in the beginning with it. At the beginning [of the program] I was scared as well. Like, you know, to the whole idea.... I wasn’t scared-scared, but it was kind of scary, you know.

Flora, Edna, Tania, Celia and Susan all noted that their sense of competence had increased since beginning the program as a result of successfully meeting the challenges presented to them. Tania said that the only way to know if she could teach was to teach. By facing her fears she was able to complete student teaching placements successfully, and prove to herself that she was able to teach. As she said,

...as badly as I wanted this course there was still that “I don’t know if I could do the teaching part” hanging over my head. Thinking “I can take this course, and I can write those papers and I can take the exam, but I don’t know until I’m standing in front of the class how I’m going to feel. If I’m going to need all those notes one after the other in front of me or can I just leave them and go with it and just what occurs, handle it, and change my, you know, focus, the class...” I just didn’t know until I actually did it. And now I know.

Building a sense of increased competence had, in turn, influenced participants’ sense of personal confidence. Whether this new sense of competence had come as a result of successfully addressing the challenges of the workplace, the practicum or the courses in the program, each participant indicated that perceiving that they had learned how to handle difficult situations successfully had increased their sense of personal confidence. Participants were conscious of being the agents of their own personal change, and also recognized the impact of external factors in their changes.

1.3.2) Changes in Personal Values/ Orientation (two participants):

The new personal knowledge Joan gained in teacher education prompted personal reflection and new self-awareness which resulted in a change in her personal values and outlook. As she said

In my own case I have suddenly become aware of a certain value system, you know, which I was never aware of.... I think you have to take ownership of that change and uh, it has to be you, like it has to be part of you, and then I think you have to know it and acknowledge it. I was this person. I am now this person.
Celia described similar personal changes which occurred over time along with life changes like giving up alcohol and becoming involved in a healthy relationship. She told the following story as an example of her personal change:

I think about ten years ago if someone was to 'spaz out' at me in a store or something I'd 'spaz' right back at them, you know, and like that happened to me yesterday. There was a lady that was "Ohhh tutt!" when I gave her my status card. She was "Tutt, ohhh!" And I looked behind me and there was a line, right? And she had to write it down, so I didn't say anything to her. This was the day before yesterday, and then yesterday I went back there and she was just nice as could be, you know, and I was just kind of... [gives a look of shock and amazement]. At one point in time I probably would have jumped right down her throat [laughs] and given her a real good talking to, you know? But because of personal change of realities – understanding why people are the way they are or understanding, like accepting a person the way they are, and knowing that's the way they are and that, I can live with it. You know that's... sometimes you run into problems where people have attitudes or something like that with you and, I think if you could separate yourself from that and not to take it personally, just to know that that's the way the person is and you're better off for understanding that as opposed to arguing with them.

1.3.3) A Deeper Sense of Their Own Aboriginal Identity (three participants):

When Celia reflected on her personal changes she noted that she was more understanding and tolerant of others now, and less inclined to take their unpleasant behaviour personally, even in the situation she described (above) in which a store clerk seemed to demonstrate racial intolerance. Seeking to gain a fuller understanding of her personal change, I asked her "What causes you to be more understanding about where a person is, or more able to work things out? More able to restrain yourself and not jump down someone's throat?" In response, Celia spoke of Aboriginal ways of being which she had internalized, saying

I think it was the teachings that I've learned since I came into the Native community. Like I've been coming into it all my life, but actually only started living in it in 1982, so I've only been here ten years but, the things I've learned from other people.... Like the first teaching I learned was that you accept another person no matter what race, creed or colour they are, and that you accept them for who they are. And other things; you don't treat people like that. You treat people like that and it's going to come back to you. You know, those teachings that the Elders have given us.... I think if you're going to learn those things and you want to live that way, you have to live that way. You just can't go telling somebody that this is the way you should do it and not live by those rules. And I think that I've been more aware of those things, and I don't think I would have realized it if I hadn't come into the community, because you know, even though my Christian background says those things too, but you know, I felt like, "Well, you guys are doing it – what do you mean?".... KATE: So you saw examples of those things in action in the community.
CELIA: Yeah. And speaking to the Elders, and even people who are just a couple of years older than me would say things like that to me. You treat people that way it will come back to you, you know? You always have to make sure you treat people with respect. And that’s one thing that I’ve learned. I mean there’s times that we goof around and we can get really downright rude, you know! But that’s all in fun. But you know, when it comes to really, reality and you’re treating a person kindly, with kindness and with respect and with love and the seven gifts that your Creator has given you; I think those are the really strong influences.

Like Celia, Edna reported that she had gained a deeper sense of her culture through interaction with others who taught her Aboriginal ways. Clara indicated that she had changed because of Aboriginal teachings and personal development which she experienced during the time she was a student in the program. Recalling what she said earlier,

I think I’ve opened up. Like I might have had some closed ideas before. Where I think I am more, I’m more open minded.

KATE: Can you think of things, um, that contributed to that change?

CLARA: One thing is getting, ah, getting involved with ceremonies and talking to different, um, spiritual leaders. It was; just to talk to them.

KATE: And that has happened while you’ve been, during this two year period while you’ve been in the program? (CLARA: Yeah.)

KATE: But it’s aside from this program and it’s contributed?

CLARA: Yeah. And I think, like I said, that course that [mentions professors’ names] taught. Everybody thought that was a really easy course? But I think they didn’t necessarily mean easy. I think they felt, like um, there wasn’t a lot of writing involved... it was just a lot of sharing.... I think they were really surprised at the course. And I said, “Well I think we really need it, and I think I might really enjoy it.” It really helped me a lot, and the way I see things. And so they, and a lot of them, our group from [mentions name of reserve] said, “Yeah, I can see, I can see that.” Like I think they couldn’t believe they were taking a course to develop themselves? Rather than about other people or about students.

KATE: Um hmm. Interesting. Yeah. Um, other people have said that too. (CLARA: Oh really.) Yeah, this idea of personal development being part of teacher education surprises (CLARA: Surprises them.) Some people. Yeah. Because you think of teacher education as...

CLARA: Teaching somebody else. [Kate laughs, Clara laughs.]

A sense of Aboriginal identity was strengthened through both learning and practice of Aboriginal teachings for these participants.
1.3.4) New Knowledge and Skills (eight participants):

All participants reported new knowledge and skills as a self-perceived personal change. Flora spoke of how gaining this new knowledge was included in her sense of self, saying “I'm somebody that’s learned a lot of things in the last two years, I’ve learned a lot, and I have a lot more to learn. I know that now.” Flora went on to talk about the importance of applying knowledge, saying “We can have a lot of knowledge, but no, it's not wisdom until we use it.... Put it into practice.” Accompanying new knowledge, skills and attitudes came a sense of self realization. Edna, Joan, Flora and Doris associated their personal change with the development of inherent gifts. As Flora said, in describing herself at the end of her two year program

I'm thinking about self-realization, but I just don't know what to say about it [pause]. Knowing that I have more potential. I know I have more potential now than I realized. Um, [pause]. It's mind boggling sometimes you know...

KATE: What do you think it was that helped you to know that you have more potential now than you did?

FLORA: By working with the students and by taking the course. Taking the course, um, gave me the confidence, the knowledge and the background, of how to do it, what kind of things you need as a teacher, that give you character...

These participants understood education to be one of the routes they could take to develop themselves.

1.3.5) New View of Learning (six participants):

Another program-related personal change was found in participants’ comments about their views on learning. All participants were asked the interview question “How do you view learning?” In response to this and other interview questions, six participants (Celia, Edna, Flora, Joan, Tania, and Susan) indicated that their view of learning had changed since they began the teacher education program. The degree of change varied from person to person, as did the nature of the change.

Tania stated that formerly she had been quick to write down everything that the professor said, whereas now she sees learning as taking place in every setting, not just the formal lecture. Her view of learning had broadened to include out-of-school learning as well. She now believes that learning is happening all the time. Susan’s attitude to learning had changed from one where she wanted to complete courses primarily to get her teaching certification to one where she wants to continue to take further courses simply because there is more which she wants to learn.

Flora had learned how to encourage children to love reading, and sees herself as able to influence that love as a result of the program. Three participants (Edna, Doris and Celia) mentioned
becoming aware of different approaches to teaching and learning as one way in which their view of learning had changed since the beginning of the program. It became more possible to perceive learning as pleasurable for Edna, who said “...every person has a different way of learning, different way of processing information... I feel you can find or you’re taught teaching methods... that, can make learning more enjoyable... I know there was – you can have different approaches but I didn’t see that there were enjoyable ways of learning. To make it more enjoyable.”

Participants orientation and attitude to learning shifted as a result of the new experiences they encountered in the teacher education program. Generally speaking participants reported an increased enthusiasm for learning, and a broadened definition of what learning is. Their new definitions included a view of learning as life long, and/ or a desire to pursue further learning opportunities.

2) Personal Change and Adult Learners: Discussion

_This wondering seems to occur when an experience comes into conflict with a world of concepts which is already sufficiently fixed in us. Whenever such a conflict is experienced hard and intensively, it reacts back upon our thought world in a decisive way. The development of this thought world is in a certain sense a continuous flight from “wonder.”..._

- Albert Einstein

2.1) Meaning Making:

What an organism does, as William Perry says (1970), is organize; and what a human being organizes is meaning. Thus it is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning making. There is no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning making context in which it becomes a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception.... we literally make sense. “Human being is the composing of meaning, including, of course, the occasional inability to compose meaning, which we often experience as the loss of our own composure” (Kegan, 1982, p. 11).

Kegan (1982), Perry (1970), Piaget (1970) and others refer to the interaction of the person with the environment as a necessary element in the adult learning and developmental process. These writers point out that humans are organisms which are constantly trying to reach/maintain equilibrium. In order to do so, they must adapt as the environment changes. When a person’s way of perceiving and acting in the world is confronted by new stimuli, we engage in an activity which Kegan (1982) calls 'pan organic' (p. 44), that is, shared with all other living
things. In this “ongoing conversation between the individuating organism and the world” (p. 43) we engage in a process of adaptation in which we either fit the new experience within our current framework (assimilation) or change our current framework in response to new experience (accommodation) (pp. 44, 45). A “wondering” is essential to changing perspectives. When “an experience comes into conflict with a world of concepts which is already sufficiently fixed in us” (Einstein, cited in Schilpp, 1949), cognitive dissonance occurs. Lambert (1984) says that “the creation and resolution of cognitive dissonance is a crucial element in learning” (p. 14).

2.2) Cognitive Dissonance, Assimilation and Accommodation in Learning:

Participants in this study reported numerous instances of “cognitive dissonance” where new experiences contradicted concepts which they already held. For example, in Chapter Five, Celia and Edna expressed pleasant surprise in describing how their understanding of university professors as distant and intimidating, based on earlier experiences, was contradicted by the close, supportive relationships they had experienced in the teacher education program. Another source of cognitive dissonance was evident in participants’ numerous references to school as an alienating experience where they were immersed in a non-Aboriginal learning environment, contrasted with the unique experience of attending a teacher education program where other classmates, subject matter and the educational setting were all Aboriginal.

Participants entertained cognitive dissonance in their changing orientations to learning as well. Resolution of contradictory experiences resulted in reported changes to their views of learning, including a broadened definition of what constitutes learning, and an increase in enthusiasm for learning. Such references showed how participants were able to allow their recent experience to conflict with previously held views, entertain and resolve contradiction, and thereby find a new learning stance.

In other accounts, participants told how new experiences were assimilated into a framework of values and beliefs already held, and served to strengthen that framework. For example, Joan told how she had deliberately selected this particular program because it fit with her values. She believed that a community-based ‘Native’ program would best equip her with the skills to teach in her community. Her experiences in the program confirmed her values and beliefs and were assimilated into her current framework, strengthening it.

While not all participants reported that they had experienced major personal changes in the program, some spoke of significant departures from previous ways. Jack Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1983) would say that some of these participants experienced a “perspective
transformation” as a result of their relationships and learning while in the program. Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1990, 1991) has provided a valuable contribution to the field of adult learning in his discussion of how meaning is constituted and transformed and its links with adult learning and development. He joins voices with Kegan (1982) in stressing the centrality of meaning making in the learning process. Mezirow (1983) derived a framework for adult learning and development in which he uses the term “meaning perspective,” defined as a system of “meaning schemes” or sets of rules governing cause-effect relationships, role expectations and the relationship between feelings and action. They guide the way we experience, feel, understand, judge and act upon our situation. (p. 2)

Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1983, 1991) asserts that movement through the challenges of adulthood involves the person in passing through an irregular series of transformations in meaning perspective. He describes meaning perspective as “the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience” (1981, p. 6). Through adapting an existing system of meaning schemes in response to new stimuli, change occurs. A meaning perspective has dimensions of thought, feeling, and will, and provides the basis for action. Often psycho-cultural assumptions have to do with roles which dictate how a person should act or behave or how society and others should act and behave.

A perspective transformation involves reflecting upon one’s meaning perspectives and reforming them. In more detail, Mezirow (1981, p. 7) identifies the following steps to a perspective transformation:

1) a disorienting dilemma;
2) self-examination;
3) a critical assessment of personally internalized role and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations;
4) relating one’s discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues – recognizing that one’s problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter;
5) exploring options of new ways of action;
6) building competence and self confidence in a new role;
7) planning a new course of action;
8) acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans;
9) making provisional efforts at new roles and to assess feedback; and
10) reintegrating into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.

Mezirow’s interest in the process of changing one’s perspective is shared by others (Bridges, 1980; Lavery, 1993; Markley, 1976; Menlo, 1984; Schön, 1983; Taylor, 1979;
Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). Lavery (1993) says that this process begins with... paying personal attention to those problems, questions or experiences which [individuals] are unable to incorporate into their existing perspectives. In their attempts to make sense or meaning of their new experiences, they are forced to reexamine the assumptions, cultural and psychological, with which they have constructed their particular perspective. The result may be the generation of new visions or perspectives, ones which will allow them to integrate their disorienting experiences into their meaning perspectives. (p. 24)

Mezirow (1983) points out that changes take different forms. A new piece of information which we assimilate into a previously existing meaning scheme constitutes a different type of change than the kind required when we accommodate our meaning perspective including its sets of rules to new and challenging information. It may be said that changes 'come in different sizes,' from fairly small additions to already existing frameworks, to large changes which result in former meaning frameworks being replaced and a new sense of self emerging.

Michael O'Connor (1990) quotes Mezirow (1981) as stating that one centrally important power, possibly the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning, is critical reflectivity. This power allows the individual to become aware of why they attach the meanings they do to reality, especially of their roles and relationships. Critical reflectivity is what is needed in order to recategorize and so ascribe new meanings, the most comprehensive of which Mezirow (1981) calls "perspective transformation." O'Connor states that perspective transformation involves reflecting upon one's meaning perspectives and reforming them. Generally speaking, Mezirow (1983) defines perspective transformation as the process of:

1) becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of our psycho-cultural assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive the world;
2) reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience; and
3) acting upon these new understandings.

In listening to participants describe their experiences, I learned that some women had experienced major shifts in perspective, the most comprehensive of which may be called "perspective transformations." It might be said that Joan was talking about a perspective transformation when she described the personal change she experienced. As in step 1) above, she experienced critical awareness reflected in her comment about how she had "suddenly become aware of a certain value system, you know, which I was never aware of...." Then Joan described elements of step 2), above, when she spoke of how she took action to change her value system,
saying "I think you have to take ownership of that change and it has to be you, like it has to be part of you..." When she concluded her description of her perspective transformation with the statement "...and then I think you have to know it and acknowledge it. I was this person. I am now this person" she referred to an aspect of the actualization described in step 3), above. Joan engaged in a process which resulted in a departure from her previous framework to embrace a new meaning perspective.

In Mezirow’s (1983) version of meaning making and how cognitive dissonance may be addressed, adult learning and adult development intersect. There are two possible paths to perspective transformation. One path involves a sudden insight into the very structure of the cultural and psychological assumptions which have limited or distorted the way one understands one’s self and one’s relationships. Joan described such a sudden insight. The other path is a movement in the same direction that occurs by a series of transitions which permit us to revise specific assumptions about ourselves and others until the very structure of the assumptions shifts. In Mezirow’s framework (1978), maturity is seen as a movement towards perspectives that are more universal, better able to deal with the abstract, provide for more principled judgments and give us a greater sense of control and direction in our lives. He says that “the fully functioning, self-directed adult learner moves constantly toward a more authentic meaning perspective” (Mezirow, 1985, p. 22). Like other adult development ‘stage’ theorists (Erikson, 1950; Kegan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981; Loevinger, 1976; Perry, 1970, 1986), Mezirow (1978) sees development as hierarchical, stating

As we move forward to new perspectives, we can never return to those in our past. Indeed, we are continually reconstructing the reality of the past by reinterpreting it from each successive vantage point as we move from one perspective to the next. Maturity holds the promise that becoming older may indeed mean becoming wiser because wisdom can mean interpreting reality from a higher perspective. One can arrive at that vantage point only by living through the full range of challenges encountered in the different seasons of one’s life and through the successive transformations experienced in responding to them. (pp. 104, 105)

Participants in my study reported both sudden and gradual shifts in their ‘meaning perspectives.’ Celia, who reported a large but gradual shift occurring over time, used critical reflectivity when she described the way she responded to the store clerk who insulted her. Here she recognized that by her own meaning making she had arrived at a different, more expansive way of responding to the situation than she would have earlier on. To recall what Celia said
At one point in time I probably would have jumped right down her throat [laughs] and given her a real good talking to, you know? But because of personal change of realities – understanding why people are the way they are or understanding, like accepting a person the way they are, and knowing that’s the way they are... I can live with it.

Celia’s process was congruent with Mezirow’s (1978) discussion of learning and maturation, where maturity is directly connected with learning and involves movement towards meaning perspectives that are progressively more “inclusive, discriminating and more integrative of experience” (p. 106).

Mezirow’s framework (1981) outlines three steps in transformation, termed “alienation” (a departure from the old understanding(s), “reframing” (a restructuring of one’s understanding or reality and one’s place in it) and “contractual solidarity” (participating again on the basis of one’s new inner-directed terms as defined by the new meaning perspective) (O’Connor, 1990, p. 41). Though perspective transformation is not an everyday occurrence, nor perhaps desirable as such, there are certain learning stances which may encourage the kind of learning which is associated with adult growth. Schön (1983) for example, discusses a process which he calls “reflecting-in-action” (p. 54) which may be useful in generating new insights. In this process

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds unusual or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding and a change in the situation. When someone reflects in action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent upon the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. (p. 68)

In Chapter Four, Flora as a student-practitioner, described a change in her attitude toward school which exemplifies the learning stance Schön (1983) calls “reflecting-in-action.” She came with prior (negative and intimidating) understandings of what school meant, and as a result of these preconceptions was prepared to leave at noon on the first day of school and not return. Instead, upon encountering a new, positive experience her first day in school, i.e., learning about Aboriginal issues from an Aboriginal teacher, she experimented by staying past noon. As she said “When he saw that I was going to leave at twelve o’clock he came in and he just started talking about all this Native stuff and I was fascinated!” She was able to live through her discomfort and found that as her experience generated new understanding, it changed the situation. Her increased comfort level then allowed her to stay. A researcher in the practice context, she engaged in a process of “reframing,” constructing a new theory about school as fascinating, based on the
unique case she found in a situation where school was offered by and about Aboriginal people. This new theory replaced her old categories of established theory about school as a negative experience. Thus, by achieving a new “contractual solidarity” she was able to participate in school on the basis of her new inner-directed terms. This new meaning perspective allowed her to entertain the possibility of continuing on in university to earn her B.A., an option which previously had seemed closed to her.

In Kegan's (1982) discussion of meaning making he uses the terms “assimilation” and “accommodation.” His concepts have much in common with Mezirow (1981, 1983) and other authors. Watzlawick et al (1974, p. 11) write about “first order change” (like assimilation) and “second order change” (like accommodation). In assimilation, new categories may be added to an existing class or system without changing that class or system, while in second order change, the class or system changes. Kolb (1984) also refers to this process, though by different terms. What Kolb (1984, p. 52) calls “comprehension” or an “introverted” standpoint is similar to Kegan’s “assimilation.” Similarly, Kolb’s (1984, p. 53) concept of “apprehension,” or an “extroverted” standpoint may be compared with Kegan’s (1982) “accommodation.” Kolb (1984) says

One could describe the introverted standpoint as one that under all circumstances sets the self and the subjective psychological process above the object and the objective process....This attitude therefore, gives the subject a higher value than the object.... The extroverted standpoint, on the contrary, sets the subject below the object, whereby the object receives the predominant value.... Every human being possesses both mechanisms as an expression of his natural life rhythm. (pp. 52-53)

....The interactionism of experiential learning theory places knowing by apprehension on an equal footing with knowing by comprehension, resulting in a stronger interactionist position, really a transactionalism, in which knowledge emerges from the dialectic relationship between the two forms of knowing. (p. 101)

These authors point out that having access to both accommodation and assimilation as adaptive modes means an improved opportunity for responding appropriately to new information, and an increased ability to learn. Several authors (Brookfield, 1990; Combs et al, 1984, p. 95; Fales, 1981, p. 36; Kolb, 1984, p. 36) stress the old adage that ‘What you put into it is what you’ll get out of it.’ Encouraging the involvement of the self in the learning is a way to enhance adult learning. As Kolb (1984) says

Individuals learn to the extent that they expose their needs, values and behaviour patterns so that perceptions and reactions can be exchanged. Behaviour thus becomes the currency for transaction. The amount each invests helps to determine the return. (p. 36, citing Bradford, 1964, p. 192)
However, the experience of personal change is not always a desirable or pleasant event (Bridges, 1980; Bourque & Divine, 1985). Bridges (1980) discusses change in meaning perspectives and points out that while smaller changes in meaning perspectives may be less difficult, major changes are often uncomfortable affairs. He outlines the difficult process of letting go of the old, suffering a confusing nowhere of ‘in-betweeness’ and then finally launching forth into the new. He describes this struggle from old to new meaning perspectives as “a natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning points of the path of growth” (p. 5). In their discussion of change, Watzlawick et al (1974) claim that the equal balance between apprehension and comprehension resulting in the dialectical relationship which Kolb (1984) refers to in his discussion of experiential learning does not always exist. Rather, there is sometimes a resistance to the new and a tendency to operate within one’s finite repertory of previously established systems of meaning, or a preference for assimilation over accommodation. Some explanation for this preference for assimilation over accommodation is provided by other theorists. MacFarlane (1991) reports a view which Kegan (1982), Perry (1970) and Gilligan (1982) have in common, saying

All agree that in order to grow we need both challenge and support. When we feel threatened or under stress we tend to stay with the better known parts of ourselves and therefore do not risk growth. When we feel safe and trusting we reach out, open up, and allow ourselves to be responsive to the environment.... The tendency is to try to hold on to the way we are, to deny the experience of contradiction, to resist change in ourselves and to pull back. Sometimes this results in retreat or in defending the current social role or perspective. (p. 46)

In Chapters Five and Six, participants' comments on both challenge and support were mentioned as part of their learning experiences. Factors which challenged them included their own sense of intimidation at being students in a post-secondary education program; their past experiences in which they were made to feel marginalized as Aboriginal students in education; daunting program assignments like the practicum placements; lack of support from those in their communities who did not believe in the validity of their undertakings; and the challenge of being a student while simultaneously holding down jobs and fulfilling family and community responsibilities. Factors which provided support included encouragement from others; Aboriginal role models; believing in themselves and the value of their enterprise; and program features which complemented their lives.

Through experiential learning in a supportive learning environment, some participants
were able to engage in a dialectic relationship between the two forms of knowing, apprehension and comprehension (Kolb, 1984, p. 101), which allowed new knowledge to emerge. This new knowledge sometimes emerged 'in the face of' previous perceptions, and sometimes resulted in personal change. Recalling Edna's comments, repeated below, I find an account of such learning, resulting in the kind of personal change which might be called personal growth.

I used to be pretty much of a push-over [laughs]. I've become a stronger person for myself, and to feel good about myself in that way.... I've opened up, ah I opened up in a way where I'm not a shy person. And also I'm willing to, um, to view new ideas. [I attribute these changes to ] I guess the learning process I've had.... I think it's just ideas or knowledge that I've learnt in both programs.... People that I'm involved with.... Especially in circumstances that have come up, ah, even just being involved in some of the hands-on in the program. And I'm not so much a push-over. I'm not so shy to express how I feel. But I think that the hands-on has helped.... And each time I came for a course it would be some member start sharing.... they've all got so much to share... everybody's just so close and it will be hard to leave everybody behind....

When Edna 'opened up' she was able to engage in a process of adaptation through the hands-on learning in the program, resulting in a change to her current meaning perspective in response to new experience (apprehension). In a supportive environment she blossomed. She became, in her words, "a stronger person," by letting go of her shyness, and becoming willing to consider new ideas, rather than staying with a former "introverted standpoint" (involving comprehension rather than apprehension – Kolb, 1984) in which her learning experiences would have reinforced her shyness and a previously existing sense of self.

Opportunities to learn through first hand experience strengthened participants' sense of their own authority in making meaning. In their growing sense of confidence and competence, participants were like other adult learners reported by Hill (1999) who said

...in my own work with Aboriginal adult learners, I have watched how they have moved towards a greater degree of self-directedness and control of their learning with each validation of the various aspects related to their unique cultural perspective. (p. 123)

The large or small shifts in their meaning perspectives which participants reported resulted in personal changes which gave these women a different perspective on themselves, education, and/or ways of understanding.

2.3) Meaning Making and Culture:

Many writers (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Kegan, 1982; Kolb, 1984; Weiser, 1985) claim that through the acts of learning we all 'order the world.' However, although the processes of
categorizing which Watzlawick et al (1974) and others (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Kolb, 1984; Weiser, 1985) discuss may be universal, the categories which are constructed depend to some extent upon the particular learner and the context from which that learner comes. Scholars claim that between the perceived and the perceiver is a ‘filter’ through which flows all experience. As Watzlawick et al (1974) state:

Our experience of the world is based upon the categorization of the objects of our perception into classes. These classes are mental constructs, and therefore of a totally different order of reality than the objects themselves. Classes are formed not only on the basis of the physical properties of the objects, but especially on the strength of their meaning and value for us.... once an object is conceptualized as a member of a given class, it is extremely difficult to see it as also belonging also to another class.... this class membership of an object is called its “reality.” (pp. 98, 99)

Jerome Bruner (1986, p. 123) supports Watzlawick et al’s (1974) statement in claiming that most of our encounters with the world are not direct encounters. He says that even our direct experiences, so called, are assigned for interpretation to ideas about cause and consequence, and the world that emerges for us is a conceptual world. When we are puzzled about what we encounter, we renegotiate its meaning in a manner that is concordant with what those around us believe. Like Bruner (1986), Kolb (1984, p. 43) claims that “through comprehension we introduce order into what would otherwise be a seamless, unpredictable flow of apprehending sensations, but at the price of shaping (distorting) and forever changing that flow”.

Perry (1970, p. 35) reminds us that all knowledge is constructed. Upon accepting knowledge as constructed, it becomes important to recognize the contexts in which knowledge constructions are situated, as well as the influences which these contexts bring to bear. In her article Dilemmas of Knowing: Ethical and Epistemological Dimensions of Teachers' Work and Development (May. 1990), Nona Lyons comments on an epistemological perspective which she calls “positionality” (pp. 173, 174). Such a perspective acknowledges context and the idea that knowledge is personally created. She says

...the positional knower conceives of truth as situated and partial. Truth is considered partial in that individual perspectives “that yield and judge truth are necessarily incomplete” (Bartlett 1990, p. 881). Truth is “situated” because it emerges from particular involvements and relationships. Knowledge arises within social contexts and in multiple forms. Because this is so, the “key to increasing knowledge lies in the effort to extend one’s limited perspective.” (Bartlett, pp. 881, 882, cited in Lyons, p. 174)
Through learning, then, we ‘construct reality,’ and as adults, our present reality is increasingly informed by what came before (Cross, 1981). As Weiser says “All we experience is filtered through the lenses of our personal versions of reality, our frames of meaning” (cited in Lavery, 1993, p. 11). While theorists provide us with maps which may be useful in tracing the paths of meaning making in adult learning, it must not be assumed that those with differing cultural backgrounds arrive at the same meanings. Our realities are not solely personal, but are located within a larger system of shared meaning. As Bruner (1990, p. x) says “…our knowledge then, becomes enculturated knowledge, indefinable save in a culturally based system of notation.”

All-encompassing, culture has been defined many ways by many scholars. Barer-Stein (1988, p. 150) provides a comprehensive definition:

Culture seems to represent the total of all aspects of the patterns of daily life that are learned by an individual that determinedly affects that person’s behaviour, provides a sense of order, security, and identity, and yet paradoxically is in a state of continuous change.

Aboriginal scholar Eber Hampton says

Culture is what we learn from birth. Culture is what we do every day, the way we live. Tradition is what we have learned since being humans. Tradition is the awareness of the inner connectedness of all things. Tradition has no gender or race, it is about being human. Tradition is our gift to humanity. (taken from RCAP, 1st draft, 1993, p. 5)

It follows that if knowledge is constructed (Perry, 1970), and if the construction is impacted upon by context or “positionality” (Lyons, 1990), then culture, or “what we do every day” (Hampton, 1993) has an impact on knowledge, and its formation – meaning making.

Understanding the role of culture in the formation of knowledge brings new light to bear on education and the function of educational institutions. Scholars Michelson (1996), Haig-Brown, (1995) and others have noted cultural ‘blind spots’ in the academy, the result of unexplored assumptions, and exercised in everything from course content to research applications. Michelson states that academia needs to “relinquish the image of the rational consciousness constructing knowledge in detached and splendid isolation” (p. 191). She maintains that all knowledge is situated knowledge because it is socially and historically situated in the matrix of the social relationships and social activity of the active human groups who create it. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 3, p. 456) concurs with this observation that academia entertains cultural ‘blind spots’ including an over-emphasis on detachment and objectivity, saying:

While western academics and intellectuals have begun to give some credence to Aboriginal
understandings of the universe, including ecological knowledge in particular, the gatekeepers of western intellectual traditions have repeatedly dismissed traditional knowledge as inconsequential and unfounded. They have failed to recognize that their approach to knowledge building is also defined by culture and that Aboriginal intellectual traditions operate from a different but equally valid way of construing the world. Aboriginal people have particular difficulty with the western notion that knowledge can be secular or objective, divorced from spiritual understanding and deeply embedded values and ethics.

Not only individuals, but social institutions too are steeped in cultural contexts which both inform and limit ways of making meaning. In the absence of acknowledging that all perspectives have limitations, knowledge building may be difficult. In those institutions which uphold only the perspectives of their own cultural context, marginalization may occur. Where meaning-making is threatened, marginalization may be deliberate in order to uphold accepted, dominant ways. As Berger and Luckmann (1967) point out

The appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates empirically that one's own universe is less than inevitable... The confrontation of alternative symbolic universes implies a problem of power - which of the conflicting definitions of reality will be "made to stick" in the society?... He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality. (pp.108, 109)

2.4) Culture and Perspective Transformation:

If culture exerts a primary influence on our meaning making and our means of decoding stimuli, then when a person experiences changes in meaning perspectives, culture is also involved. Even what Kolb (1984) calls "the cultural system of social knowledge" (p. 138) which shapes individual development is apprehended through a dynamic process of negotiation. Kolb (1984) says that personal change and development is the product of the transaction between personal experience and the system of social knowledge interacted with. With adequate opportunity for interaction, 'development proceeds from a state of embeddedness, defensiveness, dependence and reaction to a state of self actualization, independence, proaction and self-direction' (pp. 138-140). Mezirow (1978), Kegan (1982), Bruner (1986), Kolb (1984) and others emphasize the dynamic nature of this developmental process.

Like Mezirow (1978), Kolb (1984) and others, Edna, Joan, Flora and Doris associated their personal change with the development of inherent gifts in the context of learning. They confirmed Kolb's (1984) claim that

It is the process of learning from experience that shapes and actualizes developmental potentialities. This learning is a social process; and thus, the course of individual
development is shaped by a cultural system of social knowledge.... Through experiences of imitation and communication with others and interaction with the physical environment, internal development potentialities are enacted and practised until they become internalized as an independent development achievement. (p. 133)

Like Kolb (1984), Jack Mezirow (1978) links culture with personal development. For Mezirow (1978), perspective transformation is involved in the developmental process of becoming more aware of previously constricting states and choosing new paths more congruent with the self. He says

We all require the meaning perspectives prescribed by our culture, but we have the potentiality of becoming critically aware of our perspectives and of changing them. By doing so, we move from an uncritical organic relationship to a self-consciously contractual relationship with individuals, institutions and ideologies. This is a crucial developmental task of maturity. Transformation in meaning perspective is precipitated by life's dilemma which cannot be resolved by simply acquiring more information, enhancing problem solving skills or adding to one's competencies. Resolution of these dilemmas and transforming our meaning perspectives require that we become critically aware of the fact that we are caught in our own history and are reliving it and of the cultural and psychological assumptions which structure the way we see ourselves and others. (p. 108)

Mezirow (1978) posits that culture facilitates or inhibits movement toward maturity by dictating the tempo of change and by providing or denying the opportunity for people to take the meaning perspectives of others. He claims that one must become dissociated from an organic relationship with society to move along a gradient of perspective transformation (p. 106). Griffin (1987) refers to such disassociation as “meta-cognition” and says that

It is important that we understand our own perspective or the framework we place things in so that we can decide if we wish to change some of it. It is difficult to know we have a particular perspective until we meet someone whose perspective is totally different. We are like a fish who has no idea of what water is because it has never known anything else. (p.24)

Encountering persons or situations which present a totally different perspective sometimes serves to highlight previously unnoticed perspectives in oneself which now stand out in sharp contrast compared to a new way of perceiving things. For me, hearing the experience of other women who were in post-secondary education provided such an opportunity. As I listened to these Anishinabe women describing their experience in school, I found myself comparing and contrasting it with my own school experience. Though school had sometimes been an unpleasant experience for me, I could not recall a time in my elementary, secondary or university experience where I had felt isolated or marginalized because of coming from a cultural background which was
different from that of my teachers and classmates. In listening to Susan talking about her mother’s educational experiences, I found myself thinking about my own mother and her educational experiences. As the fourth generation of Freemans to attend university, and the third generation of Freeman women to attend university, I came from a privileged and protected position in mainstream society, where education was viewed as beneficial and valued as a place to achieve recognition and develop one’s gifts. My family’s experience stood in stark contrast to Susan’s family’s experience, where collective family knowledge included memories of how her mother had been victimized by the residential school experience she was forcibly subjected to. While for my family, school had been a place which was culturally and personally sustaining, for Susan, Celia, Flora, Tania and others, school had been a place which was intimidating and denied their cultural roots. Until I encountered other Aboriginal students, and had the privilege of hearing their alternative perspectives, I was like ‘the fish who has no idea of what water is,’ unaware of the ways in which school is a powerful agent for cultural preservation and perpetuation. As a result of learning about education from the perspective of Aboriginal learners, I experienced a broadening of perspective. As Dr. Marge Denis (1979) says “New awareness occurs when a person develops a multiplicity of ways of understanding reality” (p. 113).

Mezirow (1978) points out that cultures vary in terms of the frequency with which one is confronted with the kind of problems which spark perspective transformation (p. 108). He sketches two predominant modes of social relationship and says that while both modes exist side by side in every culture, one mode typically tends to have more expression than the other. Mezirow (1978) claims that in those cultures which favour the “organic mode,” the predominance of organic unities such as family, class or caste, and local community mean that the individual is psychologically assimilated by the values, rules, customs and expectations of the community. Consequently, in “organic mode” cultures, opportunities for change come infrequently. Such cultures are contrasted by those favouring the “contractual mode” where social relationships place greater emphasis on the individual rather than the primary group, and on contractual rather than organic relationships. He says sociologists have argued that it is in societies in the process of transition from organic to contractual that the individual is most likely to come into possession of consciousness of self and to be exposed to a variety of communities and perspectives (p. 108). Here the challenge to individual perspective will be great enough and frequent enough to spark perspective transformation.

What study participants said about their own learning and personal change seems to
challenge Mezirow’s (1978) claim. Using Mezirow’s (1978) definition, my findings suggest that these participants come from a culture favouring an 'organic mode,' given the great emphasis participants placed on relationships and local community. Rather than being members of a society in the process of transition from organic to contractual, participants were firmly rooted in their ‘organic unities,’ gaining a post-secondary education for the benefit of the whole rather than for purely individualistic purposes. Yet it seems clear from what they said that some participants experienced significant personal change and even perspective transformations in their attitudes towards education and themselves as learners.

One aspect of participants' shared cultural orientation was an attitude toward school as a negative experience, formed out of collective cultural history, illustrated by family members’ negative memories of residential school, and reinforced by their own recollections of school as alienating. For those seven participants whose parents had not attended university, enrolling in a university program was a significant change in itself, positioning them as the first generation in their family to do so, and placing these women in the minority within their own communities.

However, conflicting with this negative view of school was another shared cultural orientation toward school as potentially beneficial for the participants themselves, for their communities, and for their children. In facing the challenges of post-secondary education, participants in my study are like other Aboriginal learners. The Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) refers to the challenge which many adult learners like participants in my study face in returning to school:

After being out of school for some years, returning to the classroom takes courage and determination. The pursuit of further training and education represents a big step for Aboriginal adults whose own school experience was negative and degrading. Many adults go back only to provide a better life for their children. (p. 502)

As participants moved through the program, these adult learners spoke of personal changes in their attitudes toward school and learning. Program features which recognized Aboriginal culture and provided support assisted them in negotiating their changes. In depicting their perspective transformations, one thing which struck me about participants’ comments is how they were able to make these significant changes as individuals and yet keep the importance of the community and their relationships paramount.

Mezirow (1985, 1991) points out that adults can move beyond the limits imposed by earlier processes of socialization to explore experience more fully as self-directed learners, and to ultimately change socialization processes through a dynamic learning dialectic. He also notes the
"perspective transformations occur not only in isolated individuals but also in people involved in
groups and social movements" (1991, p. 185). In reviewing the 'Indian control of Indian
education' movement which has transpired over the last twenty-five years, I find myself
wondering whether this movement provided the opportunity for a collective perspective
transformation to occur, which participants reflected in their own personal educational narratives.
As Bruner (1996, p. 122) points out, social realities are not static, but the product of an ongoing
dynamic process of negotiating meaning. Perhaps "education" is a verb.

Participants' concerns regarding education are housed within a broader context revealing
Aboriginal views toward education spanning several decades in Canada. Education has many
negative connotations for Indigenous people, created partially by residential schools and
assimilationist policies. However, among these participants as among those representing
Aboriginal views at large, a more positive orientation to education is emerging. Education is now
seen by some Aboriginal people as a potentially powerful tool for cultural regeneration and
continuity. In such Aboriginal-authored papers and studies as *Indian Control of Indian Education*
(1972), *Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future: A Declaration of First
Nations Jurisdiction Over Education* (1988), and the *Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), education is presented as potentially valuable if it is education which
is developed by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people.

The educational goals outlined in the above-mentioned three papers, written over a span
of twenty-five years, are remarkably similar. All of these papers talk about the importance of
Indigenous people having the opportunity to make decisions in matters which affect them, and
about the necessity for content and process in education which recognize Indigenous culture. The
landmark paper *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972) came in response to a new set of
government views promoting assimilationist policies. In this paper, Aboriginal mandates for
education were clearly stated:

In Indian tradition each adult is personally responsible for each child, to see that he learns
all he needs to know in order to live a good life. As our fathers [and mothers] had a clear
idea of what made a good man and a good life in their society, so we modern Indians want
our children to learn that happiness and satisfaction come from: pride in oneself;
understanding one's fellow men; and living in harmony with nature. These are the lessons
for survival in the twentieth century. Pride encourages us to recognize and use our talents,
as well as to master the skills needed to make a living. Understanding our fellow men will
enable us to meet other Canadians on an equal footing, respecting cultural differences
while pooling resources for the common good. Living in harmony with nature will ensure
preservation of the balance between man and his environment which is necessary for the
future of our planet, as well as for fostering the climate in which Indian wisdom has always flourished. We want education to give our children the knowledge to understand and be proud of themselves and the knowledge to understand the world around them. (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972)

The study conducted sixteen years later by the same Aboriginal organization, Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future: A Declaration of First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education (1988), again stressed the importance of education which supports Indigenous values. In this study it was stated, among other things, that

The right of First Nations to resume jurisdiction over education affecting First Nations students in federal, First Nations and provincial schools must be recognized by all levels of government.... First Nations must develop their own national and local education policies which would reflect their philosophy, cultural beliefs and practices. Such policies must be acknowledged and adhered to by federal agencies and other governments.... First Nations must control the development of curriculum materials from preschool to post-secondary levels to ensure that they eliminate stereotypes about First Nations and teach pride in our heritage, provide cultural content and promote feelings of self-worth. Culturally relevant content must be recognized by other governments and all school types as a necessary component for quality education for First Nation students. It must also be appropriately resourced. Irrelevant southern curricula must be replaced by cultural content applicable to northern settings. (National Indian Brotherhood, 1988, pp. 31-33)

Most recently, the multi-million dollar study, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), echoed the same concerns on the part of Aboriginal people, reporting that

Aboriginal people are diverse in their histories, environments and cultures, but their deep commitment to education cuts across all boundaries. In our public hearings, Aboriginal parents, elders, youth and leaders came forward to tell us of the vital importance of education in achieving their vision of a prosperous future. For more than 25 years, Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. They want education to prepare them to participate fully in the economic life of their communities and in Canadian society. But this is only part of their vision. Presenters told us that education must develop children and youth as Aboriginal citizens, linguistically and culturally competent to assume the responsibilities of their nations. Youth that emerge from school must be grounded in a strong, positive Aboriginal identity. Consistent with Aboriginal traditions, education must develop the whole child, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.... despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future.... Aboriginal people rightly expect education to serve as a vehicle for cultural and economic renewal. (Vol. 3, p. 434)
These papers point out that additions of colour added to content and to those delivering education are just the beginning. The challenge is to move from a largely Eurocentric system to a system which incorporates, advocates and teaches Aboriginal ways of knowing, and which is "Native education for Native people by Native people" (Celia).

For the women participating in this study, a central contradiction of meaning perspectives was experienced in being Aboriginal while simultaneously gaining an essentially non-Aboriginal credential. Some participants endured this contradiction so that they could redress the cultural discontinuity which they had experienced in their own lives as Aboriginal learners in a non-Aboriginal education system by becoming Aboriginal educators. They were aware of being 'trail breakers' who could make it easier for those coming along behind them who would be their students and who might see them as educational role models.

Like participants in Haig-Brown's study (1995), these women voluntarily sought credentialling from "an institution which prepares First Nations people to participate in an exclusionary, majority non-Aboriginal society, while at the same time attempting to enhance their awareness and appreciation of their own cultures and heritage" (p. 237). Like Haig-Brown (1995), while I see that further study is needed to justify my perspective, I understood participants in my study to be exercising personal power in proactively seeking the kind of educational experience which would be a positive departure from earlier experiences and benefit their lives. These participants, like those Aboriginal adult learners Haig-Brown (1995) worked with, showed "a determination to get the benefits of that education without submitting to it.... as adults they can select the kind of institution they will attend, and, as a result, the educational experience is different from that which they had previously endured. The reward for their struggle is a form of education more compatible with their needs and desires" (pp. 170, 171). A further reward was an increased sense of ease and competence in education which allowed them to open to perspective transformations.

In short, the right to engage in Aboriginal processes of meaning making and perspective transformation, and the right to generate and disseminate Aboriginal knowledge are presented as necessary components of a successful Aboriginal education. Participants who believed in serving as agents for positive change through education, who endorsed heuristic methods and allowed shifts in their own perspectives, and who surmounted barriers to achieve their teaching certification were, in effect, positioning themselves within the broader context to contribute to the ongoing effort to achieve Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education. Winter (1996) indicates
that “First Nation people in Canada view postsecondary education as vital for the success of their movement towards self-government and self-reliance" (p. i). For many Aboriginal people whose goal is self-determination, this goal incorporates the idea of autonomy over institutions (Little Bear, Boldt & Long, 1984) including educational institutions (RCAP, 1996).

Study findings raise questions about Mezirow’s (1978) claim that in ‘organic mode’ cultures, opportunities for change come infrequently. An area for further investigation is to determine what factors (aside from the transition from ‘organic’ to ‘contractual’) would encourage opportunities for perspective transformation in cultures favouring an ‘organic mode.’ Perhaps their perspective transformations were supported by the realization that their personal changes were for the benefit of the whole. Or perhaps the opportunity for education-related perspective transformations was stimulated by others including Aboriginal mentors and educators who inspired participants to adopt a positive attitude toward education by fostering a concept of education as a tool which could support and further Aboriginal community well-being. Mezirow himself (1991) recognizes the impact which social movements (such as the ‘Indian control of Indian education’ movement experienced by ‘organic mode’ Aboriginal cultures) may have on stimulating perspective transformation. He says

If a social movement supports an alternative meaning perspective that affords relief from the stress generated by our dilemma, we will likely be more receptive to it. Identifying with a social movement provides perhaps the most powerful reinforcement of a new way of seeing our own dilemma. Social movements, in turn, gain great power when people identify with them as part of a personal perspective transformation. (p. 188)

A topic for further investigation is whether a new ‘social reality’ is being negotiated as Aboriginal people themselves identify school as potentially positive. Should this be the case, members of cultural groups favouring an organic mode may be more stimulated to open themselves to the perspective transformation this new orientation to school requires. The role of the collective in the transformation of perspectives requires more detailed examination. Adult educators who have critiqued Mezirow’s theory of transformation state that one of its weaknesses is the “omission of historical and sociocultural context as important” (Taylor cited in Brooks, 2000, p. 141).

Bruner (1986) describes the creation of narratives in societal and cultural forums as a process involving the recreation of shared meanings among groups of people. Ironically, education has a potentially important role in reforming the discourse about education. As Bruner says, “…culture is as much a forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating action as it is a set of rules or specifications for action.... Education is, or should be, one of the
principal forums for performing this function” (p. 123). Perhaps a collective perspective transformation in Aboriginal attitudes toward education may be fostered through education by Aboriginal educators. As Iroquois curriculum developer Brenda Tsioniaon LaFrance says “Schooling must be a cultural negotiation” (National Round Table on Education, RCAP, July, 1993, p. 2).

Conclusion

...Indian people across the countries of Canada and the United States have been experiencing what might be called a revitalization. We have awakened just in time to rediscover something that might otherwise have passed from our reality forever. I am referring to our great heritage, our culture, and our values.

Tom Porter, Iroquois

Participants reported that in a supportive environment they experienced both small and large shifts in their meaning perspectives. While their definitions of the term ‘personal change’ were broad, they included some shared categories. While some participants associated personal change with growth, others associated it with something new, though not necessarily with growth. Some participants linked personal change with an holistic view of the person. All but one participant indicated that personal change was largely an internal event, psychologically based and linked with changing attitudes and perceptions. One participant associated personal change with external events. While most participants presented personal change as a positive thing, two women also indicated that some personal changes could be both negative and difficult.

Participants’ depictions of what prompts personal change were also broad, but included shared categories. When asked what causes personal change and/or to what they would attribute their own personal change, participants named other individuals, learning experiences, support from significant others such as supervisors, teachers, husbands and peers, environment, Aboriginal spiritual teachings, personal willpower, self-awareness, and ‘hard knocks.’ For all participants, personal change involved relationships with others in some capacity. For these Ojibwe women, personal change could be prompted by both internal and external factors.

All study participants discerned personal changes in themselves in a variety of areas. Changes included an increased sense of self confidence, a newly developed or enhanced love of learning, new knowledge and skills, a deeper sense of their own Aboriginal identity, and character changes. The new experiences and learnings they had achieved as students in teacher education courses and in practice teaching, and the positive relationships with others including the support
and stimulation they found with peers, supervisors, instructors and program staff were named as primary factors in their personal changes.

In discussing their 'meaning making,' participants recounted both assimilating new learnings into existing meaning frameworks, and accommodating these frameworks to adapt to new learnings. Participants' comments about their meaning making and perspective transformations within the arena of education have greater impact when understood within the context of their lives, as well as within the context of historical and contemporary issues in Aboriginal education. Reported changes such as an increased sense of personal confidence gained through meeting program challenges, and a new or enhanced understanding/love of learning are especially significant given that education in general has negative historical connotations for Aboriginal students. For some participants, enrolling in post-secondary teacher education was a daunting prospect, yet one which was undertaken for a multitude of reasons including the benefit such educational pursuits would accrue to their own students and communities. Participants exerted their efforts within the broader context of the movement toward a new more positive expression of Aboriginal education which is 'for Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people.'

It could be said that some participants were 'actualizing internal development potentialities' through the personal changes which they reported. Courses and practice teaching were reported stimulators of that change. Perhaps participants were like other teaching professionals Cranton (1996) refers to when she says "educators' individual development and their role in work and social contexts cannot be separated. Learning is both a process of socialization and a process of change" (p. 142). However, while it is safe to say that participants in the study experienced personal change according to their own reports, the deep nature of such change is difficult to categorize. Adult learning and development frameworks acknowledge the links between culture and meaning making, between culture and perspective transformation, and between culture and personal change/development. Yet these same frameworks are not useful in assessing the nature of Anishinabe women's personal change unless they are fully inclusive of cultural differences.

Within cultures, shared discourse may occur involving sets of basic assumptions which are available to members of the cultural group and yet may not be available to others outside the group. As Catherine Belsey says "A discourse is a domain of language-use, a particular way of talking (and writing and thinking). A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterize it." Discourse focuses on the importance of context within
meaning and the open-texturedness of reality” (Belsey cited in Eisenstein 1988, p. 11). It is important to remember that in finding shared meaning, there is much which is implicit in the exchange. If an awareness and understanding of cultural differences is not brought to bear on cross-cultural exchanges, then it is possible that at least some, if not all of the communication may be misconstrued. When culture is not shared, and meaning perspectives are culturally influenced, it must be assumed that the ‘open-texturedness of reality’ must be earned rather than taken for granted. We must acknowledge that our meaning-making ‘filters’ are culturally prescribed. Added to that, if we take the perspective of the RCAP (1996), Cathro (1993), Foucault (1980), Haig-Brown (1995), and Mihesuah (1998), among others, we must acknowledge that much of the academic discourse is created by dominant groups who have a stronger voice within the domain of academic language-use. An awareness of power differentials is also a necessary component in cross-cultural endeavours.

Efforts to understand another person must be exercised with care. Given the possibilities for misconceptions to occur, meaning making endeavours with those of other cultures must be treated with respect and caution. For example, the connections between individual development and ‘a cultural system of social knowledge’ whether ‘organic,’ ‘contractual,’ or otherwise deserves further attention in order to gain an adequate understanding of the underlying nature of participants’ personal change.

It is beyond the parameters of this study to make assumptions about the deep nature of meaning making and personal change for these participants and for other Aboriginal adult learners. However, I believe that with extra care and effort, real communication and understanding is possible if carefully developed. Making the effort to understand the context from which communication springs, and questioning the underlying assumptions which we all carry with us into interactions are two such ways in which communication with those of other cultures may be treated respectfully. Honouring opportunities which allow collaborators to make meaning heuristically is another way of showing respect and recognizing that “Aboriginal intellectual traditions operate from a different but equally valid way of construing the world” (RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, p. 526). Such efforts may be highly rewarding in that collaboration across cultures presents the opportunity for challenges to entrenched perspectives and the potential for perspective transformation, leading to broader understanding and greater knowledge.
CHAPTER 7

FRAMEWORKS FOR EXAMINING ABORIGINAL ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Introduction
In this chapter, I outline findings pertaining to participants’ views about maturity. I then provide a brief overview of the literature on adult development which initially seemed to hold relevance in relation to findings. Finally the chapter outlines the process by which a shift in my own orientation occurred, resulting in a revision of one of my initial research goals (which was to explore findings pertaining to participants’ personal growth in relation to theories of adult development).

Organization of the Chapter
The chapter presents (1) findings related to participants’ definitions of the term “maturity.” Literature relating to participants’ comments is then reviewed as follows: (2.1) exercising development potentialities; (2.2) stages and phases; (2.3) gender-specific theories of adult development; and (2.4) adult development and culture. This segment of the discussion concludes with (2.5) the danger of the ‘simple solution.’ Issues concerning the assessment of maturation across cultures are then explored in (3) my own perspective transformation. The chapter concludes with comments and implications for research.

Frameworks for Examining Aboriginal Adult Development: Findings and Discussion
1) Participants’ Definitions of Maturation: Findings
Participants had much to say in response to the interview questions 1) “What does the term “maturity” mean for you?” and 2) “What helps someone to mature?”

Generally, their responses could be grouped into two main categories – those which associated maturity with age; and those which did not associate maturity with age.

For Susan, Doris and Flora, maturity was connected with age. Susan linked maturity with age and experience, and alluded to a growing sense of confidence born of experience, saying

Maturity.... I think a lot of people know what maturity is, and, or there’s different words, but they don’t know how I see it. So I would rather just give it as an example.... Age [laughs]. Experience. I would say most of all, experience. [pause] Oh, I would say age, but
they kind of go together because [for example] if this course was probably available to me when I first finished high school, I don’t know whether I would have been ready for it, but now, where I’ve experienced [pause] home life, I’ve experienced school, I’ve experienced working within the schools. I feel I’m now mature enough to be a teacher.

Like Susan, Flora associated maturity with age. In addition, she referred to personal characteristics and learning experiences. She said

...when you’ve grown up, when you’re not childish any more. Older... In wisdom too... more wisdom and knowledge... A lot of birthdays. [Laughter.] My learning, living, reading, studying, going to school, learning...

In describing what she associated with maturity, Flora talked about Aboriginal youth, saying

...as they mature, as they get older, they start to realize how important things are, or they’re able to concentrate for longer periods of time. They realize responsibility. They change, and I think it’s because they’re maturing. So I would say experience and knowledge helps you to mature.... We can have a lot of knowledge but no, it’s not wisdom until you know how to use it, put it into practice. Elders are very wise... they’re very knowledgeable... they’ve had a lot of life experiences, so they know a lot of different things and they know how they could put them into practice.

Doris also associated maturity largely with age, but as she reflected on the word further, she also identified characteristics of maturity and established that these characteristics were not necessarily age-specific. She noted that there was personal agency involved in maturing, choosing to accept and explore what is given to you which will lead to maturity:

I don’t know how to describe the term maturity. I know it, I know what it means and all that, but... I’ve always associated maturity with age. Yeah. As you get older, you mature, and that’s basically what I associate maturity with.... and also a level of understanding too, is associated with that as well.... I guess I could say that too, because, I was choosing Elders as an example. We call them the Wises, the Keepers of the Knowledge. They’re the oldest and the most mature I guess. And they have the highest level compared to – I’ll use my daughter, for example. She’s seven age-wise, but she’s ah, she’s much more mature than other seven year olds. And then there’s my fourteen year old who’s mature physically and verbally, but socially, he’s not mature, you know? [Laughter.] So that’s it too. I don’t really know what to say.... I guess we mature with age. You don’t only mature mentally or physically; you mature in so many different ways. You keep gaining more and more, more and more of what’s given to you I guess. I’m not too sure.... And not only been given; it’s probably what they lived through too. Experienced.... What helps someone to mature? To be given different opportunities and different challenges, I think, is what would really help someone mature. Not having something forced upon you, but learning it, like given it, but it’s up to you to take it upon yourself to explore.
For Edna, Clara, Joan, Celia and Tania, maturity was not associated with age. In her reflections on maturity, Joan was very clear that there was a cultural aspect to be taken into consideration in understanding definitions of maturity, and that for the Ojibwe, people matured in their own time and space. As she said:

Maturity. I’ve probably thought about this a number of times and each time I think about it I think of something else, and it’s not always the same. Like two years ago my idea of maturity was not the same as what it is today. But I think it’s a person who is a very well rounded person in terms of their feelings, their way of acting, their seeing things, how they perceive themselves as a human being, a person who, I guess, likes themselves, because they have achieved as much as they can, you know, in their own personal life. They are the best that they can be and that they are always willing to learn, to be open to new ways of growing as an individual....

With our people, wisdom doesn’t come, you know, to someone who is ninety, as opposed to someone who’s twenty. Wisdom comes to those who grow and have attained a certain level of maturity and wisdom.... In the non-Native world, like if you’re fifteen years old you’re expected to be this. In the Native world you’re not expected to be this. You’re expected to grow in your own time and space.... I think some of the factors [contributing to maturity] probably would be the environment which these people grew up in; the positive things which have happened in their lives and the negative things which... Say for example, the family where there’s abuse; there’s very little growth for anybody, because there’s that abuse. And I think that those are some of the factors. And where students are abusing drugs, where there is substance abuse, I think there’s a certain level where these people stop growing, because there is so much abuse. And like I said, there is the home environment but there is also the community environment. Communities can die as a whole because of the environment. Communities can grow as a whole because of the environment. And each one I think is possible.

For Edna too, the concept of maturity was culturally linked, and people matured following their own process of development rather than according to age. She said

Maturity? I can’t not answer that in a cultural context. [pause] I think... we as students in the program have grown. [pause] I remember; I think of what we have become. In a way, that’s a process of growing and learning what your, positive and negative, you know, and that’s an ongoing process. I think even myself, in some ways I better not mention [laughs] lack maturity. If we took, for instance, the teachings of the seven grandfathers, that was something to aim for. Maturity... humility, bravery, honesty, truth, love, um... [laughs] ....It’s something that an Elder would have, those bigger things. Yes, they’re big things – but that’s what I see maturity as. It’s an ongoing process. Like I could be mature but immature in some ways... I don’t think, I don’t know if age would really make a difference... I guess people have their own developing process of maturity. But I would say that it would be the amount of wisdom or [pause] maturity.
Like Edna and Joan, Clara and Tania also understood maturity to be linked with personal characteristics rather than age. Clara said

Maturity? Someone who is, ah [long pause] not necessarily old. Someone who has reached that level…. Someone who is serious and has reached a level of understanding. Really shows that they are serious…. I see a lot of older people who are not necessarily mature…. responsibility…. Maybe more responsible rather than understanding.

KATE: Would you say that both [responsibility and understanding] were aspects of maturity, but being responsible was more important?

CLARA: Um humm. Knowing themselves. Getting to know themselves I think.

Celia mentioned age, but said that maturity didn’t necessarily come with growing up, but was connected with personal actions and characteristics.

Maturity? Oh, fifteen years of having fun! No. [Laughs.] Maturity. Um… I don’t think it’s necessarily growing up because I find myself still… still thinking in a young way? I think maturity is probably accepting the responsibility of taking care of yourself…. Knowing that you’re responsible for everything that you do and that you’re in a situation because you choose to be there and nobody put you there… being able to take care of your responsibilities or being responsible for yourself…. Life experiences [can help someone to mature]. For me that was the big thing. Life experiences… I grew up with a lot of alcoholism in my family, so everywhere I went there were bars; in [names place she grew up] you could go into bars when you were small… But I think learning how to live a different lifestyle. That was something that I always wanted but I fell into the routine anyways, the trap of drinking and stuff. So it was getting out of that cloud, coming out of that cloud was a real life experience for me. And I mean literally, it was like a cloud. Wow! Is this what life is really like? And; and I think being able to accept those life experiences… Being able to accept those life experiences, and choosing the way I wanted my life to be. I didn’t want to, you know, if I had children, I didn’t want my children to see that kind of a life. And it’s not like my parents were that totally bad or anything, but… just what I’ve experienced, I can relate to other people, and I think that, um, the things I’ve chosen in my life are good things, and that’s, that’s you know, my choice. And I think that that’s the responsibility, you know, in life. Experiences are what influence your life, you know. But it’s such an easy routine to get into, those bad habits of drinking and stuff… It was…like where was I going? I wasn’t going anywhere. So I had to make the — and I didn’t really consciously think of that, but I thought “Well, what do I want?”

For Tania, maturity was associated with a level of understanding. As she said

Maturity means a level of understanding the rules and your relationship to your people that affect your life, you know, with your children, with your students, with your husband…. A deep level of understanding. You know what reality is as opposed to fantasy or idealistic views or… You understand reality. When you understand reality and where you are in your life, and those around you, you could be considered mature.
In general, maturity was age-related for three participants, and not age-related for five participants. Two of these five participants mentioned that maturity involved ‘growing at your own pace.’ Maturity was associated with life experience and learning. Joan, Edna, Flora and Doris believed that maturity involved self-realization through developing one’s gifts. Participants’ definitions of maturation included attitudinal indicators (for example, positive self-perceptions, self-confidence); personality traits (for example, demonstrating characteristics such as wisdom, seriousness, patience, responsibility, well-roundedness, humility, bravery, honesty, lovingness); knowledge and skill indicators (for example, one who has had a lot of experience, shows they are knowledgeable, has a deep understanding of ‘reality,’ and/or has “achieved as much as they can” (Joan), knows themselves, has a great deal of cultural knowledge, is able to put knowledge into practice); and physical indicators (age).

2) Participants’ Definitions of Maturation: Discussion

In reviewing participants’ comments, I was tempted to make sense of them using what I had learned about adult development through readings and my own experience. Several associations immediately came to mind, as outlined below.

2.1) Exercising Development Potentialities:

For Doris, Edna, Celia and Joan, maturity involved changes in the self which were reminiscent of Kolb’s (1984) definition of adult growth. In such adult growth processes, “development potentialities are enacted and practiced until they become internalized as an independent development achievement” (p. 133). Doris concurred with Kolb’s definition when she described the process of maturation by saying “You keep gaining more and more, more and more of what’s given to you I guess.” These participants’ views of development were like that of Ojibwe academic Jim Dumont, who described adult development by recounting the following traditional teaching:

Over the course of a lifetime, many forces are at work to shape the human person who enters this world with beginning ‘gifts’ – qualities and traits with which she/he is born. People are responsible for determining what their gifts are, and to learn how to use them, to develop their gifts to become whole and in balance, and in the end, to embody these gifts, so that they know ‘who they are’ and ‘what they can do’ for their people. (R.A. Antone & J. Dumont, in Hill, 1999, p. 5)

Participants’ overall orientation was to develop their gifts for the good of the community and the children they would serve through education. Their intention to use their gift in this way was
consistent with the views of other Aboriginal people. Kim Anderson (2000, p. 202) recounts the teachings of respected Ojibwe Elder Art Solomon as reported by an Ojibwe participant in her study, saying:

Women can build this sacred sense of purpose into their lives, and work with it to validate and guide their life experiences and life work. Our purpose is almost always tied into what we do for the community, as Barbra Nahwegabow has experienced: “Art Solomon talked about the gifts that we are given by the Creator, and how you need to use them for the good of the community. So that’s something else I think about a lot. Because he said, “You know, when you are standing in front of the Creator and s/he says, “What have you done with the gifts I gave you?” I want to be able to say, “Well, I did this, and this and this... [laughs] I think, just as a Native person who was given certain gifts and certain responsibilities, I really feel it’s my obligation to use those for the good of the community. That’s what I have tried to do, in the twenty-five years that I’ve been working.”

Like Edna, who indicated that she had become a stronger person, and viewed herself differently than before as a result of experiences in the teacher education program, other participants reported that developing their gifts came through lived experience. In some of their educational experience, they had engaged in perspective transformations, exercised their development potentialities and grown. Five of the eight participants (Susan, Flora, Doris, Joan and Celia) associated maturity with experience and its commensurate learnings. Like Kolb (1984), Kegan (1982), Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1991) and others, their comments suggested that where learning constitutes meaning making in its deepest sense, adult learning and adult development intersect.

2.2) Stages and Phases:

It was also tempting to reflect on participants’ comments in the light of ‘phase’ and ‘stage’ theories of adult development, because some participants related maturity with age, while other participants did not. One way of clustering the multitude of theories about adult development has been in terms of developmental stage or life phase (Cross, 1981; Lasker & Moore, 1979). Phase theorists and stage theorists differ in some of their basic assumptions.

For life phase theorists (Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978, 1986; Lowenthal et al, 1975; Neugarten, 1964; Sheehy, 1976; Weathersby, 1981) adult development is associated with age, and with issues or tasks which an individual is likely to be dealing with at a particular time of life. Cross (1981) provides a useful metaphor in discussing life phase approaches to adult development, saying
This line of inquiry has been likened to the seasons of life, each with its own distinctive character – the spring time of youth, the harvest of midlife, the winter of advanced age. Strictly speaking, this is not a developmental process if one regards development as a continuous flow toward growth and maturity. Rather, it represents qualitatively different phases through which people pass from birth to death. Some researchers relate the phases to age; for example, adults between the ages of 45 and 55 are in the “settling down” phase of life. They stress the importance of social expectations – those in positions of leadership and authority on the job, at home and in the community are in a settling-down phase of the life cycle. (p. 167)

Phasic theories allow for ‘horizontal progression’ through phases of development, and do not claim that one phase is more adequate than the next, but rather that phases are in keeping with particular times of life. Phasic theories are more apt to present development as an inevitable unfolding of predetermined patterns. While the environment may influence the rate of growth, it has little effect on form and sequence. While some phase theorists take the position that difficulties will occur if a given phase of development does not emerge ‘on time’ or if phase-related issues are not dealt with and resolved (Gould, 1978, for example), others do not note such hindrances to the unfolding of adult life phases. Study participants Susan, Doris, Flora were like phase theorists in associating maturity with age. However, they differed some from phase theorists in talking about how maturity involved perspectives which were increasingly more ‘adequate’ than those held earlier, implying an ‘hierarchical’ rather than an ‘horizontal’ progression.

Stage theorists (Erikson, 1950; Kegan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981; Loevinger, 1976; Perry, 1970, 1986) on the other hand, do not associate development with age. Rather, they suggest that adult development is adult growth, and that development does not occur simply as a result of chronological aging. For stage theorists (Kegan, 1982; see also Perry, 1970), development means a qualitative change in the way the world is viewed, with the new incorporating the old and transcending it. As MacFarlane (1991) points out

Many stage theorists rely heavily on the fundamental ideas of Piaget for the definition/description of the developmental process: structural organization, developmental sequence, and interactionism. Piaget believed that a person is constantly interpreting and making meaning of the world. The way of making meaning changes as the person matures, moving through a series of qualitatively different ways of viewing the world. Each stage subsumes the previous ones and represents a more complex, more differentiated and integrated perspective and hence is better or more advanced than previous ones. The idea that the farther along the developmental line one is, the better, is inherent in stage theories but ‘better’ refers to how one is able to see or construct the world. (p. 24)
While Cross (1981, p. 169) maintains that most stage theorists contend that it is ‘better’ to be at a higher level or position of intellectual or moral development than at a lower level, she notes that Loevinger (1976) and, to a lesser extent, Weathersby (1981) have some reservations about the validity of the concept of hierarchy, pointing out that higher stages do not necessarily bring about happiness or better adjustment to society. Rather, ‘better’ implies that as age increases, structures (stages) become more highly differentiated and integrated, which allows for more complex information processing and manipulation of environmental input. (Hunt & Sullivan, 1974, p. 139)

Joan spoke of the important role of environment in shaping individual and community growth. In saying “I think some of the factors [contributing to maturity] probably would be the environment,” she reminded me of stage theory approaches to development. Stage theorists place some emphasis on the role of the environment in shaping growth. They are interactionists, who believe that the environment, including education, can play a critical role in ‘pulling’ the individual into ever higher levels of development. Where environmental stimulation is lacking, the individual may stagnate at lower levels of development.

Stage theorists commonly take the position that rates of development show extreme variation, with most people never reaching the highest stages of development. When participants like Edna and Joan spoke of development unfolding at its own ‘time and space,’ they reminded me of stage theorists who discuss variation in developmental processes. Stage theorists posit that while the order of succession is common for all people, some people may pass through two stages of development in a lifetime, whereas others may pass through nine or ten stages (Cross 1981, pp. 229, 230).

2.3) Self and Other, Autonomy and Connection:

While participants did not elaborate on relationships with others in their definitions of maturity, I encountered many references to relationships throughout the interviews and informal dialogue with participants. The emphasis participants placed on relationships tempted me to think of what adult development theorists had to say about self-other relations.

One of the polarities frequently recognized in discussions across the field of adult development is that of autonomy versus connection in self-other relations. The concept of self (identity) in relation to other is central to many of the developmental theories and finds its roots in Erikson (1959, 1978, 1982). While Erikson’s (1959) stages are age-related, his focus is on ego development and his theory posits that issues may be recycled and dealt with recurring as one
moves through the life cycle. Central to Erikson’s (1959, 1982) theory are the concepts of identity or sense of self, trust, generativity (the desire to find a way to contribute to and nurture others/society), and intimacy versus isolation. Gilligan (1978, 1979, 1982, 1987, 1988), Perry (1970, 1986), Kegan (1982), Belenky et al (1986) and Loevinger (1976) include discussion of the relationship between self and other in their models of adult development. Many developmental theorists have depicted individuals as moving toward greater autonomy and the ability to act independently or separately from the demands of one’s environment and others (Erikson, 1976; Kohlberg, 1981; Levinson, 1978; Piaget, 1970). Individuation is seen by many to be a major ongoing task of adulthood. Levinson (1978) posits that although the process of individuation is carried on throughout the life cycle, one of the major tasks of mid-adulthood is to become more individuated, and in so doing, to rework polarities, one of which is attachment-separateness. Becoming more individuated is crucial to the success of other life tasks. “If he is to make significant mid-life changes in love relationships, occupation, leisure, and other important aspects of his life, a man must become more individuated” (Levinson, 1978, p. 243). In their discussion of basic influences on the development of the adult self, Colarruso and Nemiroff (1981) identify the process of reworking ‘object ties’ as one of the central tasks, saying “...the quest for a clearer differentiation between self and others ends only with biological death” (p. 90). Erikson’s (1959, 1982) eight stages of psychosocial development focus on issues of autonomy and separation, with the exception of stages one and six.

While several theorists mention the attachment-separateness polarity as figuring importantly among issues to be worked out in adulthood, Kegan (1982) identifies this as a central issue. He says

> Of the multitude of hopes and yearnings we experience, these two seem to subsume the others. One of these might be called the yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied. The other might be called the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience one’s own distinctness, the self-chosenness of one’s directions. (p. 107)

Kegan also perceives adult growth to involve a dialectic between autonomy and inclusion with one not surpassing the other, but both being reworked and expanded with development. This separates Kegan (1982) from theorists who would place heaviest emphasis on the side of autonomy and increasing individuation. Some writers would contend that this also separates Kegan’s thought (1982) from the mainstream. Gilligan (1988) points out that contemporary psychology upholds “the ideal of individual autonomy” (p. 5) and says “The individualism
defined by the ideal of the autonomous self reflects the value that has been placed on
detachment... The self, although placed by psychologists in a context of relationships, is defined
in terms of separation” (pp. 6, 7).

Those theories which explore growth as increasing separation and detachment were not
useful in shedding light on my participants’ orientation.

2.4) Gender-Specific Theories of Adult Development:

Having found little satisfaction in reviewing theories which depicted growth in terms of
increasing autonomy, I turned to gender-specific theories to illuminate participants’ comments.
Specifically, I was reminded of Gilligan’s (1982) discussions of adult development. Recalling
participants’ central concern with the well being of their communities and Aboriginal students, it
seemed to me that they were practicing what Gilligan (1982) would call a “care orientation.”

Perhaps leading the wave of critical responses to theories of adult development, Carol
Gilligan wrote the widely read book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s
Development* (1982). She is best known for her challenge of the previously male-dominated world
showing a male bias but presented as universally applicable, and outlines differences in women’s
approach to moral and intellectual issues. She would disagree with developmentalists such as
Levinson and associates (1974), for example, who believe that there are “relatively universal,

developed his theory from a relatively small, homogeneous sample of male participants, but
applied his theory to women’s development as well. Kohlberg (1981) proposed that moral
development moves towards increasing autonomy and “principled behaviour.” While many
theorists (Kegan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972; Perry, 1970) discuss
development in terms of hierarchies and increasing autonomy, Gilligan (1982) found that the
women she studied spoke more often of webs, responsibilities, contexts and care. Gilligan (1982)
reformulated Kohlberg’s (1981) theory of moral development to reflect two moral voices and two
ways of finding and responding to a moral problem.

Gilligan’s empirical data (1982) have led her to contend that women and men employ
different perspectives when engaged in moral meaning making. She talks about a “justice” or
“rights orientation” and a “care” or “responsibility orientation” (1982), and claims that men are
more likely to decide upon questions regarding moral rights using a justice perspective, while
women favour a care perspective in addition to a justice perspective. According to Gilligan (1982), men tend to view moral problems in terms of competing rights and the resolution of these problems to require absolute judgments arrived at through formal, abstract thinking with the solution generalizable to all. Women, on the other hand, although using a “rights orientation” sometimes, also use a “care orientation” in moral meaning making. From this “care” perspective, moral problems are seen to arise in situations of conflicting responsibilities where these responsibilities are for specific, dependent others. Solutions are arrived at through more subjective deliberations and are particularized, contextualized, and often involve ‘putting oneself in the other’s position.’ Gilligan argues that both sets of concerns are necessary for the moral conduct of human life (1979, 1982).

Participants in this study clearly indicated that they felt a keen sense of responsibility to others. In discussing their definitions of maturity, four participants mentioned that mature individuals had a sense of responsibility. And in the interviews, a sense of community responsibility and connection was expressed by all participants more frequently than any other single concern. This sense of community responsibility, discussed in previous chapters, was expressed through participants comments and actions demonstrating concern for the children, concern for future generations of Ojibwe people, and regard for the well being of the people. Participants were very care-oriented in their concern for the Aboriginal children of their communities, and in their comments about what had assisted them in succeeding in education.

In review, there were numerous perceptions of the self which were embedded in relations with others (as outlined in Chapter Four). The high value which these Aboriginal participants placed on interpersonal relations is shown in their stories about the ways in which relationships with others played a central role in their own sense of themselves, their motivations, career aspirations, and educational experiences. While they had exercised autonomy in post-secondary achievements and referred to their individual accomplishments with pride, such accomplishments were given purpose and significance by the ways in which they could be used to benefit their communities, families and culture. Benefiting the whole was an important motivator in their efforts. All participants expressed a desire to invest their efforts for the benefit of their people – recalling Susan’s words, “...if there’s something I could do for my community, then that’s where I would like to be. I would like to remain working for the People.”

A study done by Gilligan and Lyons (1983), illustrates how the “care” or “responsibility orientation” is more central to those whose conceptions of self are rooted in a sense of connection
and relatedness to others, while the "rights orientation" is more commonly found among those who define their sense of self in terms of autonomy and separation. Study findings suggest that women more commonly define themselves in terms of their relationships and connections to others. Other researchers report similar findings (Bepko & Krestan, 1990; Chodorow, 1978, 1989; Lyons, 1990; Miller, 1976). Jean Baker Miller points out that "Women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation and relationships" (cited in Surrey, 1985, p. 1). Congruent with this view, a test of college students reported by Gilligan (Gilligan, Ward, Taylor, 1988) showed that men projected more danger into situations of close, personal affiliation while women perceived more danger in personal achievement. Women linked this danger with the isolation which they associated with competitive success. Gilligan (1988) concludes that "These contrasting perceptions of safety and danger in attachment led to the identification of fear of intimacy as the corollary to fear of success" (p. 246). A subsequent test of medical students at Harvard and Tufts showed that men perceived relationships as potentially dangerous more frequently than women (Gilligan et al, 1988, p. 150).

Gilligan (1982) accounts for this gender difference in her discussion of male and female infants' differing relationships with their primary care giver, their mother. In order to separate from their first care taker and establish themselves as individuals, boys must reject identification with their mother. Girls, on the other hand, being of the same sex, need not do so, but can maintain their close affiliation without being sexually threatened. This difference leads to men's tendency to become "objectifying" and women's to become "relational" (Gilligan, 1982). In exploring the influences of early childhood upon our later development, Gilligan keeps company with Freud, Jung, Piaget, Erikson and others who came before her and who follow a psychoanalytic tradition. She joins with these others in claiming that some of the factors influencing our process of 'making sense' have their source in early childhood.

Gilligan (1982) posits that women have been viewed as being 'stuck' at lower levels of development because they value relationships and care; that is, they are not able to 'move on' to a position of autonomy and to use logic and justice as guiding principles. Her work challenges this view.

Gilligan's (1982) work contradicts that of Kegan (1982), Perry (1970) and others in claiming that issues centering on autonomy are not necessarily the measure of maturity, but her model also shares some similarities with these theorists. As MacFarlane (1991, p. 48) points out,
all three theorists are concerned with the self in relation to the other and how people make meaning. All three see development through forms as a dialectical process and present the most advanced forms of development as those in which the person sees him/herself as the agent and chooser and where care, responsibility, faith, doubt and identity are present. Likewise, all three agree that context is of vital importance, that in order to grow we need both challenge and support, and that as we grow, issues reappear and are reworked at different stages.

Like Kegan (1982) and Perry (1970), Gilligan (1982) traces a path of development from self-focus through concern about the reaction of or care for others, to a balance of self and other by means of differentiation and integration. In this process of development is both the need to preserve the self and to transform it. Gilligan (1982) found that women move from a perspective where the self is the sole object of concern, through a time of focusing on responsibility as defined in terms of connection to others and a feeling that to put oneself first is selfish. In the first perspective “morality is a matter of sanctions imposed by a society of which one is more subject than citizen” (p. 79). From the second perspective, “moral judgment relies on shared norms and expectations” and self worth is found in the role of care giver. This perspective reflects the conventional feminine voice, one that defines the self “on the basis of the ability to care for and protect others” (p. 79). The third perspective involves a rethinking of the concepts of selfishness and care and responsibility. The woman comes to include herself in the population of those to whom she is responsible. She must transcend the tension between being responsible to self and others to be both ‘real’ and ‘good.’

Participants’ comments as they referred to themselves indicated a conception of self closely linked with a sense of connection and relatedness to others, as in Gilligan’s (1982) “care” or “responsibility orientation.” For those who spoke of the multiple roles they must play, there was indication of tension between being responsible to self and to others, as expressed by Flora, who said “...I was so many things to so many people, there was no time for me. It was like “Where am I?” I didn’t count for anything, anywhere!”

As with the women Gilligan (1982) discusses, a sense of connectedness was also found to be very important among the women Belenky et al (1986) studied. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) did a study on women’s ways of knowing, involving interviews with one hundred and thirty five women (resulting in over five thousand pages of transcribed text). They contrast their findings with those focusing on a male population, and note

Confirmation as a thinker and membership in a community of thinkers comes as a climax in Perry’s story of intellectual development in the college years.... This scenario may capture
the “natural” course of men’s development in traditional, hierarchal institutions, but it does not work for women. For women, confirmation and community are prerequisites rather than consequences of development. (p. 194)

Like the women in the study conducted by Belenky et al (1986), participants indicated that support of community, teachers and staff, family and peers was significant to them in succeeding in their post-secondary program. Participants’ comments suggested that such confirmation, along with the sense of community and closeness they felt as a group of Aboriginal learners gave them the degree of belonging and security required to risk perspective transformations of the type discussed in Chapter Six.

While it is tempting to assign meaning to women’s behaviour based on gender, not all researchers concur with the idea that gender-differing traits exist. As is pointed out in “Women and Moral Theory” (Kittay and Meyers, 1987), “there is a tendency to overlook differences within a group when using contrastive schemes” (p. 296). And as Hunt (1987) points out in reference to the complexity of any project attempting to measure ‘human nature’ — “Every person is like every other person in some ways; every person is like some other person in some ways; every person is like no other person in some ways” (Hunt quoting Kluckhohn & Murray, 1949, p. 37). It seems apparent from Gilligan’s (1982, 1987), Belenky’s (1986) and others’ work, that there are other factors which effect orientations to knowing even within the same gender.


Careful views of the empirical literature typically fail to support generally accepted conclusions of stable gender differences... Overall, the available data do not support the conclusion that women are dedicated to harmony and to communal, non-egotistic goals under all conditions, across all situations. But in general, the average woman in our society is more likely than the man to be expected to pursue these objectives... (p. 249)

She cites several interesting studies and examples (Lott, 1987, pp. 241, 243, p. 250) illustrating the distinction between what women are expected to do (and how they perceive themselves as behaving) and what women actually do. In gender research, Lott (1987) points out that

While many observations of women’s behaviour may support the conclusion that women are more cooperative, helpful, and altruistic than men, we tend to make such observations in limited situations, ones in which cultural expectations for appropriate gender behaviour are strong. When we observe people under conditions in which non-gender-related demands are
more salient, we find that women can and do behave competitively and egotistically, and men cooperatively and sensitively. (p. 249)

In general, she agrees that the "main effects of sex are frequently qualified by situational interactions, and the selection of tasks plays a critical role in eliciting or suppressing differences" (p. 108). Wodak (1997) also endorses an approach to understanding gender which acknowledges context, saying

Some of the research has isolated the variable of sex/gender from other sociological or situational factors and has made hasty generalizations... Instead I would like to propose that a context-sensitive approach which regards gender as a social construct would lead to more fruitful results... Moreover, I would like to suggest a look at gender in connection with the socio-cultural and ethnic background of the interlocutors, and in connection with their age, their level of education, their socio-economic status, their emotions and the specific power-dynamics of the discourse investigated. (p. 2)

These findings point to the importance of recognizing that, like figure and ground, every way of being springs from a context. When findings are decontextualized, some of the meaning may be lost or overlooked. Lott (1987) concludes that

Gender differences may reliably be found for some behaviours, at some ages, in some situations, at some times and places. But such differences are better understood if related to their learning antecedents and situational determinants than if simply related to sex. By "virtue of being persons" as Erving Goffman (1979) has put it, women and men have learned to provide and to read depictions of masculinity and femininity as defined within their culture. But historical and current variations among women in life-styles, aspirations, attitudes, and interests, the differences between women who are affluent and those who are poor, between white women and minority women, provide impressive evidence that we must include all within-gender variations in our understanding of what it means to be a woman. (p. 289)

This depiction of the woman as a flexible, adaptive creature who exhibits traits in conjunction with context, culture, history, and specific settings and tasks is much more compatible with the idea of a 'meaning making dance' of assimilation-accommodation which characterizes our way of being in the world than is the picture of a fixed individual with stable personality components which dictate ways of behaving across all times and situations.
Adult Development and Culture:

If, as Kolb (1984), Kegan (1982), and others suggest, it is through a process of meaning making that adults develop, then culture has a significant bearing on adult development. As Jerome Bruner (1990, p. x) states, our knowledge is "enculturated knowledge, indefinable save in a culturally based system of notation," that is, our meaning making and even our means of decoding stimuli are culturally based. Harding (1987) indicates that

A number of feminist critics have pointed out that generalizing from the gender-differing traits or behaviours observed in any particular culture or subculture to what is universally masculine and feminine ignores the effects of history and culture on human belief and behaviour. (p. 304)

Gilligan's work (1982, 1987, 1988) is important in that it asks a fundamental question about the application of maturation theories. Starting by challenging the application of maturation theories developed from male sample groups to women's development, she goes on to question the assumption of universal applicability of theories in general. As she says

To ask whether current developmental theories can be applied to understanding or assessing the lives of people who differ from those upon whose experience these theories were based is only to introduce a problem of far greater magnitude, the adequacy of the current theories themselves. The answer to the initial question is in one sense clear, given that these theories are used repeatedly in assessing the development of different age groups. But the question asked in such an assessment is how much like the original group is the group being assessed. For example, if the criteria for development are derived from studies of males and these criteria are then used to measure the development of females, the question being asked is how much like men do women develop. The assumption underlying this approach is that there is a universal standard of development and a single scale of measurement along which differences found can be aligned as higher and lower, better and worse. Yet, the initial exclusion of women displays the fallacy of this assumption and indicates a recognition of difference, pointing to the problem I wish to address.... My interest lies not only in women and the perspective they add to the narrative of growth but also in the problem that differences pose for a liberal educational philosophy that strives toward an ideal of equality and for a developmental psychology that posits a universal and invariant sequence of growth. (1987, pp. 281, 282 )

Gilligan's comments have implication for the study of development in other cultures. The danger of applying Western theories to other cultures is that, while differences may be discovered, we may find only that 'an onion is not a potato,' while learning little about the 'onion' itself. Worse yet, there is the danger that such research may infer that 'potato is better' simply because this is the starting point and we know more about potatoes. Gilligan (1982) urges
us to adopt a perspective which allows that paths of development may be different but equal.

Gender differences demonstrated by Gilligan (1982, 1987, 1988) and others point to the possibility that other differences exist – perhaps between classes and races for example (Dixon, 1976; Harding, 1987). This possibility has been recognized by several researchers including Lowenthal and her colleagues (1975) who defined their research groups by social role rather than age, in order to avoid assuming universal age-linked developmental periods (Cross, 1981, p. 171). Sechel (1987) recognizes this possibility when she says “...if women use a different moral language and progress through different moral perspectives, might there [also] be a moral relativism and diversity in cross-cultural moral development...?” (p. 320).

This concern seems well-founded when one looks at definitions and discussions regarding the term “culture” (Barer-Stein, 1988; Bruner, 1986; Hampton, 1993; Kolb, 1984; Snow, 1979). If, in fact, culture is “not a thing” (Pitman et al, 1989, p. 45), but a dynamic reality, and if individuals are both formed by and form culture, then it seems possible that adult development in different cultures may not follow identical courses, for the variety among cultures is tremendous. As Pitman (1989) notes...

...research has begun to demonstrate that the life course itself is culturally or emicly defined, that different cultures vary in their definitions, degrees of perception, and evaluations of the process (Fry 1985; Keith 1985; Keith and Kurtzer 1984).... With any one cultural group, definitions of the life course can vary on the bases of sex, public versus private domains, care and family life cycle, and/or kinship network....the anthropological constructs regarding age suggest hypotheses that posit that the varieties of linear or cyclical progressions, their beginning and end points, and the biocultural events that move them are not all prefashioned with roles and statuses assumed and moved into in lock step fashion. Rather, they are presumably learned via the neurological processes of importing information that is redundant in the environment via the socioemotional process of both choosing from and constructing available options. The life course structure and process and notions of it are variable, therefore, and are based firmly in neither culture nor biology to the exclusion of the other. Nor are these processes, structures and events reserved for only some age groups, whether age is defined chronologically, biologically, or culturally. Rather, these are lifelong processes of continual construction and adaptation.... (pp. 43, 44)

If knowledge is tied to social context, then we must take Gilligan’s (1988) admonition seriously when she says that there is a need for new concepts and new categories of interpretation.... Specifically, psychologists need to incorporate the anthropologist’s recognition of the dangers in imposing one set of ethnocentric categories on another population and take on the concerns of anthropologists, historians and literary critics with the complexity of interpretation and
the construction of alternative world views. (pp. xiv, xv)

Research has also shown that a great deal of cultural variety exists regarding cultural definitions of gender (Collier & Rosaldo, 1981; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Pitman & Eisenhart, 1988; Rosaldy & Lampehere, 1974; Sacks, 1979; Sanday, 1981—as quoted in Pitman, 1989). These researchers would deem it unlikely that universality in development would exist even with the same gender across cultures, let alone across cultures as a whole.

Meaning making processes of categorizing and classification are grounded in cultural orientations to the phenomenal world. The importance of culture as a primary factor influencing our 'making sense' is echoed by Sandra Harding (1987, 1991) who notes that people of different cultures employ different meaning making structures. She says, for example that

Relatively rigid separations between mind and body, reason and emotions, the public and the private, self and other, the abstract and the concrete, culture and nature, appear characteristic of (western) masculine thinking. (1987, p. 297)

Belenky et al (1986) refer to another cultural predilection in referring to Western, technologically oriented culture as “valuing rationalism and objectivity” (p. 6). The meanings we assign to things, the values, preferences and processes by which we arrive at our understandings are all influenced by our culture. Western “reality construction” appears to rely extensively on dichotomies or pairs of opposites. For example, “self-other” relations, discussed in theories of adult development, is a dichotomy in which the other is object.

Objective distancing of self and other is not shared by all cultures. In World Views and Research Methodology, an interesting study done by black American economist Vernon Dixon (1976), Dixon claims that the difference between African and European world views is ontological, that is, to be found in our differing interpretations of the essence of things. For Africans, the relationship to all else, to the phenomenal world, is as Man (Woman)-to-Person, while for Europeans (and the ‘Western world’) the relationship is as Man (Woman)-to-Object.

Harding (1987, p. 229) notes that other authors have reported similar contrasts between Chinese and Western concepts of nature and Native American and Western attitudes towards nature. Dixon (1976) contends that while the Euro-American separation of self from nature and other people results in a characteristic “objectifying” of both, for the Africans she studied, their world view held

a conception of the self as intrinsically connected with, a part of, both the community and nature. The community is not a collection of fundamentally isolated individuals, but is
ontologically primary. The individual develops his sense of self through his relationships within his community. His personal welfare depends upon the welfare of the community, rather than the community’s welfare depending upon the welfare of the individuals who constitute it. Because the self is continuous with nature rather than apart from and against it, the need to dominate nature as an impersonal object is replaced by the need to cooperate in nature’s own projects. (p. 302)

Harding (1987) notes several studies which concur with Dixon’s findings. She says that what these observers have called “African world view” is significantly similar to what feminist literature has identified as a distinctively feminine world view.

In both frameworks, there is less emphasis on individual autonomy and more concern with relations to others and to nature. For both women and Africans, other people and nature tend to be conceptualized as dependent parts of relational networks. Humans and nature are continuous with each other. What they label as European or Euro-centric shares significant similarities with what we have been identifying as masculine or androcentric. Thus, on these separate accounts, people (men?) of African descent and (Western?) women appear to have similar ontologies, epistemologies and ethics, and the world views of their respective leaders appear to be similar. (p. 299)

Haig-Brown (1995) acknowledges a ‘feminine’ orientation in Aboriginal cultures, recalling Paula Gunn Allen’s use of terms:

Again acknowledging the serious problems which accompany any attempts to generalize about various First Nations cultures, I return to Allen’s statement that they are more often gynocratic than not and they are never patriarchal (1982:2). Allen uses ‘gynocratic’ interchangeably with ‘gynocentric’—these terms refer to a woman-focused world view. (p. 48)

Dixon’s words echo those of Verna Patronella Johnson (in Vanderburgh, 1977, p. 182) who points out that the Ojibwe self is in and part of rather than over and superior to the rest of creation. The delicate balance between self and group which is found among many Aboriginal cultures including the Ojibwe has implications for adult development. Here the ideal of maturity does not end with the autonomous self. This is not to say that autonomy is not valued. As one northern Saskatchewan Aboriginal woman states “while at times we are defined by others, there must come a time when the individual herself says who she is” (Poelzer & Poelzer, 1986, p. 114). For this woman and other Aboriginal women, self definition is considered to be as important as social definition in developing a healthy, growth-filled life (Poelzer & Poelzer, 1986, p. 114). Yet self and group are not viewed as diametrically opposed dichotomies. Autonomy is not valued in and of itself, but linked to its benefit to the whole, with each being an integral part of the other.
Among Aboriginal women Poelzer and Poelzer found that "the interviewees saw social [community] development as dependent in large measure on personal development" (p. 114). At the same time, building one's self concept was greatly dependent upon "how others think about you," "how I think about myself" and the social and economic life of the individual (p. 114). Poelzer and Poelzer's participants saw assertiveness and personal autonomy as essential to their personal growth and to women becoming more actively and creatively involved in their respective communities (p. 129). Participants in this study were like those women whom Poelzer and Poelzer (1986) discuss in valuing their individual accomplishments but presenting them in the overall context of their usefulness to their communities.

Information presented here suggests that there may be contrasting values of connectedness and autonomy found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. It may be that maturity is measured with a different yardstick among Aboriginal cultures, with autonomy being less than ultimate. Fundamental cultural differences must be considered when exploring adult development, and yet may be overlooked as they are implicit and intrinsic to the cultural orientation of both researchers and participants. As Kim Anderson, Aboriginal author of the book Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood (2000), says

In some cases, I worry that the English language and the concepts embedded within it will not convey the vision that the interview participants offer. When women, for instance, speak of the need for self-sufficiency, what the western mind is likely to engage in is a concept of western liberal individualism. This runs contrary to values typical of Native cultures, where a sense of self and the individual is grounded within a sense of responsibility to community and relationships. When the participants speak of a need to love and nurture oneself, they do not divorce themselves from responsibility to community, as with the "me first" western ideal. (p. 50)

While some authors claim that a tendency to be "objectifying" or "relational" is a product of gender, and some claim it a product of culture, others (Dixon, 1976; Harding, 1987) claim that such a tendency is a product of social relations. In acknowledging the central role which social relations play in the formation and development of the self, Bruner (1986) says

I believe too that Self is a construction, a result of action and symbolization. Like Clifford Geertz and Michelle Rosaldo, I think of Self as a text about how one is situated with respect to others and toward the world – a canonical text about powers and skills and dispositions that change as one's situation changes from young to old, from one kind of setting to another. The interpretation of this text in situ by an individual is his sense of self in that situation. (p. 130)
In reviewing Gilligan's (1978) work, Harding (1987) comments that do not question that these differences exist between feminine and masculine moralities and between the world views these moralities are a part of. The problem is that the gender dichotomies appear to be embedded in a larger pattern of difference, one that separates ruling class men in the West from the rest of us – not just, or perhaps, even men from women in the West. Thus the focus of my concern...is...the more general characteristics of social relations that tend to produce the contrasting human problematics Gilligan located in the moral preoccupations of the women and men she studied. (p. 299)

Like Haig-Brown (1995) and Allen (1986) who note the 'gynocentric' nature of Aboriginal world views, Harding (1987) notes similarities between women’s and African world views in terms of self-other relations, with both Africans and women experiencing a greater sense of connectedness and less autonomy in their self-other relations. Harding accounts for the similarities between women’s and African world views by saying that both are oppressed, their oppressors the power elite – “white, European, bourgeois men” (p. 305) – and that these dominators have created similarities in the roles and experiences of women and of Africans which have led to similar moralities. She argues that race and gender contrast schema originate “within projects of social domination” (p. 305).

At first glance, it seems that the same argument may be applied to Aboriginal contexts, where connectedness is also experienced to a greater extent (Alexander, 1953; Anderson, 2000; Johnson, in Vanderburgh, 1977). And there is no doubt that Aboriginal people have also suffered and continue to suffer from 'projects of social domination' (Anderson, 2000; Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Cathro, 1993; Deloria, 1998; Haig-Brown, 1995; Hampton, 1994; RCAP, 1996). Such domination may be found in many areas including post-secondary education. However, without further research to explore the nature of tribally-based world views which existed in the absence of oppressors, it is dangerous to assume that Aboriginal moralities and orientations have originated because of oppression. Further, as S. Freeman (1985) says “Just as there is no one experience of womanhood that transcends history and culture, there has been no uniform experience of subordination, and no single path to change.... To understand women more fully, we see special advantage in multidisciplinary approaches...” (p.3). Harding (1996) emphasizes the importance of detailed examination when she mentions local 'gendered knowledge' systems and proposes that such ways of knowing may differ by society, culture, ethnic background and political project, resulting in differing knowledge systems among women as well as between women and men.
2.6) The Danger of the ‘Simple Solution’:

While there seemed to be some obvious parallels between participants’ comments and some aspects of the literature, as outlined above, several deeply problematic issues began to emerge as the work progressed. Though I was tempted to make sense of participants’ orientations by turning to the literature on adult development, I felt increasingly dissatisfied and uncomfortable in my efforts as the research progressed. For one thing, using gender-based theories of adult development seems too simplistic in attempting to gain a deeper understanding of growth and maturation for these participants. Accounting for developmental characteristics and possible differences based on ‘mainstream’ gender theories alone omits Ojibwe cultural variables and thus does not provide an adequate solution. In conclusion, I found little which would support the efficacy of contemporary maturation theories in making sense of adult development across cultures.

While participants’ could be called “care” or “responsibility” oriented in their approaches to community and education, it is impossible to assess, given the frameworks presented here, whether their orientation is born of culture, gender, ‘projects of social domination’ or some other source entirely. Hayes and Flannery (2000, pp. 133, 134) point out that recent works (Harding, 1996, for example) call for the need to acknowledge more complexity in our assessments of women’s orientations that earlier gender theories provide. As they say “Clearly, we need a better understanding of the intersections of race, culture, and gender (and other attributes) as they affect ways of learning” (p. 134).

3) My Own Perspective Transformation:

In the course of doing this research I began to experience a fundamental shift in perspective with regard to one of my initial research goals. Mezirow’s framework (1981, p. 7) outlining the ten steps in a perspective transformation so clearly depicted my own disorienting and reorienting process that I have used this framework, below, to describe the perspective transformation which rendered my initial research goal untenable.

3.1) A Disorienting Dilemma:

Having started out with the firm intention to pursue my initial goal of “exploring the experience of eight Ojibwe women near the end of a two year program in teacher education and discussing these experiences in relation to theories on adult development,” I identified the areas of research which seemed to have relevance (outlined above). However, I felt increasingly
uncomfortable as the research progressed. The degree of discomfort I experienced was too great to be attributed merely to my discovery, as outlined above, that the many variables and potential differences within and across cultures and genders made assessment difficult.

Aside from concluding that it was impossible to determine whether participants’ orientations were gender-based, culture-based, or springing from some other source, I began to question the foundations of my earlier assumption that this was an area which I could investigate adequately or even ethically. While there are some rather obvious links in Gilligan’s work and others, some deeply problematic issues began to emerge.

As a non-Aboriginal woman talking with Anishinabe women about their personal changes in education, I was aware that the ‘open-texturedness of reality’ (Belsey in Eisenstein, 1988, p. 11) was not to be assumed. From participants’ references, it is possible to see only inferences to their sense of self as maturing Ojibwe woman, and these through the lens of the researcher. Because of this awareness, I found that it was exceptionally important for me to consider what was implicit in their comments when participants reported changes in their orientation which might be called ‘perspective transformations.’ For this reason, I asked them to define what they meant by ‘personal change’ before asking them questions regarding personal change, in an effort to avoid getting caught in my own assumptions about what they meant by the term. However, even with such precautions, I became increasingly conscious of striking differences between my orientation and experiences in post-secondary education and those of the study participants. Eventually I came to understand that because of the cultural and experiential differences in our personal backgrounds, there was a good possibility that, should I venture into an exploration of participants’ orientations to growth and development, I would not be able to present these orientations in a way which would do them justice. My own experience in post-secondary education was one in which I was not marginalized, being of the majority. Given our significantly different starting points, how could I fully understand and depict something as intimate as participants’ personal growth and maturation experienced through education?

3.2) Self-Examination:

According to O’Connor (1990, p. 285) “...transition experiences...merit the title ‘perspective transformation’ because the number and degree of change described as happening through the transition seemed to demand a radical change in psycho-cultural assumptions.” Eventually, I realized that I was in the midst of one of my own perspective transformations, which was rendering my initial goal untenable.
I found that I had to look at what I had intended to do and how I had intended to accomplish it in ways which would address ethical concerns. To look at what I had intended to do, I went back to my original thesis proposition which was to:

better understand the experience, motivations, expectations, future plans and interaction of Ojibwe women in a post-secondary program of teacher education. The study (1) explores the experience of eight Ojibwe women near the end of a two year program in teacher education including their motivations; their characteristics; their experiences in the program; and their goals upon completion; (2) discusses these experiences in relation to theories on adult learning, adult development and Aboriginal education; and (3) presents implications of the study in relation to further research pertaining to program planning for Aboriginal students.

To look at how I intended to accomplish this, I went back to my methods. Here, I intended to conduct a four part study consisting of:

(1) interview(s) with eight Ojibwe women nearing completion of a program in Aboriginal teacher education; (2) follow-up telephone interviews after the participants had received transcripts of the first interview; (3) a demographic data questionnaire; and (4) field notes which I kept during the two years students were in the program and more intensively throughout the interview process.

The interview schedule, which would generate a great deal of information, was devised to include three groups of questions – the first including those I had formed while working in Aboriginal post-secondary programming; the second including questions related to the literature on adult learning and development; and the third grouping including open-ended general questions to address the possibility that there may be answers for which I did not know the questions. Open-ended questions were also included in each section to allow the interview to unfold in a direction of the participant’s choosing if desired. At the end of the interview schedule a final question asked participants if there was anything else I needed to know.

In addition to open-ended questions, several other measures were taken in the study in order to avoid the pit fall of cultural misappropriation. First, during the interviews I practised ‘active listening’ as frequently as possible, repeating to the participant what I heard to verify that my perception was correct. In addition, I asked for clarification when I did not understand the participant’s meaning. Second, when the transcripts were complete, I sent a copy to each participant accompanied by a follow-up telephone call to make sure that their words were transcribed correctly and that they were still comfortable with what they had said in the interview. Third, as much as possible, I endeavoured to identify my own biases and assumptions
as I undertook the task of analyzing the data for meaning. Finally, in presenting the data, I used direct quotes from the participants themselves as much as possible, in order to illustrate the findings in their own words and include the voices of the participants in the research.

While these steps gave me some sense of comfort that I had taken precautions to avoid misrepresenting the participants, I still felt uncomfortable.

Reflecting deeper still, I found that I had to ask myself why I had intended to do this exploration. I recalled my own time in university and how I had experienced my own personal development and change through education as both difficult and rewarding. Exploring theories of adult development had been personally significant and relevant for me. I realized that I wanted to know more about these participants' personal development through education as it related to my own personal experience and interest. I had assumed that because such growth had been valuable for me, it would be valuable for others. As a program planner in Aboriginal education, I wanted to know what in education would foster personal development for Aboriginal students, so that I could contribute to the knowledge about program planning which fosters such growth.

3.3) A Critical Assessment of Personally Internalized Role and a Sense of Alienation from Traditional Social Expectations:

As I reviewed what I had intended to do and how I had intended to accomplish it, I saw that my motives to explore Aboriginal adult development arose out of personal interest and the assumption that because experiencing personal growth in education had been valuable for me, it would be the same for others. I began to feel uncomfortable both with this untested assumption and with assuming that I could legitimately explore something as subjective, culturally value-laden, and personal as adult development related to participants' experiences. While the study topic had been approved and met ethical review considerations, I began to feel awkward as I saw myself in an unflattering light, another white researcher meeting doctoral requirements and following my own interests 'on the backs of' Aboriginal people. While I had hoped that what I learned about Aboriginal adult development in the research process would be useful to future Aboriginal students, I had to admit that it was my own unquestioned assumption that such learning would be valuable which led me to explore the area of adult development for Anishinabe women.

The most centrally problematic aspect of my former perspective was associated with the 'personally internalized role' as Mezirow (1981) would say, which I had formerly played in Aboriginal education, and which I find I am no longer comfortable with. Formerly, in my work
and in my area of doctoral study, I realized that I had served as a 'cultural broker' of sorts. As a 'cultural broker' I was someone who had gained knowledge about Aboriginal adult students and passed it on to others, primarily non-Aboriginal, as well as providing information about a 'non-Aboriginal world' to those Aboriginal colleagues with whom I worked. In this role I had often been asked about various aspects of Aboriginal education, culture and community life by those who did not have experience in these areas, and who saw me as an 'expert' of sorts. Yet in my own life, the most rewarding learnings in these areas had come from Aboriginal people themselves. My inquiries about what 'worked' in Aboriginal students who had often been subjected to educational experiences they had no say in, to their detriment.

Delpit (1988) discusses the humiliation which students like my participants experience in having to learn the rules of an academic discipline while simultaneously being taught a sense of powerlessness as they are subjected to a discourse they had no part in forming and perhaps no role in transforming. She points out that these rules of the discipline are part of the culture of power, which marginalized students have little access to. Brown (1990, p. 93) notes that "Historically universities were developed for the benefit of privileged intellectuals – they were not intended to be instruments of change but were rather the protectors and perpetrators of the status quo." While my work as a 'cultural broker' had often been directed at changing some of the features of university which Aboriginal students found detrimental, I have come to understand that such work continues to keep Aboriginal people themselves one step removed from the communication and decision-making process, and thus still on the margins of the 'culture of power.' In acting as liaison between Aboriginal and university constituents who were working on program development for Aboriginal students, was I not inadvertently serving to keep Aboriginal people remote from decision-making and academic forums? Further, if my own best learnings about Aboriginal education and community life had come from Aboriginal people themselves, was I not keeping other non-Aboriginal people from similarly rewarding encounters by serving as an intermediary?

Vine Deloria Jr. (1998), Standing Rock Sioux and professor at the University of Colorado asks pointedly "Should Indians be allowed to present their side of the story, or will helpful and knowing whites be the Indian spokespeople? This battle has taken up my adult life" (p. 67). I now find myself asking the same question. Was I toiling to learn about Aboriginal adult development so that I could continue to work as an even greater expert, a 'helpful and knowing'
white spokesperson?

My sense of alienation from a former social role I had played was complete. I could not, in all honesty, proceed comfortably with an exploration of Aboriginal adult development as I had initially intended. The theories I had hoped to use were developed by non-Aboriginal people, about non-Aboriginal people. The subject area was too personal, value-laden and sensitive for me to enter into an analysis of it comfortably. As I spoke with only eight women, I could not hope to arrive at anything definitive even if I had proceeded to delve more deeply into Aboriginal women's adult development. But most importantly, I am not Aboriginal, and have come increasingly to believe that discussions of adult development, along with theory building and application in this area are most appropriately conducted by Aboriginal people themselves.

In addition, as I looked at my methods, I felt increasingly that there was a step left out of the research process. While participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and make comments and changes, they had not yet been offered the opportunity to review my findings and discussion. The interviews had generated a great deal of information, and way too much to be included in entirety in the thesis, necessitating in the omission of some information. Yet I felt that there was an inherent violence in decontextualizing the participants' comments by coding the interviews, chopping them up, and pulling quotes out of the whole to illustrate my findings. It seemed that in order to avoid contributing to the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the 'culture of power' in academia I must offer participants the opportunity to review my work before it was published.

If, as Delpit (1988) and many other authors (Assembly of First Nations, 1988; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Deloria, 1998; Frideres, 1987; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Mihesuah et al, 1998; Swisher, 1998) have pointed out, 'valued knowledge has traditionally been produced and controlled by a privileged group of which marginalized peoples have not been a part' (p. 282) then it is especially important to ensure that participants in my study are included in my knowledge-producing process. It is important to find some way of 'giving back' to them and to acknowledge their place as study participants. Haig-Brown (1995) points out

For First Nations people, the possibility of participating in the research process holds special significance. Many people involved in First Nations education object to the strong Eurocentric bias of the language and concepts used in most studies conducted by academics.... While Whittaker (1986) acknowledges that 'all research is exploitative,' First Nations people have been subjected to too many researchers who gather information for personal and professional benefit without giving anything back to them. (p. 32)
3.4) Relating One’s Discontent to Similar Experiences of Others or to Public Issues – Recognizing One’s Problem is Shared and Not Exclusively a Private Matter:

My discomfort was further exacerbated yet simultaneously soothed by the discovery that I am not alone in this struggle. Others have recognized similar issues in their work. Like Haig-Brown (1995) I experience a personal contradiction and can say “I am a non-Native person focusing on First Nations control of education, hoping in some way to contribute to the development of the discourse. I hope that this study contributes positively to the struggle to transform the oppressive nature of the relationships which have existed, and which continue to exist, between non-Native and First Nations people in this country” (Haig-Brown, 1995, p. 254).

At the same time I am aware that the ways in which I choose to participate may actually impede opportunities for First Nations control if I am not extremely careful. Anderson (2000) says

It is true that we are so accustomed to accepting the opinions, studies and research on Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people that we don’t question this practice. Often this is seen as more valid, somehow, than the words of Aboriginal people. I try to imagine a Women’s Studies department filled with male faculty and fueled by men’s writing. This would be considered unacceptable. Why, then, do we find it okay to read about what non-Aboriginal people have to say about every element of Indigenous lives, including our womanhood? (pp. 40, 41)

Some Aboriginal people simply are not comfortable with non-Aboriginals conducting any research pertaining to Aboriginal studies. Karen Gayton Swisher (1998; see also Swisher & Deyhle, 1989) of the Standing Rock Sioux First Nation, past editor of the *Journal of American Indian Education* and Chair of the Teacher Education Department, Haskell Indian Nations University, states in an article called “Why Indian people should be the ones to write about Indian education” (1998)

The words *voices, stories, and perspectives* are prevalent in recent reports of research and typify the intent of educational researchers to represent more accurate interpretations of the qualitative research experience. Among the current methods being used to attempt to capture authenticity are: listening to the voices of the people and making sure they are heard through the writing; telling the stories of the people as metaphors and examples of schooling experiences; and presenting the perspectives of others in an attempt to encourage readers to see through a different lens. However, much research is still presented from an outsider’s perspective. (p. 190)

Swisher (1998) goes on to say that these efforts are not enough to ensure authenticity. Rather, Indian people believe that they have the answers for improving Indian education and feel they must speak for themselves. There is an attitude of “we can and must do it ourselves,”
but we need help from our friends. If non-Indian educators have been involved in Indian education because they believe in Indian people and want them to be empowered, they must now demonstrate that belief by stepping aside. They must begin to question their motives beyond wanting to do something to improve education for Indian people. In writing about Indian education, they must now defer to Indian authors, or at least co-author in a secondary position. Far too often non-Indian people have been writing the books on Indian education, so to speak. For example, just three non-Indian authors have written more than 30 articles and books about Indian education since 1985. Their authority is cited more often than the experts from whom their experience and information was gathered, and they have become the experts in Indian education recognized by their mainstream peers. This is not so much a criticism of their efforts as it is an admonition for Indian authors to publish more. (pp. 192, 193)

Through my professional life of over twenty years working in Aboriginal education, I am aware that great changes have come about in the field. The many expressions of the desire for self-determination since and including the paper Indian Control of Indian Education (1972) attest to the fact that Aboriginal people have been endeavouring to gain control of their own representational and decision-making processes for decades. While it is clear that Aboriginal people have had valuable things to say about their own education all through the years, it is only recently that their voices have held credence in the mainstream, as a result of an increase in published Aboriginal authors and studies such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) which have been guided by Aboriginal directors and participants. Yet despite some gains in recent years, the Royal Commission (1996, Vol. 3) states

What we find most disturbing is that the issues raised at our hearings and in interveners’ briefs are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bringing forward since the first studies were done [nearly thirty years ago]. As we examine each one, we see that there has been progress, but it has unfolded at a snail’s pace and falls far short of the goal.... It is readily apparent that Canadian society has not yet accomplished the necessary power sharing to enable Aboriginal people to be authors of their own education. This suggests that there are persistent barriers to be addressed if education for Aboriginal people is to change significantly. (p. 501)

And as Devon Mihesuah, Oklahoma Choctaw and associate professor at Northern Arizona University points out, “despite the increasing number of published works authored by Native writers, Cook-Lynn observes that “the greatest body of acceptable telling of the Indian story is still in the hands of non-natives” (Mihesuah, 1998, p. 13).

On the other hand, not all Aboriginal people feel that only Aboriginal writers should address Aboriginal topics. Mihesuah (1998) continues “In “American Indian Studies is for
Everyone” [Ojibwe author] Duane Champagne expresses his belief that “Indian scholars do not have a sole monopoly on Indian studies.” Most Indian scholars agree with him.” (p. 14). It is possible to swing too far the other way and assume that Aboriginal ancestry and experience guarantees a kind of ‘universal’ Aboriginal expertise encompassing all individuals, First Nations, and geographical locations. As Anderson (2000) says

Native people have suffered a particular brand of this objectification. Ever the objects of study, we have been the bed and foundation upon which many consultants and academic “authorities” have built careers. Many people have begun to rightly question the authority of these “experts,” but this has often led to another problem – the silly expectation that, because one is Native, one can speak about everything pertaining to Native people. How many of us have sat as the lone Aboriginal student in a classroom, embarrassed by the demands placed on us by instructor and students to field all the enquiries about Indians? (p. 21)

The importance of a variety of perspectives is not to be undervalued in any learning process. Through dialogue across perspectives, new awareness is built. I am soothed by the realization that in participating in the discourse around Aboriginal education, I too have been formed and changed by the dialogue with Aboriginal people. I agree with JoAnn Archibald (Sto:lo Nation) who says “...First Nations are also asserting their own ways – our own form of discourse – so important and beneficial for non-Native societies” (cited in Haig-Brown, 1995, p. 254). The mutual learning to be gleaned from dialogue on Aboriginal education suggests to me that it would unnecessarily impoverish the discourse to dictate who may participate on the basis of ancestry, or to assume expertise or lack thereof because of blood line.

However, at the same time it is my growing belief that topics of a more personal or private nature should be ‘off limits’ to those outsiders who can do little more than speculate about a reality which they have not themselves experienced. I have come to understand that Aboriginal women’s adult development is one such topic.

My own concern about the inappropriateness of applying theories of adult development across cultures has been expressed by some of those adult development theorists themselves, as discussed earlier. Writers such as Gilligan (1978, 1979, 1982, 1987, 1988), Freeman (1985), Belenky et al (1986), Lyons (1990), Sechel (1987), Noddings (1987) and others have challenged the validity of earlier theories derived from research using a small, somewhat homogeneous sample, especially when the resulting theories presume to account for all adults’ development. While some (Freeman, 1985; Lyons, 1990; Noddings, 1987; Sechel, 1987) have criticized particular aspects of these theories, others (Belenky et al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982, 1987, 1988) have
gone on to develop theories of their own. Just as these theorists had difficulty with the application of theories across genders, and their implied universality, so I feel uncomfortable with the universal application of theories across cultures. And while it has been most suitable for women to challenge theories developed by men and applied to women by developing their own theories, so it seems most appropriate for Aboriginal women to question writing by non-Aboriginals in personal areas by researching and writing more themselves. It is their prerogative and their domain to explore and develop their own theories of Aboriginal women's development rather than mine.

3.5) Exploring Options for New Ways of Action:

With the realization that as an 'outsider' I was not comfortable with my initial goal to explore Aboriginal adult development, I understood that a portion of my doctoral research was rendered unusable. For some time I mulled over my dilemma, to the point where it became the most pressing aspect of the thesis, superseding the other writing I was doing. I talked with friends about my discomfort and in the process articulated several plans. I tried omitting the chapter on adult development entirely, but that seemed too truncated. I thought about simply talking to the participants about what I had found or showing them my code sheets, and asking for feedback in the area of Aboriginal adult development specifically. I thought about perhaps ending the whole thesis-writing mess as I couldn't face the possibility of being another 'white' researcher encroaching on a 'red' world.

Finally I decided that, for my own comfort level, and given that my concerns touched on issues identified by others in the field, the best plan of action was to address this new development as a thesis finding, and stay true to my initial plan, supported by Belenky (1986) and others, of including the researcher in the research. I concluded that while it is not my business to explore Aboriginal women's adult development, it is legitimate and perhaps useful to examine the frameworks I use to understand others, to present my own personal changes, and to try to remain open to new understandings as offered by Aboriginal teachers.

Accordingly, I revised and rewrote this chapter to include a discussion of the ethical issues I had surfaced.

3.6) Building Competence and Self-Confidence in a New Role:

Deciding to replace an exploration of participants' experience as it related to theories of adult development with an exploration of my own perspective transformation in this area was a fairly big departure from my earlier plan. In order to follow this new role in which the focus
would shift from the participants to the principal writer, I needed to have some confirmation from others. The others I turned to were my Aboriginal colleagues. When I described my dilemma, and the discomfort I was feeling, they supported my new direction. One of my Aboriginal colleagues and friends, who has been involved in issues around Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education for many years, offered to discuss issues with me and 'vet' what I had written. In addition, I was encouraged by the writing of Aboriginal authors who expressed the need for respectful relations and increased collaboration in research involving Aboriginal people. Celia Haig-Brown's book (1995) was also a timely find, recommended by an Aboriginal colleague at the very time when (unknown to her) I was struggling with these issues. In her book, Haig-Brown (1995) outlines a research stance she takes in Aboriginal education which is somewhat like my own stance, and reiterates similar concerns, saying

....Reality lies in the mutual examination of the world by all the study participants (which, of course, includes the researcher). Critical ethnography insists on acknowledging the power relations which circulate among the various study participants. The ethnographer establishes the authority for her written work by watching, spending time with, talking with, and acting with people who dwell in a particular place at a particular time.... Critical ethnography demands that a researcher work closely with other study participants to create valid knowledge. It is based on an approach to the world which opposes logical-positivism – the notion that it is possible to have objective, value-free knowledge. Critical ethnography exists in relation to what has been variously called a Western, European, White, bourgeois, rational, male ideology, and it is espoused by people who are struggling to democratize the business of creating knowledge. (p. 15)

Another author who helped me to feel comfortable with my shift in focus from the participants to myself is Mohawk author and lawyer Patricia Monture-Angus (1995) who says

As I have come to understand it from listening to the Elders and traditional teachers, the only person I can speak about is myself. That is how the Creator made all of us... All I have to share with you is myself, my experience, and how I have come to understand that experience. (p. 44)

3.7) Planning a New Course of Action:

To avoid being another researcher who gathers "information for personal and professional benefit without giving anything back" (Haig-Brown, 1995, p. 32), I contemplated what action I would take as an effort to do justice to the eight women who so generously gave of themselves and their time. To accommodate my new perspective, I decided that I would do two things. First, I decided that I owed it to the participants to offer them the opportunity to review what I had written, should they so desire. Second, in order to avoid cultural misappropriation, I decided to
discard my earlier plan to write about participants' Aboriginal adult development in the thesis, and replaced this section with a discussion of the issues surrounding such writing and a description of my own process leading to perspective transformation.

3.8) Acquiring the Necessary Knowledge and Skills for Implementing One's Plans:

In order to implement my plans, I endeavoured to place telephone calls and/or e-mails to all participants, to tell them where I was in the thesis-writing process, and ask them if they would like to take a look at what I had written. I was able to contact six of the eight participants and report to them that I was almost finished. When I asked if they would be interested in reading what I had written, all six women said yes. As reading over two hundred pages seemed like a daunting task, I offered to send each participant a summarized version or the whole thesis. All participants liked the idea of receiving the 'short version' first with the option to request the whole thesis should they decide they would like a copy upon seeing the summary.

3.9) Provisional Efforts at New Roles and to Assess Feedback:

I prepared a custom-made package for each woman as they requested and mailed or e-mailed it. Thesis summaries ranged in size from fifty-five to seventy pages. All participants received the table of contents, chapter outlines and summaries, a copy of their individual profile, and excerpts of the findings and discussion which focused particularly on their own quotes and contributions to the study. A covering letter was included in each package thanking them for their contributions to my learning, inviting them to look at their summary and provide feedback, and offering to forward a copy of the whole thesis should they wish to have one. After I sent the summaries, I telephoned each participant to ensure that they had received their package and to ask them if they had any feedback which they would like to provide.

Although taking this additional step generated more work for me, maintaining contact with participants during this last collaboration turned out to be a very gratifying experience and the feedback I received in exercising this new role was very positive. While I had stayed in touch with several of the participants, others had moved and made other changes since I last spoke with them. It was delightful to get caught up with each other. Time after time when I finished speaking with participants I felt uplifted, exhilarated, and heartened by the warmth we shared. All of the participants I spoke with (Tania, Flora, Celia, Susan, Doris and Joan) have continued to make valuable contributions in the field of Aboriginal education. Celia and Tania have moved from their own First Nation territories to work in First Nations education elsewhere. Flora, Susan, Doris and Joan have been working in education on their own reserves.
All six women expressed pleasure and gratitude in having the opportunity to see the written work. Talking with participants was a very affirming experience personally. Tania told me that she was proud of me and valued the work I had been doing. Flora divulged that she had begun writing poetry during her teacher education program and had continued writing since graduating. She then offered to read some of her poems to me which related back to her time in teacher’s college, and delighted and honoured me with a personal reading over the telephone. Shortly after Tania received her package she sent me an e-mail in which she mentioned that when she read her summary she laughed and cried, was “overwhelmed and touched.”

At the time of this writing, not all participants have opted to provide feedback on the summary due to a shortage of time in their busy lives. Susan indicated that she was happy to receive her summary but would like to provide any feedback she might have at a later date when she hopes to have more time. Accordingly, I gave her my e-mail address. However, because she seemed very busy with her work, I also told her that while her feedback is welcome, I hoped that she would not to feel pressured to respond. The feedback which has been offered has necessitated only minor changes. Both Flora and Joan commented on the number of ‘um’s’ included in their quotes. When I offered to omit these from their quotes, they indicated that it was not necessary. However, I reviewed their quotes and removed the term ‘um’ in those cases where doing so made the quote read more clearly.

While some of my colleagues advised against this extra step of sending custom-made packages to participants (understandably wondering if I would ever finish the thesis!), taking this last step was well worth the effort both because it increased my ‘ethical comfort level’ and because it was clear that participants appreciated being contacted. They valued the opportunity to review and comment on the work as it neared completion and found the exercise personally meaningful. I felt rewarded and deeply touched by their comments. My findings confirmed what others (Clifford, 1988; Haig-Brown, 1995; Mihesuah et al, 1998; RCAP, 1996) have asserted - the importance of recognizing and respecting Aboriginal people as full participants in research projects, and of ‘giving back’ in some way which acknowledges their efforts.

3.10) Reintegration into Society on the Basis of Conditions Dictated by the New Perspective:

Reintegrating into an academic society based on conditions dictated by my new perspective means that I have to find a place where I too can feel ‘at home’ as a learner. Like my participants, one of the things which helps me the most is finding role models in the effort. While role models may not yet abound, it is possible to find sources like Haig-Brown (1995), a non-
Aboriginal woman who has worked in Aboriginal education and is concerned with ‘power relations’ and ways to conduct herself appropriately. In addition, I have begun to reassess my professional roles and what roles I can be ethically comfortable with in my future work. These reflections have led me to explore new options for employment, as I believe that increasingly non-Aboriginal people in the field of Aboriginal education must step aside to make room for Aboriginal scholars and educators in the field.

Conclusion:

I experienced a “perspective transformation” of my own through working on this focus of the thesis. What I learned prompted more questions than answers pertaining to Aboriginal adult development. Personally speaking, my awareness of being an ‘outsider’ conducting research in Aboriginal education created a degree of discomfort in the endeavour. As I have learned more about the necessity of Aboriginal writers and researchers being represented as published authors in the academic discourse around Aboriginal education, my discomfort has grown. In reflecting on my own journal notes, I came across the following excerpt:

Aware of the bias in literature, and of my contribution to it as a non-Aboriginal researcher writing in English about Aboriginal adult education, I have endeavoured to use the words of the participants themselves as much as possible in presenting aspects of their educational experiences. Nonetheless, I am aware that such an approach only partially acknowledges the perspective of the participants, as the responsibility for interpreting and discussing what they had to say still rests, at times uncomfortably, with me the writer. (excerpt from my journal notes, July, 1998)

It is beyond the parameters of this study, and my ethical ‘comfort zone’ to make comment on adult maturation as it pertains to Aboriginal women. It remains for Aboriginal researchers themselves to determine stages and phases of Aboriginal maturation should they so desire. As a woman reflecting on her own growth experiences through education, I have come to believe that any personal work is highly contextual. Therefore exploring personal matters with Aboriginal women is likely to be distorted by my own “perspective of the outside observer.”

While I did observe that these women were highly relationship-oriented, and seemed to practice an “ethic of care” (Gilligan, 1982) to a great degree, it is unclear whether such an orientation is fostered by gender, by culture, by both, or by something entirely different. The literature outlines multiple factors leading to the importance of interconnectedness for both Aboriginal (Ojibwe) and women’s meaning making and development. More importantly, Gilligan
herself points out that it is inappropriate to apply theories of adult development derived from studies of men conducted by men to women's development, because such theories fail to take gender differences into consideration. Similarly, it is inappropriate to apply theories of non-Aboriginal women's development derived from studies of non-Aboriginal women conducted by non-Aboriginal women to Aboriginal women's development, because such theories fail to take cultural differences into consideration. Haig-Brown (1995) says that "most grand theory... has taken its strength from denying particularity" (p. 236). In my research endeavour, I learned the fundamental unsuitability of attempting to exercise a 'grand theory.'

Working with eight Anishinabe women over their two year program was a highly rewarding experience for me, but limited in its scope. A far deeper and broader research effort would be necessary, and one conducted from the perspective of a cultural 'insider' in order to achieve legitimacy.

It is through listening to rather than speaking about Aboriginal women's perspectives on growth that a depth of understanding about these perspectives may perhaps be reached. Through honouring the many ways of being human by respecting differences, meaning making becomes increasingly deep and more inclusive. I believe that differences are worth protecting. Paradoxically, protecting differences enriches the whole -- like Anishinabe author and environmental activist Winona LaDuke (1999) I believe that "In the final analysis, the survival of Native America is fundamentally about the collective survival of all human beings" (p. 5). It is important to honour different ways of expressing the human condition for the benefit of all.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

When I began this study, my intentions were to (1) explore and discuss the experiences of eight Ojibwe women near the end of a two year program in teacher education including their motivations; their characteristics; their experiences in the program; and their goals upon completion; (2) discuss these experiences in relation to theories on adult learning, adult development and Aboriginal education; and (3) present implications of the study in relation to further research pertaining to program planning for Aboriginal students.

This study was conducted with the hope that such knowledge would contribute to my own and others’ ability to provide a better in-school environment for Aboriginal women’s adult learning and growth to occur, while adding to the knowledge about Aboriginal adults who enrol in higher education.

To some extent, I have been able to fulfill these intentions. Through exploring participants’ characteristics, experiences, and goals, I learned of the preeminence and permeating nature of relationships and their importance for all participants. These findings were presented in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I discussed participants’ comments in relation to their adult learning experiences, and presented a review of program features which participants identified as impacting upon their success in their program of teacher education. Chapter Six provided a review and discussion of participants’ comments related to their self-identified personal change within the adult learning context.

In Chapter Seven, I had intended to explore findings pertaining to participants’ growth and adult development in relation to pertinent theories in the field. However, in the course of reading and reflecting on the subject, my own perceptions have changed significantly. I have come to believe that it is dangerous and futile to apply frameworks of adult learning and development created with ‘mainstream’ participants to understanding the experiences of participants in my study. Several deeply problematic issues have become apparent which question the foundations of my earlier assumptions that such an exploration would be worthwhile. Consequently, in Chapter Seven, I presented a revised version of my original intention which included a discussion of the steps in my own perspective transformation.
Organization of the Chapter

This chapter summarizes some of the central findings of the study, and presents a brief reflection on questions which the study raised, concluding with implications and suggestions for further research.

Reflections on Findings

The study yielded some general as well as specific findings. In general, I found that these Aboriginal women placed a high value on their interpersonal and community connections and relationships. For all participants, relationships with others and with their communities were highly regarded and very important influences on their lives as Aboriginal adult learners. Some perceptions and experiences reported by participants echoed those addressed in the literature, including the importance of such learning processes as learner – learner interaction in facilitating adult learning; the value of support in successful educational endeavours; and the multiple factors motivating participants to complete a program of teacher education. Other perceptions, most notably the sense of community and children being at risk culturally, and the sense of responsibility in achieving and using an educational credential as a way of addressing community needs in this area, were unique. The literature on adult learning did not present information which suggested that a sense of social responsibility, shown by all participants to such a great extent, is shared as a motivating factor by other adult students.

The literature suggested that valuing community and interpersonal connections may be culturally linked. If this is so, then efforts to understand Aboriginal adult learning must take such values into consideration. Further, study findings suggest that the degree to which these Aboriginal adult learners are successful in post-secondary education may depend, in part, on program features which recognize and support community, cultural and interpersonal connections. Community-based delivery of the program, the presence of Aboriginal mentors and peers, and course content/process relevant to Aboriginal education are three such features.

Learning is a matter of how people transform through participation in the activities of their communities' (Bruner, 1986; Rogoff, 1990). Like Lyons (1990), Bruner (1986), and others, I have come to endorse the perspective that knowledge is contextual, thus culture, or "what we do every day" (Barer-Stein, 1988) has an impact on knowledge, and knowledge on culture. From this perspective, teaching and teacher education may be viewed as a powerful tool to de/reconstruct culture. It is with this perspective in mind that the activities of Aboriginal people
as culture-creators-through-education become particularly interesting. There is still much to learn in this regard.

The challenge is to articulate what is truly Indigenous education. What is education beyond the inclusion of bits of history, arts and crafts, songs and dances? What is Indigenous education in its delivery and in its underlying foundational structures? ...articulating these Indigenous expressions of education requires that Indigenous people have the power to enact their own education. (Hill & Freeman, 1999, p. 16)

Aboriginal women, through the activity of defining who they are as individuals, who Aboriginal people are, and what their cultures are, have participated in creating culture which may be passed on. These women continue historical roles as purveyors of cultural knowledge through the medium of formal education. They are strong voices in advocating change in the education system, in curriculum, in education policy and in teaching itself. There was a pervasive sense in the interviews that participants were becoming teachers because they had a vision of what education could do for the future of their children, their cultures and their communities. In this regard, participants were like many other Aboriginal women in Canada, as reported by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 4)

Aboriginal women appearing before the Commission represented every facet of society.... It is clear that despite such diverse cultural backgrounds and places of residence, there are many commonalities among Aboriginal women, the greatest of which is an overriding concern for the well-being of themselves, their children, extended families, communities and nations. Their common vision is of a future in which the values of kindness, honesty, sharing and respect are a part of everyday life. It is also clear that the women who appeared before us are determined to effect change in their current life situations.(p. 21)

As Marie Smallface Marue (1984) says “Our strength as Indians derives from our tribal identity” (p. 36). Aboriginal women who are striving in the direction of obtaining a teaching credential to benefit their communities and further their First Nations cultural identities have important roles to play in education. It is hoped that their voices have been heard in this paper, in particular because much of what is available on the experiences of Aboriginal students has not been produced by Aboriginal authors or involved those of First Nations ancestry as full participants.

Implications and Questions for Further Research

Although research on the experiences of Aboriginal students in teacher education in Canada is increasing (RCAP, 1996), there is still little written material available in this area.
Given that there is a pressing need for more Aboriginal teachers (RCAP, 1996), and that many Aboriginal students enrolling in teacher education have difficulty finishing their program of study, it is important to learn more about Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. In particular, learning more about Aboriginal women in teacher education is important as women comprise the majority in such programs (RCAP, Vol. 3, p. 550).

The study raises questions for further research in this and other areas. Most importantly in terms of the application of research processes, the study points to the importance of increasing the number of Aboriginal researchers in education. Questions for further investigation in this area include:

1) How may Aboriginal researchers, scholars and colleagues be supported in their research efforts? and
2) What are the main issues and concerns regarding Aboriginal research conducted by non-Aboriginal researchers, and how may these issues and concerns be addressed?

The study presents implications for Aboriginal teacher education and program planning and identifies questions for further research, including:

1) Are study findings pertaining to the importance of relationships (and the implications of this for program planning) relevant for Aboriginal women of other First Nations; for non-Aboriginal women; for Aboriginal men; for non-Aboriginal men?
2) What are the Aboriginal graduation rates for programs which recognize the importance of relationships/support community connections as compared with those which do not?
3) Is a sense of social responsibility (i.e. the desire to gain and use an educational credential as a way of addressing community needs) which was shown by all participants to such a great extent a motivating factor for other students enrolling in teacher education?
4) To what degree is the role of mentor important and beneficial to other Aboriginal post-secondary students and to non-Aboriginal students studying to be teachers? and
5) Are non-hierarchical, holistic learning approaches which downplay the need to set priorities preferred by Aboriginal adult learners in general, and if so, what implications would this finding have for program planning?

The study also raises questions which may be pertinent to the field of cultural studies, including:

1) Do Ojibwe women generally perceive themselves as holding primary roles as nurturers and teachers still? and
2) What factors (aside from the transition from ‘organic’ to ‘contractual’ – Mezirow, 1978) encourage opportunities for perspective transformation in cultures favouring an ‘organic mode,’ and how would such findings relate to Mezirow’s (1978) theory concerning organic/contractual societies?
Finally, the study identifies an area for further research which I believe could only be appropriately explored by Aboriginal women researchers themselves – the area of adult maturation as it pertains to Aboriginal women. Personally speaking, as a non-Aboriginal (or 'pigmentally challenged,' as Ojibwe playwright Drew Hayden Taylor 1999, would say!) person conducting research in Aboriginal education, I have felt an increasing degree of discomfort in the endeavour. As the thesis progressed and I came to believe ever more firmly that Aboriginal writers and researchers must be represented as published authors in the academic discourse around Aboriginal education, my concern about finding an appropriate role as a non-Aboriginal researcher has grown.

At the end of the study, I have come to believe strongly that those of us who are non-Aboriginal and work in the field of Aboriginal education must do all that we can to honour Aboriginal perspectives and voice as paramount in the development of educational offerings which suit the needs of Aboriginal students. Sometimes staying true to this belief means, for me, declining to participate in activities in which I feel my contribution as a non-Aboriginal would be inappropriate or counter-productive.

Conclusion

While this study is limited in scope and thus cannot provide definitive conclusions, it is hoped that this research effort may offer a small contribution toward a growing understanding of Aboriginal women's concerns in education. Out of such understanding must come further discussion and support for increased involvement of Aboriginal scholars and collaborators. Their involvement is necessary to increase the efficacy of programs which will serve the needs of Aboriginal teacher education students. Such programs are needed so that more Aboriginal teachers may become equipped to continue to 'do the work of the People,' for as Chief John Snow says:

The purpose of education is cultural survival. Culture has to do with our food, our housing, our clothing and our methods of survival. It has to do with our view of the world, its creation, and the interaction of the plant life, the animal and the bird life and human life. It has to do with the ways we organize our society, with the government and the regulation of our society. It has to do with the games we play, the songs we sing, and the dances we dance, and the art we create: but most of all it has to do with our language, our philosophy, our relationship with the Creator, our attitudes, our beliefs and our values. All human beings have a culture. There are many different ways of being human.... We still educate our children for cultural survival. (Conference speech, 1979)
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Non-Aboriginal Authors, continued:


Non-Aboriginal Authors, continued:


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Non-Aboriginal Authors, continued:


Non-Aboriginal Authors, continued:


APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
Interview Schedule

PART 1:

Historical Background:

1. I'd like to learn about your decision to come to a program of teacher education.
   - What appeals to you about being a teacher?
   - What influenced your decision to come to a program of teacher education?
     - What led up to your decision?
     - What were the most important factors involved in your decision?
   - What were you doing before coming to teacher education?
   - How did you actually make the decision?
   - Why did you choose this particular program (ATEP)?

2. What were your expectations of teacher education? of this particular program? of yourself?
   - Have your expectations been met? In what way were they met/not met?

3. What was your general state of health when you entered the program?

Current Form:

4. What do you intend to do upon graduating?

5. What do you hope your contribution to teaching will be? OR What do you hope you have to offer to teaching?

6. What is your general state of health at the present time?

PART 2:

Interaction with the Teacher Education Environment:

6. What stands out for you about your experience in the ATEP?

7. How do you view learning? Teacher education? Has your view of learning changed since the beginning of the program? (Explain?) Has your view of teacher education changed since the beginning of the program? (Explain?)

8. What has helped/hindered your learning?

9. What does the word "significant" mean for you? What has been the most significant to you during your program of teacher education?
   - How do you identify what has been significant?
   - How has it been significant?
   - Why has it been significant?
10. Have your thoughts and feelings changed since the beginning of teacher education? If so, how?

11. Did anything happen in teacher education that was unexpected? If so, what? Why was it unexpected?

12. What is the most important thing you have learned in teacher education?

13. Describe your idea of the "ideal teacher." Has your idea changed since the beginning of the program? If so, what contributed to the change?

14. What would you like to say to someone interested in pursuing teacher education? OR What advice would you give yourself if you had to do it over again?

PART 3:

Reflections on Personal Change, Personal Development:

15. What does the word "maturity" mean for you? What helps someone to mature?

16. What does the phrase "personal change" mean to you? What causes such change?

17. Looking back, how would you describe yourself at the beginning of the program? How would you describe yourself now? To what do you attribute these changes (if there are changes)?

18. How do you feel about yourself as a teacher education student?

19. In your experience as a student in a teacher education program, what, if anything, has helped to further your own maturity?

20. Let me see if I understand what you are telling me? Before you began the program you felt ____. Now you feel ____. Is that correct? (NOTE: USE 'ACTIVE LISTENING' TECHNIQUES LIKE THIS THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW.)

21. Is there anything else you would like to tell me/ think I should know?
APPENDIX B:

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear ________________,

Re: A study of Aboriginal women's experience in teacher education

I am in the process of doing my doctoral thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. My study involves talking to Ojibwe women about various aspects of their experience before and during enrolment in a program of teacher education. If you agree to participate in this study, I will be asking you to complete a form relaying demographic data, as well as to take part in an interview, with a possible follow-up interview to come later. I would like to tape the interview(s) so that I may give you my full attention and so that I will have an accurate record of your responses.

Your responses will be confidential -- all names (both place and personal) will be removed/replaced by code names before the interview audiotape is transcribed. All quotes taken from your responses and used in the thesis will be reported under pseudonym. In this way, any information used in the thesis or relayed in any way will be anonymous. After interviews are transcribed, you are welcome to a copy of the transcription for your own use and/or to check for meaning and accuracy. At the end of the study I will happily provide you with feedback on the findings as well as a written summary, should you so request. Your participation is voluntary and you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature below indicates that you are willing to participate in this study, and that you give me permission to tape the interview and to use the information which you provide with the understanding that you will remain anonymous.

I agree to provide demographic data and to be interviewed for the research project under the conditions stated above.

Signed: ____________________________________________

Name: ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________

Researcher: ____________________________________________

Kathryn (Kate) M. Freeman, Department of Adult Education, O.I.S.E.
APPENDIX C:

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET
Demographic Information

Name:__________________________________________________________
Address:________________________________________________________
First Nation Affiliation:___________________________________________
Age: _____ Place of Birth:_________________________________________
Current Place of Residence:________________________________________
First Language Spoken:___________________________________________
Other Languages Spoken:__________________________________________
Education:
Other Education Programs Attended:________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
Other Education Certification:_____________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
# of Years in Formal Schooling: _____ Highest Grade Completed: _______
Mother's # of Years in Formal Schooling: ______ Highest Grade Completed:_____
Father's # of Years in Formal Schooling: ______ Highest Grade Completed:_____
Employment:
Employment Background (past 7 years):________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
Current Employment:_____________________________________________
________________________________________
Marital Status:___________________________________________________
Dependents (Specify):____________________________________________
Divisional Specialization within Teacher Education Program: (Check one)
Primary/Junior______ Junior/Intermediate______ Intermediate/Senior______
Date:________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D:

“GIFTS OF THE SEVEN GRANDFATHERS”
Ojibway tradition tells us that there were Seven Grandfathers who were given the responsibility by the Creator to watch over the Earth’s people. They were powerful spirits. The Seven Grandfathers realized that life was not good for the people.... (1988, p. 60) ....the seven gifts that were given... out of the vessel of the Grandfathers [to make life good were]

(1) To cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM.
(2) To know LOVE is to know peace.
(3) To honour all of the Creation is to have RESPECT.
(4) BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity.
(5) HONESTY is facing a situation is to be brave.
(6) HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation.
(7) TRUTH is to know all of these things.

The spirits taught the boy that for each gift there was an opposite, as evil is the opposite of good. (p. 64)