Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Program Choices

by

Pamela Williamson

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Pamela Williamson

Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education

University of Toronto

Abstract

The exploratory study focused on First Nation students and First Nation education counsellors within Ontario. Using an interpretative approach, the research sought to determine the relevance of the counsellors as a potentially influencing factor in the students’ post-secondary program choices. The ability of First Nation education counsellors to be influential is a consequence of their role since they administer Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) funding. A report evaluating the program completed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada in 2005 found that many First Nation students would not have been able to achieve post-secondary educational levels without PSSSP support.

Eight self-selected First Nation Education counsellors and twenty-nine First Nation post-secondary students participated in paper surveys, and five students and one counsellor agreed to complete a follow-up interview. The quantitative and qualitative results revealed differences in the perceptions of the two survey groups as to whether First Nation education counsellors influenced students’ post-secondary program choices. Students perceived themselves to be their greatest influence, while the counsellors felt their influence was greater once students made their program decisions, through encouragement and follow up support.
The study raised questions regarding challenges faced by First Nation education counsellors to provide consistent academic, personal and cultural/social supports to their sponsored students. While the study suggested the role of First Nation education counsellors had evolved little from its original financial-administrative role and toward a more rounded offering including interpersonal, academic and cultural supports, in keeping with an educational decolonization process, counsellors face chronic program under funding and are under-staffed. To enhance First Nation students’ academic success, federal and provincial governments and First Nations are encouraged to further support First Nation education counsellors with greater training opportunities (expansion of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association’s Native Counsellor Training Program), a higher ratio of counsellors to students, and support and promotion of their ability to provide interpersonal and academic counselling.

The study challenged First Nation education counsellors to seek more opportunities to maintain consistent engagement with their students, especially with more autonomous or older students. First Nation students were also challenged to seek more from their counsellors than sponsorship.
Acknowledgments

No undertaking is ever done alone. Every project, regardless of size, requires the encouragement, advice, and patience of many unseen and often unacknowledged circle of supports.

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To the First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors who took the time to participate in the surveys and follow up interviews, a humble “miigwetch” for your frankness and insights.

On behalf of the Ontario Native Education Counsellors’ Association, the PSE Aboriginal Student Services offices, and the First Nation education counselling units who forwarded, posted, and left my surveys for others to view and complete, I could not have done this without your encouragement and help. I have already begun to “pay it forward” in my support of other graduate students.

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To other First Nation and Aboriginal students, I send you encouragement as you continue determinedly with your studies. Rely on your knowledge of your culture and ways of being to infuse and guide your research. You have much to give.

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Dedication

Dedicated to all who thirst to learn and grow, who find new learning opportunities within each new circumstance, and, more importantly, who challenge others to do the same.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Research

Undeniably, the world experienced by First Nations people in Canada has been one of extremes, especially in light of the unique socio-economic struggles and issues they face on an ongoing basis. Specific to education, First Nations are the fastest growing populations in Canada (Mayes, 2007), and yet they are the least likely to achieve academic success at the post-secondary level (Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2000; Degagne, 2002; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2005). The apparent disconnect between the two factors has implications and multi-layered repercussions beyond the individuals, extending to their First Nations and to Canada. The conceptual framework upon which the research was built stems from recognizing the need to change or enhance the elements at play in the education of First Nation students at the post-secondary level. Specifically, my investigation and interest focused on the exploration of the role of First Nation education counsellors and the extent to which they influence First Nation post-secondary students and their selection of college or university accredited programming.

Within the general Canadian population, research found that a significant influencing factor for non-Aboriginal students and their choices of program and higher education institution was their parents. Parental influence has been well documented as a catalyst in the plans of non-aboriginal students and their post-secondary future, including the relevance of parental education (Looker, 1994), parental occupational status (Andres and Krahn, 1999), to name a few. Outside of the family, individuals who serve as influencers for general population students were found to be counsellors, college personnel, and peers (MacAllum, Glover, Queen, and Riggs. 2007). Dubois (2002) found that place of residence, gender, father’s education and occupation, and student’s marital status influenced decisions of students to enrol in university. Relating to Aboriginal students, First Nations Education Steering Committee (2005) found that without parental role models and parental familiarity with the post-secondary system, Aboriginal students lacked the vital family support needed for their post-secondary education success. Choy
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dand Ottinger (1998) in a study for the U.S. Department of Education examined factors that affected choice of post-secondary institution among various race or ethnic groups. They found American Indian and Alaskan Natives were more likely to choose a post-secondary institution based on “other” unidentified influencing factors as opposed to family, friends, and spouses, and when compared to other race or ethnic groups. They were least likely to be influenced in their institution choices by a teacher or counsellor. In the limited information available regarding individuals who influenced non-traditional-aged adult students, MacAllum, Glover, Queen, and Riggs (2007) found that they demonstrated a much higher level of independence and were less likely to be influenced by others. Other factors that influence Aboriginal students were explored in a later chapter where First Nation students are profiled in a more in-depth manner. What I found was that research pertaining to influencing factors impacting First Nation students’ choices specific to programming was limited, and even less was available related to the role of First Nation education counsellors. The Canadian Council on Learning (2005) undertook a question scan to “locate literature and policies devoted to the facilitation of Aboriginal postsecondary success” (pp. 1). Their investigation confirmed that limited empirical research existed regarding post-secondary First Nation students. Looker and Lowe (2001) noted that much of the research on Aboriginal people focused on educational attainment as opposed to educational plans.

These findings supported the relevancy of my research as it centred on investigating the plans of study of First Nation post-secondary students, and the role of the education counsellors who funded them. While First Nation education counsellors are the primary authority with whom First Nations students must interact for sponsorship, very little has been written about them. Since almost all Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) funding is delivered directly by First Nations Bands or their administering organizations (The Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2005), the research undertaken was designed to enhance knowledge in this area: on the First Nation post-secondary students; on how they make their program choices; and on the role of the First Nation education counsellors who serve them. Further, the area of study was examined from a decolonization perspective. This meant that I attempted to observe the relationships between the two groups, comparing the role of education counsellors as
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seen by the students and as perceived by the counsellors themselves, to the original role of First Nation education counsellors as it was derived to complete duties specific to dispensing post-secondary sponsorship, and as dictated by INAC. As discussed later in the Chapter Two, I demonstrated that this move on the part of INAC was a result of lingering colonizing practices. Subsequent decolonizing efforts began, as First Nations recognized the historical bindings of colonizing systems that impinged on the various levels of First Nation education, and the subsequent struggles made by Aboriginal populations toward greater self-determination and control of their education. Taking these factors as my guides, I began my investigation.

Issue Statement – Research Problem

No specific theoretical model was found that to be relevant or applicable to the role of First Nation Education Counsellors and their influence with First Nation post-secondary students. Given the apparent lack of research specific to the topic, I used information and documentation from a variety of sources to build an emerging and composite picture of First Nation education counsellors. Some of the key sources were government documents, post-graduate theses, and journals, as well as, statistics and research retrieved from higher education and First Nations’ organizations at the regional, provincial, and national levels. I also included my personal knowledge and experience both working with First Nation education counsellors and having been a student receiving sponsorship from my Band’s education counsellor.

As a result of my investigation into the topic of study, the focus of the research remained exploratory in nature. The research was exciting for me because I had the opportunity to develop a clear and composite picture of First Nation education counsellors through the voices of the First Nation education counsellors and the First Nation post-secondary students who participated in the study. Further, the resulting information had the potential to lend insights into the unique nature of their work and their relationship with First Nation students.

Research Hypothesis

My hypothesis entering into this study was given that First Nation education counsellors have significant authority over funding for tuition, living allowances, and
purchase of texts and other program requirements of First Nation high school graduates or First Nation mature students, they have significant influence in the First Nation post-secondary students’ selection of post-secondary programming.

**Research Questions**

The research questions guiding my work included:

1. Does the level of influence that First Nation Education Counsellors have on First Nation post-secondary students sufficiently impact the students’ choices of post-secondary programming?

2. What is the potential significance regarding the influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation post-secondary school students’ program choice as it relates to decolonization pedagogy?

3. What roles do First Nation education counsellors play in First Nation post-secondary students’ selections of post-secondary programs?

4. Where does the influence of First Nation Education Counsellors compare when ranked with other potential influencers in First Nations students post-secondary program choices?

5. Does fixed funding for sponsorship impact on First Nation high school graduate or First Nation mature students’ choice post-secondary program selections?

6. Does the level of educational attainment of First Nation education counsellors play a role in the selection of post-secondary program and institution selected by the First Nation students?

**Research Rationale – Justification for the Research**

First Nation students attending post-secondary education in colleges or universities in Ontario, and their relationship to First Nation education counsellors were selected for research for the following reasons:

- Research was limited specifically to First Nation education counsellors because of their unique relationship with the First Nation students they sponsored;
First Nation students continue to experience difficulties in attaining academic success in their post-secondary academic endeavours;

First Nation students continue to have lower participation rates in post-secondary programming involving highly technical, scientific, and/or mathematical front entry requirements;

The Province of Ontario has the largest population of Aboriginal people in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006), thereby, the results have potential usefulness to the larger First Nation population;

By determining the relevance of the role of the First Nation education counsellors in their students’ post-secondary academic choices, the findings could contribute to the development of strategies to enhance First Nation students’ selection, retention, and completion of PSE programming;

Research results may contribute to First Nations’ ability to lobby and allocate resources more effectively specific to post-secondary education;

Research results may be used by Ontario post-secondary institutions to strengthen the relationship between their Student Support services and programs and First Nation education counsellors to improve program selection and academic success of First Nation students.

Research results may be of benefit to the Ontario Native Education Counsellors Association in the role of advocacy for First Nation education counsellors.

Key Research Assumptions

The outcomes of the research questions were interpreted based on the following assumptions and parameters:

That a significant number of First Nation students are sponsored by their First Nation for their post-secondary schooling. The assumption was based on the fact that the majority of First Nation students enrolling and registering through the Ontario College Application System (OCAS) and the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) are funded by their First Nations. It is noted that a number of First Nations are denying an increasing number of students eligible for sponsorship given that they have more students than funding.
That First Nation education counsellors’ have influence with Chiefs and their Councils as to whom is approved for post-secondary sponsorship. Depending upon their policies, Chiefs and Councils are ultimately responsible for key financial decisions. First Nation education counsellors or their supervisors present recommendations to Chief and Council on whom to sponsor each year. Given that the students who apply meet the eligibility requirements set down by the First Nation and Inuit Branch - Post-Secondary Student Support Program funding envelop, often the recommendations of the First Nation education counsellors are approved of by Chief and Council. For further clarification, there is additional information provided within the definition for Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) in the definition section of this chapter.

That Chief and Councils in Ontario would endorse their First Nation education counsellors’ participation in the survey. Each First Nation has entitlement to make decisions regarding their territory which extends to deciding who may contact First Nation employees. As part of protocol, a specific clause was included in a letter of invitation to participate in the survey that was sent directly to First Nation education counselling staff working with post-secondary students. There was a specific request for the counsellors to seek approval from their superiors in order to participate in the survey.

That the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) would endorse and agree to play a participatory role in the research given that it was specific to their membership and could be used in future research and advocacy they participate in on behalf of their membership. The Association provided a letter of support and has played a participatory role in the research by adding my contact information to their listserv, sending their membership the invitations from me to participate in the survey, and/or inviting their students to participate.

That post-secondary Aboriginal student service units’ within educational institutions would participate in promoting First Nation students in participating in the survey. Letters of request, emails, and phone calls were
made directly to Aboriginal student service sectors within post-secondary institutions with such services for approval to post posters of information and invitations to students regarding their participation in the surveys.

- That a significant population of First Nation students frequent and utilize the services within the Aboriginal student support offices within colleges and universities in Ontario.
- That both First Nation education counsellors and First Nation students are familiar with where Indian status is derived – from each First Nation – and that they know the First Nation they are a member of. The assumption is based on the fact that each First Nation education counsellor works for a specific First Nation or First Nations within a regional body that delivers services to a number of First Nations, and that the students can only apply for funding with their First Nation.
- That First Nation post-secondary students’ have to apply directly to their First Nation or to a regional office to receive sponsorship for their post-secondary education, and as a result, have made contact with their First Nation, or First Nation education counsellor.
- That First Nation Education Counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students have access to the Internet and personal email accounts, and would be able to receive invitations to participate in the survey through email communication. The assumption is based on the fact that the majority of the education counsellors listed in the ONECA directory have email addresses and that many of them are on the ONECA listserv. First Nation post-secondary students have email accounts available to them from the post-secondary institutes they attend, and given their access to technology, are more likely to be email users. Statistics Canada (2006) confirmed that more than two thirds of the Aboriginal adult population have used the internet.

**De-Limitation of Scope**

The research was specific to First Nation post-secondary education counsellors working on-reserve, or in regional First Nation educational units, and to First Nation post-secondary student populations attending colleges and universities in Ontario. When
describing who was included in the survey invitation, it is to be noted that there was a greater number of categories of students that were excluded than education counsellors.

First Nation education counsellors are very unique group of education service providers given that they only exist within First Nations or in regional First Nation education offices. A description of their duties and comparisons to other groups of education support services are detailed in a later chapter.

There were a number of groups of First Nation students who were not included in the initial survey invitation. I did not include First Nation post-secondary students attending First Nation Education Institutes in Ontario in the survey invitation. The rationale was that First Nation students within these institutions are provided with academic, social, and cultural services that potentially differ from the student support services accessed and available to Aboriginal students attending Ontario colleges and universities. A description of First Nation Education Institutions is included in a later chapter. Interestingly, several students from these institutions responded to the survey and were included in the results. First Nation students paying for their own tuition and other expenses by other means (e.g., privately or personally paying, OSAP, loans, etc.) were also excluded since their post-secondary funding was not accessed through their First Nations. I was also aware that since some bands prioritize sponsorship eligibility to students who live on-reserve, the end results may have been more representative of on-reserve First Nation students than off-reserve First Nation students. First Nation students who were sponsored to attend other post-secondary programming, such as trade programs, as well as, private and/or for-profit schools were also not included.

As another de-limitation, I acknowledge that as a student who has received sponsorship from my First Nation through an education counsellor, and as part of my work experience, that I worked and had ongoing contact with First Nation education counsellors over an extended period of time, that there was a potential for personal bias to be reflected in my interpretation of the results.

It was being mindful of these factors that I began the research and analysis processes.
Definitions

Definitions for Aboriginal specific terminology are provided since the research deals with a particular minority grouping within Canada that is comprised of multi-layered complexities and unique characteristics not readily comparable to the general population. Many of these differences are a result of the unique and historical relationship that Aboriginal people have engaged in with the Canadian federal and provincial governments, the historical and current differences in the manner in which they have been and continue to be treated, and the manner in which they obtain services. Further, the study is specific to First Nations peoples, and not to all Aboriginal populations within Canada for study specific reasons. The following definitions will assist in understanding the research in the context of the target populations.

Anishinabek: Based on the oral teachings from elders, the term “Anishinabe”, while it has multiple meanings, references our connection as “people of the earth”, or “from this land we were made”. While I have heard many discussions on whether the word references all Aboriginal people found on North American or the “New World” lands, or only the Ojibwe, Potowatomi and Ottawa (Three Fires Council), it is a term used widely in the area of Northern Ontario where I live and one that I use in reference to myself as a Potowatomi/Ojibwe person. The term “Anishnabek” is plural and refers to a group of First Nations, as defined by the Union of Ontario Indians. In modern day, Anishinabek has taken more of a political reference in addition to the identification of the life and life-ways of the communities. It is a term used by the Union of Ontario Indians to identify the 42 First Nations territories that this specific Provincial Territory Organization (PTO) provides advocacy and through a “political, social and governance agenda” (Union of Ontario Indians web-site: http://www.bobgoulais.com/bgc/manifesto.htm).

First Nations: Aboriginal populations include Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Metis, and Inuit. First Nations is a political term used to define the rights of the first peoples who originally inhabited the lands of Canada and whose rights are integrally tied to a land base or “reserve” specific to a band or First Nation of Status Indians. Status Indian, then, refers to someone who has legally recognized rights tied to a specific reserve, hence are identified as a First Nation person. As a member of a band or reserve, an individual is part of a finite and specific group that exists within parameters and
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definitions as outlined in the Indian Act, and in the Constitutional Act. Both are federal legislation.

First Nations have authority over First Nation education and funding for First Nation students’ education through section 114 to 122 of the Indian Act up to a secondary school level of education. There exists no authority of First Nations over post-secondary education for all First Nation students with the exception that the First Nations administer funding and offer services through the First Nation education counsellor. The role of First Nations education counsellors is to provide financial sponsorship and services to Status Indians from elementary to secondary to post-secondary.

Legal recognition of First Nation people is integrally tied to the land or “reserves”. First Nations refer to land held in trust by the Federal government, as their ancestral home and heritage, and/or land specifically belonging to them as a collective as a result of an agreement with the federal government through treaties. The Indian Act identifies this land as a “reserve” and the people who live there and have familial ties to it as a “band.” Hence, they are band members. First Nation is primarily a politically driven term derived by the bands to reaffirm their original and historical “nation to nation” relationships with the federal government. Aboriginal people living on a First Nation may have Indian Status tied to that specific First Nation or are referred to as affiliates or individuals who do not have Indian Status with the specific band but have been given approval to live there. Examples of band members who do not have status include non-natives such as a non-native spouse/partner of a band member, or a non-status child with a status parent. For the purpose of this study, only the members of a band who have Indian status were studied since they are the only ones eligible for band funding for education under the Indian Act. First Nation community members may live on-reserve or, as demographics indicates, a growing number live within non-native urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Status Indian: Status and treaty rights are integrally connected to the “reserve”, or First Nation land, and band registration and are considered by First Nations as a right of heritage. Status Indian is a designated term used and defined specifically within the Indian Act. Back as far as 1876 when the Indian Act was legislated, Indians were registered by federal Indian agents to a specific band and to a specific reserve of land by
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the Federal government. The land to which they were identified may or may not have been part of a treaty agreement allocation established by the federal government. As the descendants and current holders’ of Indian Status, today’s Status Indians continue to have rights to the land, to any treaty provisions relevant to his or her First Nation, and a number of rights relating to health, education and other services.

Non-Status Indian: A non-status Indian is an individual who is a descendant of both persons who possessed status and who were non-status or non-Aboriginal, and as a result, the individual does not qualify for status under the Indian Act. They may be a child, grandchild, or other descendent of a Status Indian, or their descendants were never registered for status within the Indian Registry with the Department of Indian Affairs. Status is maintained primarily through heritage and according to legal definition (through status of mother and father). The individual may not be eligible for status as a result of the rights to status removed from a parent or ancestor (usually female) who lost their status when marrying a non-native prior to 1985, or as a result of becoming adopted prior to 1985. In both these situations, these relatives never applied or re-applied for Indian Status, and consequently, the individual is unable or has difficulty in applying for Indian Status. These individuals have the right to apply for Indians Status or Metis Status, if they meet the eligibility requirements.

Aboriginal People: According to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1996, this is a term that is relevant to the political and cultural bodies derived from the original peoples of North America, rather than to collections of individuals connected by “racial” characteristics. Statistics Canada (1988) defined “Aboriginal” as “…people who are North American Indian (First Nations), Metis, or Inuit.”

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC): INAC is a federal government agency that specifically funds services and addresses concerns related to First Nation people. It is responsible for the transfer of funding to each First Nation for the delivery of services, and maintenance of First Nation infrastructure for the benefit and well-being of each First Nation. Indian Affairs is responsible for the transfer of First Nation educational funding for post-secondary students to the First Nation level. Each band receives post-secondary funding based on a formula calculated, for the most part, on band population.
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rates. Band population rates are based on numbers of First Nation peoples on and off reserve.

**Provincial Territory Organization (PTO):** There are five PTO in the province of Ontario include the following: The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), Independent First Nations, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), Grand Council Three, and the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI). Most of the one hundred and thirty-three First Nations in Ontario identify with a specific PTO for political and advocacy purposes (Appendix A). The UOI represents forty-two First Nations throughout the province of Ontario from Golden Lake in the east, Sarnia in the south, Thunder Bay and Lake Nipigon in the north. Each Provincial (UOI web-site: [http://www.anishinabek.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=37](http://www.anishinabek.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=37)). Grand Council Three treaty area covers 26 First Nations in North-western Ontario and two First Nations in Manitoba (The Grand Council of Treaty Number Three web-site: [http://www.gct3.net/](http://www.gct3.net/)). Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) encompasses forty-nine First Nation communities within James Bay Treaty 9 territory and the Ontario portions of Treaty 5 (NAN web-site: [http://www.nan.on.ca/article/welcome-1.asp](http://www.nan.on.ca/article/welcome-1.asp)). The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians is comprised of eight member First Nations (AIAI web-site: [http://www.aiai.on.ca/webpage/Member%20Nations.htm](http://www.aiai.on.ca/webpage/Member%20Nations.htm)). The Independent First Nations Alliance has a membership of twelve First Nations (IFNA web-site: [http://ifna.ca/index.html](http://ifna.ca/index.html)). All of the First Nations listed within each of the PTO’s were identified as they existed at the time of the manuscript was submitted to the thesis advisory committee.

The Provincial Territorial Organizations are governed by a Board of Directors made up of chiefs from the PTO catchments areas. The boards are comprised of an elected Grand Council and include a Grand Chief and Deputy Chief(s). Decisions are made by formal resolution. Each PTO has an administrative office that employs a number of staff to carry out the mandate of each PTO. The PTO secretariat or administrative office supports the direction of the PTO in areas of advocacy, policy development, and administrative support. Areas that the PTO’s address include: treaty and Aboriginal rights, cultural rights, residential school negotiations and settlements, sovereignty, community and economic development, government programs, historical
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research, lands and resources, health, education, social services, policing and justice, tax immunity, housing, etc.

**First Nation Post-Secondary Sponsorship:** All Status Indians are eligible to apply for funding to go to college or university. The funding can be applied to tuition, travel, books, supplies, living allowance, and other expenses related to attending a post-secondary institution. The amount of post-secondary funding derived by each First Nation comes from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s post-secondary program entitled the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). The block funding envelop was capped in 1997 and annual increases are allotted based on directives from the Treasury Board. The most recent federal budget, once again, did not increase funding to the PSSSP (Canadian Federation of Students, 2007). Approval and the funding amount received by each student is further dependent upon the criteria and policies of each First Nation or tribal council or tribal region. When the number of eligible applicants exceeds the amount of available funding, the students’ applications are denied, or deferred until funding may come available at mid-term (when other students have been unsuccessful), or next fiscal year.

**Influence:** Working in collaboration with British Columbia First Nations, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2004) developed a definition of influence in a document outlining key roles and responsibilities of First Nation administrators. The ability to have an impact and influence was defined as “the ability to influence, persuade, or convince others to adopt or support an idea and to take action when required. It involves an understanding of the key stakeholders’ and the use of techniques, presentations, or negotiation skills to achieve desired results” (pp. 20). Specific to post-secondary education, there are potentially many influences and influencers that could potentially sway or impact the decisions made by individuals as to what post-secondary program to participate in, including, but not limited to, family, peers, friends, mentors, the educational institutions and people who work in them, academic pre-requisites, social or economic circumstances, external supports, and many other factors.

**Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP):** OCAP is an overarching principle supported by First Nations and the Assembly of First Nations that applies the concepts of self-determination and self-governance with respect to research data specific
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to First Nations. The term ownership refers to First Nations having the inherent right to be the “holders” of their cultural knowledge, data and information. Control refers to First Nations right to jurisdiction over all aspects of research pertaining to them, and at all stages of the research process. First Nations maintain the right to self-manage their data and information. Access is a term describing the right of each First Nations to retrieve information and data regarding itself as a collective, and to manage and make decisions regarding access to the information on itself as a collective. In order to access these materials, protocols must be followed. Possession refers to the control of the concrete research data resting within a physical space decided upon by the First Nations (Schnarch, 2004; National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2007).

Residential Schools: Residential or boarding schools where established in the 1800’s where First Nation children were required by law (Indian Act) to attend. These schools had dormitories where the children were required to stay with limited contact with their parents during the time of their formal education. The highest number of residential schools located across Canada totalled eighty at one point, and the school enrolments ranged from 50 to over 400 students of all ages (Kirkness, 1999). Originally, the education provided at residential schools was at a primary level of education, but later included secondary levels of education at some residential schools.

Post-Secondary Education (PSE): For the purposes of the research, post-secondary education refers to the diploma or degree accreditation that may be acquired in the province of Ontario. There are three areas of focus for research purposes. The first involve two publicly-funded types of colleges: Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning. There are twenty-four in total (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/list/college.html, (March 30, 2009). There are currently nineteen publicly funded universities in Ontario (Ministry of Colleges, Universities and Training, http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/univers.html, March 30, 2009). In 2007, the provincial government announced that Algoma University College in Sault Ste. Marie, currently affiliated with Laurentian University, became the latest chartered and stand alone university in Ontario (Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Cooperation, 2008). There are also eight Aboriginal Education Institutes
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that are members of the Aboriginal Institutes’ Consortium within the province of Ontario which, in addition to providing diploma and degree programs in collaboration or partnership with colleges or universities, also provide literacy, secondary level programs, apprenticeship, skills training, community workshops, and workplace and employer-employee training (Aboriginal Institutions’ Consortium web-site: http://www.Aboriginalinstitute.com, March 30, 2009). The exclusion of any description of other post-secondary types of institution in Ontario is merely a result of the limited number of First Nation students who may potentially be enrolled in these institutions.

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP):- Canada’s national statistics agency, Statistics Canada (2007) adopted the CIP coding in 1998, implementing modifications in 2007 to the broad post-secondary program categories. For Statistics Canada research purposes, the coding is used in all post-secondary research and the Census of population, and is an education-coding standard for all levels of education. A key modification that occurred in 2007 was the elimination of the category “Arts and Sciences,” with programming under the former category re-distributed throughout other categories. The Canadian version of CIP (2000) includes: Education; Visual and Performing Arts, and Communications Technologies; Humanities; Social and Behavioural Science; Law; Business, Management and Public Administration; Physical and Life Sciences and Technology; Mathematics, Computer and Information Science; Engineering; Architecture and Related Technologies; Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation; Medicine; and Parks, Recreation, Health (other than medicine) and Fitness (Statistics Canada, 2007). It was noted that other research studies have used a diversity of post-secondary programming categories, in addition to the Classification of Instructional Programs. For example, the College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (2005), with joint funding received from the National Literacy Secretariat and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, examined upgrading graduates under seven broad categories of college programming: Business, General Arts and Sciences, Health, Technology, Social Services, Trades and Skills, and Other (Culinary Studies, Fashion, Hospitality and Tourism, Media, and Sports and Leisure Management). For the purposes of the research, comparisons of literature, and the classifications of programs taken by respondents were completed using CIP.
Mature Student: Since the definition of mature student varied across research and PSE institutions reviewed, for the purpose of the current study, mature status was determined to be anyone outside of the definition of the traditional student. Since the traditional student is seen to be those between the ages of 18 and 24 (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009), mature students are those older than twenty-four years of age.

Chapter Summaries

The following is a brief and condensed overview that briefly highlights each chapter within the study.

Chapter One introduces general concepts related to the research and provided an overview of the topic issue and issue statement, the hypothesis and research questions, the rationale for the specific topic, key assumptions, and key definitions relevant to First Nation concepts and the First Nation environment.

Chapter Two presents a literature review in the following areas. An examination of First Nations education was provided beginning from the context of Canadian history and the Canadian government’s colonizing approach through the enforced education of First Nation children, and from there, demonstrating the struggles of First Nation toward a more decolonizing approach up to present day. I investigated research and relevant literature specific to First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors to enhance knowledge of the two subject groups, and to provide a frame of reference for the research. Despite the paucity of information available regarding First Nation education counsellors, the overview included a description of the development of their role, comparisons to mainstream education counsellors, and areas in which their roles have developed. I examined the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association since I saw their role as very relevant to my research given their close connection to First Nation education counsellors. Specific to First Nation post-secondary students, I gathered research to create a general profile and to examine issues and successes pertinent to them. The intention of the literature review was, ultimately, to provide a theoretical thread and a basis from which to understand the potential relevance of First Nation education counsellors’ influence on First Nation post-secondary students.

Chapter Three describes the methodology outlining in detail the following: the purpose of the research; the research design; the instruments, ethical considerations, the
trustworthiness of the research process. Further, a comprehensive description was included to support the selection of self-survey participants and data collection methods. Finally, I provided a brief report demonstrating how the research was implemented and carried out which included: dispensing the surveys; completion of follow up one-on-one interviews; and general information relevant to the process of data collection.

Chapter Four details the results from the First Nations education counsellors’ survey and the First Nations post-secondary students survey, including descriptive information gathered from the follow up one-on-one interviews with volunteers who had participated in the written questionnaires. Quantitative and qualitative data was derived from two groups. One group was comprised of First Nation students enrolled in post-secondary school programs and the other group included First Nation education counsellors working within First Nation communities, or within regional organizations working on behalf of groups of First Nations. The study was limited to the province of Ontario.

Finally, Chapter Five addresses the original research hypothesis and research questions created at the beginning of study, articulates a number of implications, limitations, and recommendations that emerged, and that may further enhance understanding of First Nation post-secondary education.

**Summary**

The chapter presented a general description and overview of the research with the intent of contextualizing the relevance of the study. The aim of the exploratory research was to determine whether First Nation post-secondary education counsellors influenced their sponsored post-secondary students’ program choices. The chapter detailed research assumptions, research delimitations, and research relevant definitions specific to First Nations and post-secondary education.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

Introduction

As a positive and significant trend, the number of Canadian First Nation students graduating from high school is growing. Their successes have contributed to a corresponding rise in the number of First Nation students entering and achieving academic success at the post-secondary level (Rae, 2005). First Nation students are also entering post-secondary education as an older student in increasingly larger numbers (The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2007). At whatever entry point First Nation students opt into higher education, their successes impact, not only themselves as individuals, but also their communities. The message that the education of individuals is critical to the greater holistic health and successes of all Aboriginal populations is consistent and culturally based (Malatest and Associates Ltd. and Stonechild, 2008). In a quote emblematic of learning and its relevance to the entire Aboriginal community, Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001), wrote “First Nations students and communities are seeking an education that will also address their communal need for ‘capacity-building’ to advance themselves as a distinct and self-determining society, not just as individuals” (pp. 14). The president of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council in 1996 affirmed the importance of post-secondary education, “you will not get an argument about the value post-secondary education has brought to our communities….the real changes are happening because our people are going to university and taking their skills and using them…. to make meaningful changes in our community” (Danziger, 1996, pp. 232). The chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development stated in the report entitled “No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada” that “…improving education outcomes is absolutely critical to the future of individual Aboriginal learners, their families and children, their communities, and the broader Canadian society as a whole” (2007, pp. 19). The chair further added that education for Aboriginal learners is a divided constitutional responsibility – provincial and federal. The Auditor General (2004) wrote that education, or the lack of it, impacts on employment, income levels, and well-being. Ross (1991)
discussed in detail the immeasurable economic benefits of educational attainment of individual community members, especially adult literacy, on First Nations as a whole. The increasing educational attainment experienced by First Nation populations will enhance their access to greater opportunities and greater holistic health benefiting themselves, their families, and their communities.

The literature review was organized from this context: that educational attainment of First Nations peoples has implications not only for the individuals but for their families and communities. Key conceptual factors were examined using relevant research and supporting literature to outline: the evolution of First Nation education and how their struggles toward de-colonization have influenced their educational experiences; a profile of common characteristics of First Nation post-secondary students; a profile and overview of the role of First Nation education counsellors, and factors inhibiting or enhancing First Nation post-secondary students’ educational experience.

**Review of First Nation Education Through a Decolonization Lens**

The contributions of First Nations as the original peoples of the land of Canada are far less documented than the subsequent abuses and degradation imposed by “friendly” European allies, and the later formed government of Canada. The first people of the land were marginalized and repressed in many ways: land seizure, total acquisition of natural resources above and below the land, relegation to reserves, enforcement of residential schools, and many other restrictions under the Indian Act. While many overt methods of discrimination and repression have been withdrawn, not only have the residual impact of the issues persisted, but Canadian society remains immovably rooted in Euro-Western practices and ways of being. These systems, whether subtly or overtly manifested, continue to devalue First Nations and other minorities. For First Nations peoples, the struggle has been in overcoming and moving toward a reality that will enable them to become fully participating members of Canada, and of their own destiny. For the purpose of the study, the concepts of colonization and decolonization will be examined in relation to the educational journey of First Nation peoples within Canada, and how, as a people, First Nations have struggled to move toward more self-determined practices and engagement.
Burns (2001) described decolonizing pedagogy as a response to the question: what are the value and place of non-white peoples in an Anglo-European dominant society? The term is a reference to the struggles experienced by First Nations, as a minority, to combat the residual and lingering impact of historical repressions, and the more subtle form of marginalization they are confronted within the present day. The education strategy for First Nations began and continues to be a political activity they are engaged in with the government of Canada to ensure the fulfillment of the government’s legal and fiduciary responsibilities and obligations to them. For First Nations, education is seen not only as a legal and treaty right, but a vital investment in the individual and in the communities toward greater autonomy, social and spiritual healing, and economic viability. Today, despite positive advancements in the area of education, and more First Nations people are participating from elementary to the post-secondary educational levels, First Nations continue to struggle academically. Compared to the general Canadian population, First Nations students consistently lag behind in both educational success and attainment (A Van Der Woerd and Cox, 2003; Assembly of First Nations, 2008; Battiste and McLean, 2005). The experience of multi-generations of Indians subjected to sub-standard education has resulted in the ensuing socio-economic struggles, and cannot be expected to be turned around in one or two generations. The successes cannot minimize the developments and in-roads made, despite the slow nature of the progress.

Strategies and policies to educate First Nations people by the British and then later, by the Canadian government began in colonial times. Tactics used to accomplish these goals, as well as the level of participation within these activities by First Nation people, varied over time. In 1875, the Federal government assumed total control of all education of First Nation children living on reserve. The policies and plans were created by the government and carried out by a department set up specifically to deal with Indians, currently known as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The department derived its authority for First Nations’ education through legislation called the Indian Act, more specifically, sections 114 to 122 of the act (See definitions in Chapter 1). Section 114 authorizes INAC to enter into agreements with provinces and territories regarding the education of First Nations students (Department of
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors Justice, 1985). The means by which to implement the policy and to educate Indian children over multiple generations was the residential school system. During this period, very few of these students moved forward to enter or complete a post-secondary level of education since they often did not receive the level of education required to be eligible. As a further hindrance or prohibiting factor for Indians seeking a higher education, during the extended reign of residential school era, they lost their rights and status as an Indian, referred to as enfranchisement, if they acquired a post-secondary level of education. Given the significant impact of the residential school system, over the course of its implementation, and the ongoing effects felt by the current generations of First Nations students, it was imperative to further include description of this era of First Nation history in the study.

First Nation Education – Residential Schools

The following is a more in-depth examination of the residential schools and how they adversely contributed, in the long-term, to First Nations’ struggles to succeed academically. It should be noted that I used the term “Indian” interchangeably with “First Nation” in this section. In the not so distant past, I remember when Indian was the only appellation we were known by. This term was used until fairly recently (it remains in legislation) since prior to Confederation, and as such, it seemed appropriate for this period of time to be examined using this term.

Generations of First Nations children went through the residential school system. For many years, the residential schools segregated First Nation populations from other Canadians, as part of an Indian education policy (an assimilative policy) and colonization plan (The Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2005). First, the British, and then the newly founded Canadian government, imposed a system of education specific to Indian peoples only, delivering an inferior standard of education (comparative to the educational standards for the Canadian public). The government, working through various affiliated churches, not only dictated where the residential schools were located (at distance from the reserves the children came from), but what was taught, and to what level of education was to be provided. To a lesser degree, the federal day schools that were also operating at the same time for some Indian children accomplished much of the same with the exception that the students were able to go home to their families at the
end of the school day. My father recalled being strapped for being caught speaking Ojibwe during recess while attending the day school on his reserve. Neither residential nor day schools prepared most Indians students to enter higher levels of education, or to succeed academically in society. At best, the system provided them with basic academic skills in “reading, writing, and arithmetic,” and basic Euro-Western influenced skills such as cooking, sewing, farming, and gardening. A former residential school student I knew recalled a fellow student who remained at the residential school in Sault Ste. Marie passed the age of most students because he worked as a farm hand while under the pretence that he was still a student. As an educational system, the residential schools placed First Nations at a distinct disadvantage within Canadian society, delaying progress not only academically, but stultifying their potential and opportunities on so many of other levels - socially, economically, politically, and spiritually - and with lingering and ongoing effects (Forbes, Brown, Ahulwalia, 2005). Only with the closure of the schools did First Nation participation and success in all levels of education notably improved.

As a strategy of colonization, residential schools were intended to strip away the “Indianness” from the Indians – their traditions, customs, spirituality, languages, family life – or in short, their cultural identities. The purpose of sending Indian children away to attend school was to limit the influence of their families and communities on their subsequent behaviour and ways of being. By implementing such a drastic measure as removing children from their parents to be trained and reared in isolation from them, the federal government made its disapproval of the ways and cultures of Indian people transparently evident. Through the assimilation process, the ways of living of many cultures were to be eradicated. The Royal Commission Report (1996) described ‘the primary purpose of formal education was to indoctrinate Aboriginal people into a Christian, European worldview, thereby “civilizing” them. (no page number)’ The accumulative impact of generations of native students attending residential schools, without doubt, contributed significantly to the educational struggles of First Nations people today. Colonization left deep wounds. Deep wounds have left deep scars.

**First Nation Education – Public and Band Schools**

By 1950, the federal government began implementing changes to its education policies for First Nations, moving from a policy of segregation (residential schools) to
integration. The impetus of the changes was in response to First Nation protests. The following is a brief review of the process that relocated First Nations students to the provincial school system or band-operated schools upon the closure of the residential schools.

First Nations students were transferred from residential schools directly into the existing provincial schools. By 1979, two thirds of Indian students were receiving education from provincial schools (Powless, 2004). This was a significant change in policy since up to this time, the federal government was directly and solely responsible for First Nations education. Subsequently, education funding transfers were implemented between the federal government and provinces for Indian children attending provincial schools. For clarification, the provinces have responsibility for the education of its citizens, including First Nations students who live off-reserve, or live on-reserve and attend a school external to their communities. While most residential schools were closed in the 1960’s, primarily due to political pressure, interjecting Indian children into the mainstream education system was not without its issues. Within this context, the term integration refers only to the physical amalgamation of First Nation children within the existing provincial public education system and curriculum. While there was a large influx of First Nation children attending provincial school, no modifications were made to curriculum, or teaching methods. Nor were strategies implemented to transition Indian children to a new system of education. Despite recognition given to the failure and harmful consequences of the residential school system, merging First Nation students into the mainstream education system was accomplished with limited preparation. Research has further shown that academic success continued to be elusive for First Nation children and remains an issue to present day.

A system was introduced to open more band-operated schools in the 1970’s, and one of the first band schools to open in 1970 was at Blue Quills First Nations in Alberta (Powless, 2004). Band-managed schools were the result of education policy changes implemented by the federal government, and only after significant protest and lobbying by First Nations that started in the 1960’s. One of the first coordinated protests by First Nations across the country was in response to the proposed White Paper of 1967. The document was introduced by the federal government of the day and outlined a strategy to
transfer the federal government’s responsibility for Indian education to the provinces. In rebuttal through the proposed Red Paper policy, the National Indian Brotherhood (the founding national Native organization) created a policy statement entitled “Indian Control of Indian Education” in 1973. The document did not support the transfer of federal fiduciary responsibility for Native education to the provinces (Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). The paper further identified four key areas of concern that included: the broad categories of responsibility, programs, teachers, and facilities; a call for local control of education whereby First Nations were involved in curriculum development; training for First Nations people in areas of education and counselling; and the creation of day schools. More significant to the research and to be discussed later in the chapter, the policy made special reference to the need for greater participation and provision of supports for First Nation people to attend post-secondary education, and recommended strategies to encourage and assist them. As an outcome and in response, the federal government accepted the paper in principle. First Nation managed schools was one of the initial steps toward Indian control of education.

Initially, the federally funded schools were required to conform to provincial regulations that included curriculum, credential requirements for teachers, and school year, limiting the ability of the schools to provide culturally based curriculum, such as language. As a result, First Nations reported that “their authority over education was still limited to administration and management of DIAND designed education programs” (Powless, 2004). Over time and despite slow progress, Indian Affairs has moved toward the goal of Indian control over Indian education. To date, the majority of reserve schools across Canada are under the management of First Nations. Currently, funding for education for status Indians living on-reserve is paid by Indian Affairs to the bands. The bands are responsible for paying for instruction provided within band schools, transfer payments to provincial schools for on-reserve students attending these institutions, and funding student support services (Bell, 2004). The band operated schools receive Band Instructional funding based on a block rate based on number of students, size of the school, geographic location, and administrative costs (Matthew, 2000). Since the introduction of First Nation controlled schools, there has been a shift of First Nation student enrolment in provincial schools to band schools. As of 2002, there were 66,000
students enrolled in band schools, 46,000 reserve children attending provincial schools, and 1,700 students attending the remaining federally operated schools (Bell, 2004).

The impact of moving Indian children from the residential school system to a band-managed school system has not resulted in the anticipated success. First Nations children still struggle academically, achieving lower grades when compared to children from the general population. First Nations cite a lack of adequate funding has inhibited the academic success of their children. Federal funding for most band schools has never been comparable to levels of funding received from provincial funded schools. Matthew (2000) reported that a band-operated smaller elementary school would require 40% more funding, and a secondary band operated school would require 70% more funding to reach funding equity with provincial schools. Federal funds available to band-operated schools are estimated to be 75% of those for provincially operated schools (Bell, 2004). For example, band run schools have experienced ongoing difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified and accredited teachers, and in funding enrichment or developmental programming. In recent years, the government has provided additional funding to support additional programs for students with moderate to profound special needs (Bell, 2004).

Governance and administration for band managed schools were found to be inconsistent with no standardized reporting requirement. In a study completed in 2004, Bell reported that band schools have inconsistent governance and administration with no standardized reporting requirements. He believed this was a consequence of inadequate resources and, therefore, provided First Nations with no real control over the delivery of education. These issues and barriers are taking time to resolve, and it is too soon to determine whether band-controlled schools will have an impact on reversing the lower academic achievements experienced by First Nation children.

From a colonization perspective, the physical integration of First Nation students into mainstream education was an example of government-imposed standards of education on First Nation minorities. Roderiquez (1997) proposed that education is a “traditional enemy of Indian people”, in part due to the integration policies of the federal government. Aligned with the concept of decolonization, he argued that traditional values of non-interference, non-competitiveness, and emotional restraint are in direct conflict with the emphasis of western education on competitiveness relating to marks. By
integrating First Nation students into a western model of education, Burns (2001) argued that the educational arrangements are those of an internal neo-colonialism produced by the reinforcing systems of colonial and capitalist domination and exploitation. The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy defines neo-colonialism as “the dominance of strong nations over weak nations, not by direct political control, but by economic and cultural influence” (pp 324). Consequently, First Nations students could only fail, and their lack of success has been documented throughout all levels of education.

Since the 1970’s, First Nation leadership, elders, and community members have fought to regain control of education for their children. Many positive developments have been achieved. Aboriginal specific materials have been added to Canadian elementary and secondary school curriculum, and in schools with significant Aboriginal populations, language classes are available (Battiste and McLean, 2005). In addition, more attention has been given to adapting curriculum to a number of learning styles. There are also more band schools that First Nation students can attend within their own communities. These strategies have contributed to a greater success of First Nation youth and children in the completion of elementary and secondary school.

**First Nation Education – Post-Secondary**

First Nation peoples were notably absent from post-secondary education for the greater half of the 20th century. In the 1960’s, a mere two hundred First Nation students graduated from universities across Canada. Interestingly, some of the first Native graduates came from Trent University in Ontario (Newhouse, 2002). In 1968, the Department of Indian Affairs implemented the beginning of a number of programs intended to enhance opportunities for First Nations and Inuit to attend post-secondary education. Initially, First Nation students attending college or university received their sponsorship directly from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and on a client by client basis (The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2007). While the program contributed to increasing First Nation participation in higher education, Lancelley-Barrie (2001) reported that the guidelines were created and carried out with minimal input from First Nations. In 1977, the Appropriations Act formally identified a post-secondary funding allocation for Indian people, through which the Post-Secondary Educational Assistance Program (PSEAP) was
implemented (Lanceley-Barrie, 2001). All eligible First Nation and Inuit students who applied were sponsored, and their tuition was directly paid to the post-secondary institution by DIAND (Office of the Auditor General, 2004). As a student attending university in 1977, I recalled the monthly trip to the local INAC office to receive my living allowance and to provide an update on my academic progress.

In 1987 and 1989, the Post-Secondary Educational Assistance Program was extensively reviewed by First Nations and the government (Office of the Auditor General, 2004). Upon the completion of the review in 1989, the program was replaced by the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), and funding restrictions were implemented that reduced the number of eligible allocations for sponsorship provided to each student, and capped funding (Hill, 2004). To address the fact that not all eligible applicants for post-secondary sponsorship could be funded, the PSSSP added guidelines to prioritize eligible student applications. The PSSSP funded First Nation students by giving them financial support for tuition, travel, living expenses, childcare, etc. Post-secondary programs that First Nation students could be sponsored for included community college diploma and certificate programs, undergraduate programs, degree programs, and university and college entrance programs.

Shortly after the PSSSP was implemented, transfer agreements were entered into with First Nations, and the administration and funding for post-secondary programming was transferred to the First Nation level. It was as a result of the transference of funding and administrative responsibilities for all levels of education -- elementary, secondary and post-secondary -- to the community level, that the role of First Nation education counsellor evolved. Specific to post-secondary education, administration of PSSSP became the responsibility of First Nation education counsellors or administrators. These changes were the outcome of ongoing dialogue between the federal government and First Nation people and a step toward greater control of First Nations over education.

In 1989, the University and College Entrance Program (UCEP) and the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) were deployed. Through these programs, the Department provided funding opportunities for post-secondary institutions to develop culturally specific programming for Aboriginal people in Canada. The UCEP was developed in 1982 and the pre-entry programming was developed to enhance Aboriginal
students and their successful integration into post-secondary program. The ISSP was introduced in 1989, enabling First Nations and mainstream post-secondary institutions to further develop programs specifically for Aboriginal populations.

In the past thirty years, there have been other developments in the evolution of Aboriginal post-secondary education – programs aimed at providing education specifically for Aboriginal populations. Initially, the programs focused on Native studies, including courses in Native history, Native issues, and Native politics. Trent University can boast running a Native Studies Department and a Native Studies program for over thirty years (Newhouse, 2002). Both Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students have access to Native specific courses as a requirement or optional course of other degree or diploma programs, or specific to an Aboriginal specific degree or diploma designation. Laurentian University, Lakehead University, and University of Toronto began offering Native Studies programs in the 1970’s. The decade of the 1980’s saw the introduction of other Native specific programs especially in the area of counselling at both the university and college levels. Cambrian College offered the Native Community Care and Counselling Program, in collaboration with the Anishinabek Education Institute - Union of Ontario Indians, and Native Youth Worker Program since 1994. Other Aboriginal specific programs have also been developed, and continue to change and evolve to present day.

The Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS) was created in 1991 by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities with a budget of $6 million to fund the development of new programming and services within Ontario higher education institutions – (Chiefs of Ontario, 2004). The purpose of the Strategy was to increase the number of Aboriginal students participating in post-secondary education. Colleges and universities received the largest share of the funding, with a smaller portion allocated to First Nation education institutes. The portion of funding regularly allocated to the post-secondary institutions who originally applied for the funding is comprised of $5.2 million. The remaining $800,000 was allocated to First Nation education institutes through yearly submission of proposals, of who demonstrated partnerships for initiatives with colleges of universities. The twenty-nine post-secondary institutions who applied for the original funding have continued to receive on-going funding, despite the fact that the
strategy was initially a five year plan. Aboriginal specific programming and services that were developed as a result of the Strategy include Aboriginal Education Councils, Aboriginal Counsellors or Support Staff, Aboriginal Program/Service Administrators, and programs such as Aboriginal Access Programs, Aboriginal Language Programs, and other diploma/certificate programs. These programs are offered on-site, or through telemedia or distance delivery. Burns (2001) noted that Aboriginal student support services accessible within post-secondary institutions have reduced problems experienced by Aboriginal students moving to urban centres for education purposes. These students often experience challenges such as difficulties in relocation, life in boarding homes, culture shock, homesickness, loss of supports, racism, and inadequate academic preparation. Through these services, they receive culturally appropriate supports.

Until 2007, funding allocated to specific post-secondary institutions from the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS) was comprised of $5.2 million. At that time, the Ontario provincial government, through the AETS program, released new funding of one million dollars for new and continuing programs for Aboriginal post-secondary students. The funding was to be allocated through proposal process to colleges and universities who had not participated in the original Strategy funding. A further seven hundred and eighty thousand for start up and development of post-secondary recognized and accredited programming was allocated to Aboriginal education institutions who partnered with specific colleges or universities (Government of Ontario, 2007). Despite the recent expansion of the program, the funding remains static from year to year. With no opportunity to grow and expand best practice program and services, these programs are in danger of losing their ability to be responsive, creative, and therefore, effective.

First Nation education within Canadian history has evolved over time. Given pressure and protest by First Nations over the years, the residential schools were closed, band controlled elementary and secondary schools were created, and First Nations increased their participation in post-secondary education in both mainstream institutions, and First Nation institutions. While significant advances have been made, limitations imposed on funding for sponsorship, funding for band schools, funding for culturally specific post-secondary institutions, programming and supports, as well as policy limitations for eligibility have contributed to widening gap in academic achievement.
experienced at all levels of education of First Nation people. The First Nations Education Steering Committee in 2005, compared the transfer of $273 million per year for post-secondary education to First Nations, to what First Nations received for social assistance and support program transfers – a total of $1 billion annually. The committee argued, “Although factors other than education can affect the demand for social assistance, it has been demonstrated that education, or lack thereof, is directly related to jobs, income levels, and the potential for well-being.” A repeated and key message in breaking the cycle of poverty and unemployment is education - requiring greater educational opportunities, a greater investment of education specific funding, and greater educational supports that are culturally specific.

Profile of First Nation Post-Secondary Students

There are a number of characteristics unique to First Nations that set them apart - as distinct cultures and societies, and also as marginalized minorities within Ontario and Canada. The following overview of First Nation populations is intended to provide a greater understanding of First Nation post-secondary students.

First Nation students may apply and receive band sponsorship to attend higher education. This is a key difference between First Nation students and other Canadian students. In order to be eligible, each applicant must provide proof of Indian Status identifying that they belong and have band membership with one of the approximately six hundred bands across Canada, or one hundred and thirty-three that currently exist in Ontario (refer to Chapter One). A further description of the process of First Nation sponsorship was provided in an earlier chapter. By comparison and in order, Ouellette (2006) found that funding obtained by the Canadian student population at large was derived from personal savings, income from current employment, government student loans, and non-repayable money given to them by family, a partner, or friends, bank loan, and grant/scholarship. While their numbers were difficult to ascertain, given the number of eligible First Nation students who apply and are denied First Nation sponsorship in recent years (Canadian Federation of Students, 2007) and given the choice of alternate funding opted by an indeterminate number of Status Indian students, the education of some First Nation students was financed by similar funding sources. While research was limited, I located the 2006 Aboriginal Peoples Survey released in October, 2009 that
found the main source of postsecondary education funding for fifty-eight percent of off-reserve First Nations’ women was INAC or band funding (Statistics Canada, 2006). Further, approximately one out of ten First Nations women (with and without Registered Indian status) also indicated they received “other” types of financial assistance (not specified) to pursue their postsecondary studies. While these results were not necessarily reflective of all First Nation students, it provided a sense of the importance of the availability of band sponsorship and its contribution to enhancing their post-secondary educational opportunities.

The First Nation post-secondary student population in Ontario are Status Indians legally connected to one of one hundred and twenty-seven recognized First Nations in Ontario (INAC web-site: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/scr/on/ar/index-eng.asp). In a description of the diverse cultural groups and dialects of First Nation peoples in Ontario, Powless (2004) described them as “Thirteen distinct nations of people, each with their own languages, customs and territories. These nations are the Algonquin, Mississauga, Ojibway, Mohawk, Onoyota’a:ka, Tuscarora, Cree, Cayuga, Seneca, Onondaga, Odawa, Pottowatomii and Delaware. Although the focus of political activity by First Nations communities is primarily centred within provincial boundaries, the traditional territories and activities of the nations extend beyond provincial and international boundaries” (pp. 2).

Ontario has the largest absolute population of Aboriginal persons in Canada (Mendellson, 2006), and the largest First Nation people populations – 131,560 (2001 Census). The total Aboriginal population in 2006 was 242,495 (Statistics Canada, 2006). A total of 7,600 Aboriginal students were enrolled in colleges, universities and Aboriginal institutions in 2007 (Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs), compared to the 86,000 full-time general student population enrolled in postsecondary education in Ontario in the same year (Ministry of Finance, 2007). By 2009, the number of Aboriginal students who attended higher education in Ontario increased to approximately 11,000 students (Ontario.ca web-site: http://www.aboriginalinstitute.com). Figures from the two different years were not
necessarily comparable given that while the statistics from 2007 identified Aboriginal students attending colleges, universities, and Aboriginal education institutions, the research done in 2009 did not identify the institutions attended by Aboriginal people. The presented information does suggest that the number of aboriginal students attending post-secondary education increased significantly within the two year span.

In addition to population figures, there are a number of distinct characteristics and factors that point to the unique reality of First Nation students. These aspects are examined in further detail in the following pages.

The two emerging groups of First Nation students entering post-secondary programs appear to be divided by age – those under twenty-five and those over twenty-five years of age. Younger First Nation post-secondary students belong to the largest segment of First Nations populations, a trend that differs significantly from the Canadian general population profile. The on-line journal, the Aboriginal Nurse, outlined a number of findings from an environment scan completed for Health Canada – First Nations and Inuit Health Branch in 2001. The report included demographic information that found Aboriginal populations are increasing at twice the rate of Canada's population. The ratio of Aboriginal youth within the total Aboriginal population was one and a half times higher when compared to the total youth population within the Canadian total population. Yet, Aboriginal post-secondary enrolment was two thirds the rate of enrolment of general Canadian post-secondary enrolment for students ages 17-34 (The Aboriginal Nurse, 2001). The Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Labour Market Outcomes Canada (1996) study noted that younger registered Indians experienced the greatest difficulties in achieving post-secondary continuation rates compared to other Canadians of similar age. First Nation youth from 15-24 tend to have the greatest gap in university completion rates, with a percentage of 40% lower in comparison to other Canadian youth (Hull, 2000). Looker and Lowe (2001) found that while First Nation populations aged twenty-five and under represent a significant portion of the First Nations memberships, they found limited academic success within PSE. While Aboriginal and First Nation populations tend to have a higher number of younger people within their populations,
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research has shown that fewer go on or are successful at the post-secondary level than other Canadians.

With respect to older First Nation students, they represent the largest group of the Aboriginal students participating within post-secondary (Holmes, 2005; Association of Canadian Community Colleges and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2008). This demographic contrasts significantly with the profile of the average Canadian post-secondary student who tends to be younger, entering college or university directly from secondary school graduation (Educational Policy Institute, 2008; The Planning Committee for the Consultation on Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes for First Nations and Metis Students in Southern Manitoba, 2007). In comparison with their younger Aboriginal student counterparts, mature Aboriginal students are more likely to enrol and successfully complete their post-secondary program (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008, Statistics Canada, 2006). While achieving greater academic success, comparatively, the older Aboriginal post-secondary student enters the PSE having been out of the school system for a number of years. They also have other factors that compete for their time such as children and family responsibilities that add further complications to their busy school experience. As a result, many older First Nation students also find their higher educational experience overwhelming, and their numbers contribute to the overall lower success rate of Aboriginal PSE students.

What is interesting about the younger versus the older First Nation student is that most First Nations prioritise their high school graduates for post-secondary financial support above other eligible candidates. This knowledge is based on my familiarity with the sponsorship process as a previous Aboriginal educator working closely with bands, and as a First Nation sponsored student. While more First Nation youth are graduating from high school, and represent a significant portion of the First Nation population, they are the least likely of the two age categories to enrol or successfully complete their PSE programs. This requires further consideration and discussion by the bands. While our teachings speak of the youth as our future, there is much work to be done to more fully prepare them for the future. The academic success of all Aboriginal students is critical for personal accomplishment, as well as furthering the holistic well-being of First Nation communities and their ability to be self-sustaining and self-determined.
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First Nation students’ struggles within the educational system begin early. A significant number of students experience learning difficulties at lower educational levels, resulting in many entering high school two to three grade levels behind their non-Aboriginal peers (Health Canada, 2001). Approximately eleven percent of Aboriginal students at age fifteen or older were found to require an Aboriginal teacher’s aide while in elementary or secondary school (Stats Can. 2006). In 2001, forty-four percent of Aboriginal people fifteen years and older had not completed high school (Statistics Canada, 2001). Hull (2005) found that 72.4% of males and 66.5% of females between the ages of 15 and 24 in both First Nation and Inuit populations had less than a high school certificate. From a regional perspective, the rate of Aboriginal students in northern Ontario moving past high school without some assistance with basic skills has been dismally low. In a town hall meeting held by the review panel on post-secondary education led by former premier Bob Rae in October of 2004, ninety-three percent of Native children in northern Ontario lagged at least two grades behind in school (Brown, 2004). Academic struggles at the elementary and secondary levels of education have a huge impact on each First Nation person’s PSE aspirations or lack of aspiration.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the challenges faced by Aboriginal youth. Van Der Woerd and Cox (2003) cited geographic isolation, poor economic conditions, living in single parent families, risky behaviour such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout and delinquency. Thompson and Eggert (1999) found that poor academic achievement and dropping out of school was related to higher levels of psychological distress, depression, suicidal issues, low self-esteem, low expectations, and feelings of hopelessness. Mackay and Miles (1995) identified a number of factors contributing to First Nation high school students dropping out that included problems with English language skills, parental support and home-school communication. The Auditor General’s Report in 2004 noted that First Nation students face challenges including health problems, poor economic conditions, racism, and challenges related to geography and demography. These issues were examined in greater detail later in the study.

From an educational perspective, Health Canada (2001) identified that First Nations elementary and secondary education systems experience difficulties in meeting
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provincial standards, having a lower focus on science and math and lack resources such as specialized teachers and labs (2001). A significant number of Aboriginal secondary students graduate from high school without having completed many of the advanced mathematics (Malatest, 2004; Nielsen, Nicol, and Owuor, 2008) and science courses (Auditor General, 2004), making them ineligible for PSE programs that require these prerequisites.

Any aspiration toward a post-secondary education becomes increasingly daunting for the First Nation student confronted with multiple issues. It was found that First Nation students from remote areas were even less likely to succeed in higher education than their more urban counterparts (Auditor General, 2004; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2005). As a result of their lack of academic success in elementary and secondary school, more Aboriginal students are under-prepared for entry requirements at the post-secondary level. Literacy rates are lower in comparison to the general Canadian population, as confirmed in a recent study released by Statistics Canada and based on the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS). It found that 72% of First Nation in urban Manitoba and 70% in urban Saskatchewan scored below a Level Three on a literacy proficiency test. Level Three is the minimum requirement for an individual to be considered able to successfully cope in a “complex knowledge based society” according to the study (Statistics Canada, 2008). The study provided a correlation between literacy and labour market outcomes – higher scores meant higher employment rates. These findings are readily transferable to First Nation populations within Ontario.

The result from any combination of these factors is the under representation of Aboriginal students within post-secondary education. While no one issue alone has influenced the lack of the academic success by many First Nations, these identified socio-economic and interpersonal factors interconnect responsively to each other, contributing to a cultural group in crisis.

Continuing to profile First Nations PSE students, it was found that more are representatively female, and with dependent children (Health Canada, 2001, Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen, 2000). The findings were consistent with both on and off reserve First Nation PSE students (Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2001, forty-four percent of Aboriginal women had attained some post-secondary success, including the twenty-seven
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percent who acquired a university certificate, diploma, or degree (Hull, 2006). Similar results were noted in mainstream student populations, where there were similar findings that there was a higher participation rate of women at the post-secondary level than men. In 2001, sixty percent of all mainstream and non-Aboriginal post-secondary graduates were female (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 2006). Aboriginal women often experienced greater academic success than Aboriginal men. Fourteen percent of Aboriginal women compared to ten percent of Aboriginal men had some university attainment. The exception was in the area of the trades, since Aboriginal men were more likely to have a trade certificate than their female counterparts. When compared to other Canadian students, Native students were less likely to attend university than community colleges (Hull, 2006).

Taking familial ties into consideration, the parents of Native students were likely to have less than a high school education compared to the general population (Statistics Canada, 2008). It is relevant that many First Nation students are the first in their family to attend post-secondary school. The challenge of being the first to enter a college or university environment means that these students have less knowledge or preparation for what they are about to embark on. Any set back or new challenge to address may be perceived to be a huge obstacle. As an example, I found that many students from small First Nations initially had difficult navigating around the community of the institution they were attending. They found it very helpful when someone was able to take them for a bus tour, pointing out area grocery stores, banks, and other useful resources. Without previous experience or current supports to rely on, these students are in danger of dropping out early. In a report entitled “First Generation Students in Post-Secondary Education: A Look at Their College Transcripts, Chen (2005), found that as an aggregate population, students who were the first members of their families to attend college were disadvantaged in terms of access, persistence, and academic completion. The results were the same for a number of students despite having divergent demographic backgrounds, academic preparation, enrolment characteristics, post-secondary course selection, and academic performance. The findings corresponded to similar challenges and issues faced by first generation First Nation students, and their struggles and lack of success at the post-secondary level.
Statistics Canada recently found that the majority of First Nation people are currently living off-reserve at a rate of up to 70 percent (Statistics Canada, 2008). It should be noted that these statistics are in dispute with noted discrepancies. INAC (2004) cited that more than 53% of First Nations citizens lived on-reserve (391,459 of 733,626 First Nation citizens), and that an additional 23,963 resided on Crown lands, for a total of 57%. The Assembly of First Nations (2008) stated that less than half of all First Nations citizens – 43% (318,204) – live off-reserve. They argued that the Statistics Canada figures were misleading given that the totals also included non-status, Metis and Inuit within the calculations given for the urban Aboriginal population figures. It is also known that many First Nations choose not to participate in the census. Adding to the matter of where First Nations people live and as a matter of interest, mobility rates (referring to individuals who have moved to different areas over a course of time) are higher for Aboriginal populations than for other Canadians. In a study by Hull in 2006 with a focus on Aboriginal women, and based upon 2001 Canadian Census data, he found that over 50% of Aboriginal women moved between 1996 and 2001 which was much higher than the mobility rate of non-Aboriginal women at a rate of 42%. Approximately 50% of Aboriginal men moved in the same time period. Both genders moved at a higher rate than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Within the same study, specific to First Nation women, only 23% of on-reserve Status Indian women moved locally. First Nation peoples are found to live both on and off reserve, and from the research, it is also known that they tend to move more often than any other Canadian population.

For the purpose of funding for PSE, where the First Nation student resides becomes less relevant than knowing what First Nation they are members of. As noted throughout the study, the majority of First Nation students who attend higher education apply and receive sponsorship for education from their bands. They are eligible for funding as a result of their legally recognized membership with a specific First Nation. As a key element of my research, it was a critical point that in order to receive PSE sponsorship, each First Nation student must communicate directly with their band or a regional education unit responsible for post-secondary funding on behalf of a group of First Nations, often through the band’s First Nation education counsellor or an education counsellor working with the regional education unit. Nationally, approximately 23,303
First Nation students were funded by their First Nations in 2007, while an additional 10,000 were required to find alternate ways in which to pay for their post-secondary schooling (Assembly of First Nations, 2008). These results demonstrate that more First Nation students were in communication with their First Nations for funding purposes than those applying to other sources. Possibly, they were compelled toward a closer identification and communication with their First Nations than they may have previously, especially for those who were raised or lived off-reserve. In terms of financial sponsorship, the location of where they live became less relevant than where their Indian status was derived.

While it is a positive trend that the number of Aboriginal people participating in post-secondary education is increasing, the general population of Canada is also participating in greater numbers. Between 1994 and 1995 and 2004 and 2005, the enrolment of undergraduate students from the general Canadian population increased by nineteen percent (19%), from 658,300 students to 785,700 students (Canadian Education Statistics Council). While increased participation of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education is a positive growth, it is misleading to conclude that the educational chasm between other Canadians and First Nations is closing. In fact, the gap is not diminishing, and Aboriginal populations continue to lag well behind the educational levels attained by the general population (Clark, 2003, Council of Ministers, Education, 2007). In 2004, the percentage of status Indians with post-secondary education was thirty-seven percent, whereas, the general population with post-secondary education was fifty-one percent (Malatest and Associates). Within two years of graduating from secondary school, Aboriginal students were almost twice as likely to drop out of their PSE studies compared their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2003). A study entitled “The Class of 2003 High School Follow-Up Survey,” completed on Grade Twelve students from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta, and New Brunswick found that fifty-four percent (54%) of Aboriginal students had completed or were continuing post-secondary studies in comparison to seventy-three percent (73%) of post-secondary students from the general population. In 2004, Sheila Fraser, the Auditor General of Canada, cited from the “Report on Post-secondary Student Support” that it could potentially be twenty-nine years before the gap closed between the educational
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Attainments of Aboriginal high school students and their non-Aboriginal counterparts, if current trends remained unchanged. She expressed further concern over the educational gap that exists between on-reserve students in particular, versus other Canadian high school students.

While constructing a general profile of all First Nations students, it was important to reiterate the impact of the socio-economic conditions that plague First Nations people across Canada. The reality and struggles they face function as a real impediment to their post-secondary access or attainment. A legacy of social ills has dodged many of them and their efforts to make a better life for themselves. While results vary between First Nation communities, huge socio-economic gaps exist between First Nations and the rest of the nation (Armstrong, 1999). Aboriginal people experience higher levels of socio-economic issues compared to the general Canadian population such poverty, lower incomes, unemployment, poor health, infant deaths, diabetes, family violence, poor housing, incarceration, suicides, alcohol and/or drug abuses are some of the myriad issues that they may experience personally or through their families and communities (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007; Office of the Attorney General, 2004). While 80% of First Nations are located within forest regions of Canada, as an example, the majority of them are unable to benefit from living in proximity to forest resources, and continue to suffer from many of the social and economic conditions previously cited. These issues remain despite the fact that the forestry market generated $74 million, and employed 353,000 Canadians (Gysbers and Lee, 2003). In response to their travails, and as part of a multi-generational cycle, Aboriginal people tend to experience higher rates of depression, suicidal tendencies, familial violence, violent deaths, addictions (e.g., alcohol, prescription drugs, illegal drugs, gambling, etc), anomie and poor physical health. The gains achieved by educated First Nation members become more meaningful in light of the multi-layered issues and barriers many of them fought to overcome. The issues and problems will not be solved overnight. The hope of a people rests on using education as a tool toward greater holistic health.

Summarizing the profile of First Nation post-secondary students, it was found that First Nation students from Ontario come from a divergent number of First Nation cultures. As part of those First Nations, they live in the province with the largest
population of First Nations in comparison to any other province. First Nation students tended to fall within two categories of those under twenty-five years of age, and those who were older than twenty-five. The older First Nation student has demonstrated a better chance of post-secondary success. This is of concern given that the younger generations represent the largest segment of First Nation populations. First Nation females also out-perform the First Nation males academically and are more likely to succeed in attaining their PSE designations with the exception of trades programs. A number of factors were examined that contributed to their lower PSE access and success in comparison to the general Canadian student population that were academic and social-economic in nature. Often issues First Nations people are confronted with are far more prevalent and horrific than those faced by most Canadians. First Nation students have the right to access funding for post-secondary education not available to the average Canadian given their status as the original people of Canada and affirmed through legal documents such as treaties and the Constitution. However, the reality is that imposed funding caps have meant that fewer eligible First Nation students are able to access the funding. Undoubtedly, First Nations must overcome many challenges before they achieve educational equality for their members.

**Profile of First Nation Education Counsellors**

In this section, I compiled available research and information on the common duties shared by First Nation education counsellors, including their role as financial administrators specific to sponsorship, and their educational background. They were further examined in comparison with other existing education counsellor services within Ontario who steer and advise students toward post-secondary education.

I found that the First Nation education counsellors were referred to by many different titles, depending on the First Nation with whom they are employed. The lack of a standardized title for their positions is indicative of the independent nature of each First Nation and their development of these positions and programs. The following information was taken from the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) directory, as well as from a random sampling review of First Nation web-sites within the province of Ontario. In addition to the title Education Counsellor, community
personnel who work directly with First Nation post-secondary students and administer services to them are also known by the following titles:

- Director of Student Services and Counselling,
- Education Counsellor,
- Education Manager,
- Education Supervisor,
- Education Manager/Counsellor,
- Native Student Counsellor,
- Counsellor, Chief Executive Officer,
- Counsellor/Immersion Coordinator,
- Education Director,
- Education Services Manager,
- Director of Education,
- Student Services Officer,
- Post-Secondary Counsellor,
- Attendance Counsellor,
- Education Administrator,
- Native Student Advisor,
- Guidance Counsellor,
- Education Counsellor Officer,
- Education Community Services Counsellor,
- Program Manager,
- Education Service Coordinator,
- Program Coordinator,
- Student Counsellor,
- Manager, Education Services,
- Education Officer,
- Post-Secondary Administrator,
- Social Counsellor, and
- Unit Supervisor.
In correspondence to its membership, ONECA refers to counsellors specifically as Education Counsellors, and reference to the title is also cited in the name of the organization, “the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association”, and also in the name of the organization’s accredited program, entitled “the Native Counsellor Training Program.” For the purpose of the study and for consistency, the term First Nation education counsellor is used for the remainder of the research.

When a search of available literature and information was unsuccessful in locating a general and composite description of job duties for First Nation post-secondary counsellors, I examined potential reasons for the absence of a general description. The Ontario Native Education Counsellors web-site, created specifically for First Nation and Aboriginal education counsellors within their membership, did not catalogue detailed functions of First Nation education counsellors. In comparison, the web-sites of Ontario education counsellors working with general student populations provided detailed information of their roles and responsibilities. The web-sites of the following specified organizations were examined and used to note differences between First Nation and non-Aboriginal education counsellors, and included: the Ontario School Counsellors' Association (OSCA); the Catholic School Guidance Association (CSGA); and the Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners. A key difference was that the ONECA web-site targeted multi-level categories of First Nation education counsellors – elementary, secondary, and post-secondary – as well as Aboriginal student service support staff who work within post-secondary institutions. General population education counsellors’ web-sites, in comparison, were created for specific types or levels of counselling. A key reason I was unable to find a standard description of duties for First Nation education counsellors was that given First Nations vary in population, one counsellor may be responsible for multi-levels of education – elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Further, some education counselling positions are part-time, and it is not uncommon for a band employee to hold responsibilities for more than one position as required by the band, and possibly unrelated to education. Depending upon the size of the community, the education unit could employ a minimum of one full time or part-time worker, or be comprised of a group of full time education counsellors for a specific First Nation, or regional organization. Further, the absence of a comprehensive and generic
description of duties for First Nation education counsellors is likely as result of most First Nations developing their own criteria for the positions, based on their specific and unique service needs. These factors support the possible rationale for the lack of a generic description of First Nation post-secondary education counsellor duties.

A review of information and literature and First Nation web-sites yielded details and information from which a clearer picture of the function of First Nation education counsellors emerged.

Through the INAC National Post-Secondary Education Program Guidelines, First Nations may establish their own Post-Secondary Education Operating Local Policy. It is in the development of their own policy that each First Nation must also identify specific responsibilities as outlined in the guidelines. These responsibilities are primarily carried out by First Nation education counsellors or regional education authorities (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2005). The policy must include a selection priority process, an appeal process (including an impartial process, supports for an appeal, funding for costs related to the appeal, and identification of specific timelines), and how contingency emergency funding will be handled. The information outlining the process of sponsorship was described based on my familiarity and knowledge of working with First Nation education counsellors while working in Aboriginal departments within two northern community colleges, based on my own experience as a First Nation sponsored post-secondary student, and in review of the guidelines on line from the web-sites of a sampling of First Nations including Kinistin Saulteaux Nation (http://www.kinistin.sk.ca/PolicyManual.pdf) and Garden River First Nation Education Unit (http://www.gardenriver.ca/ps10c.asp).

When a First Nation student decides to appeal a decision regarding post-secondary sponsorship, no appeals can be made directly to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, only at the band or regional administering level. The bands have the right to make decisions regarding the identification of funding and allowance rates explaining why each First Nation provides varying amounts of sponsorship. The National Program Guidelines outlines the maximum of what can be dispensed for sponsorship only. When eligible applicants for post-secondary sponsorship are not approved due to factors such as a lack of funding, it is mandatory that their applications be deferred. All deferrals must be
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maintained on a list by each First Nation and the reasons for the deferrals must be outlined. As another requirement of Indian and Northern Affairs, each First Nation or administering body must also demonstrate efforts made by the First Nation education counsellor or the band to support at risk students including the site visits, telephone calls, emails, and other communication undertaken.

First Nation education counsellors play a unique and vital role from a financial standpoint. Keep in mind that they administer the only financial sponsorship for post-secondary education that is available to First Nation populations specifically. Their positions were derived when funding for First Nation education devolved directly to each First Nation from INAC. As a result of downloading, Indian and Northern Affairs entered into agreements with First Nations with accountability requirements that included the annual submission of financial and administrative reports. Each education counsellor or education unit is responsible for these reports.

First Nation education counsellors are also responsible for the applications for sponsorship submitted by community members from their First Nation, district, or region who wish to attend a post-secondary institution. The education counsellors or administering organizations follow eligibility requirements and policies specific to their First Nation (Malatest and Associates Ltd., 2004), as well as the guidelines outlined within the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). They are responsible for all post-secondary school applications for sponsorship submitted on a yearly or bi-yearly basis, and informing students as to whether their sponsorship applications were approved for band funding assistance. Specific to sponsorship duties, First Nation education counsellors are involved in the administration of payments to students for tuition, books, and a living allowance.

As described on the Indian Affairs web-site, tuition support is given to part-time and full-time students and may include fees for registration, tuition and the cost of books and supplies required for courses. Travel expenses may also be paid for by the band for students who must leave their permanent place of residence to attend college or university. Students may qualify for a grant to return home once every semester and this grant also covers any dependants who live with the student. A living allowance is
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provided to full-time students to help cover the costs of food, shelter, transportation and
day care. Each First Nation has varying policies on the amounts provided to each student,
whether travel allowances are provided, and who is deemed to be a priority from the list
of applicants for sponsorship each year.

To provide further clarification on sponsorship, a brief outline is presented to
demonstrate the differing rates of sponsorship that are based on each First Nation’s
internal allocation policy. Most First Nations rank high school graduates as their top
priority for approved eligibility. From this point, bands may rank other student categories
in different orders of priority. Other students who apply for funding include mature
students, mature students with children, retirees, students who have been unsuccessful in
a previous attempt to attend post-secondary program and are reapplying, and students
who have completed a diploma or degree and are requesting funding approval to
complete a second or post-graduate degree (e.g., from a bachelor to a master’s degree).
From my experience, whether the student lives on-reserve or off-reserve is also taken into
consideration when determining the selection of eligible students to fund each year, and
on-reserve applicants’ receive high prioritization in many First Nations. As another
factor, a student may be eligible for funding to attend college, and then be re-eligible to
apply for university upon completion of their college diploma/degree. These students are
given recognition as being a similar priority to students applying for the first time to PSE.
Each level of university is also seen as a different level of post-secondary education.
Most bands will only agree to pay for the first degree or diploma level based on PSSP
National Guidelines, and will not guarantee funding for post-diplomas, or post-graduate
degrees such as a masters or a doctorate. Again, funding approval depends on the number
of applicants in relation to the funding available in any given year. Since sponsorship,
including living allowance, is determined and distributed by the First Nation education
counsellors, the students become integrally linked and dependent upon their First Nation
education counsellors for their livelihood while attending school.

Without doubt, current band funding is inadequate or unavailable to an increasing
number of eligible First Nation members. Malatest and Stonechild (2008), in a study for
the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, found that many First Nation students
do not have reliable information regarding different sources of financial assistance. If
their plans involved receiving sponsorship from the band, and they do not receive approval for funding, many feel they do not have other options. Based on the findings from the Foundation, Riddell (2008) wrote that “financial aid programs must be complemented by community and institution based face to face guidance and outreach initiatives to better inform First Nation youth and raise their level of trust and confidence” (pp. B-9). To better equip First Nation education counsellors for working with First Nation students, the First Nations Education Steering Committee (2005) recommended that they have access to better in-service information and training.

Cuthand (1988) noted early that First Nation education counsellors play an important role in First Nation education. Education counsellors are a key contact for First Nation members when exploring their post-secondary options. Given the myriad of personal issues that may confront the students, First Nation education counsellors have assumed an increasingly greater role in social counselling. The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association confirmed that First Nation education counsellors “provide essential support and services for Aboriginal students and are critical to ongoing student success” (ONECA, nd). The Planning Committee for the Consultation on Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes for First Nations and Metis Students (2007) described that Some First Nation education counsellors have worked hard to develop close relationships with staff at the post-secondary institutions that their students and trainees are attending. Their collaborative relationships make it easier to assess and support students’ and trainees’ academic success (pp. 47).

As already noted, it was difficult to locate a standard set of roles and responsibilities of First Nation education counsellors. I chose to demonstrate this point by selecting two different groups of First Nation education counsellors to highlight their similarities and differences. As one group, The Indigenous Education Coalition (IEC) was examined. It is comprised of nine First Nations and two Friendship Centres situated in southern and north-eastern Ontario. Their web-site cited that they work together toward the goal of providing secondary level educational services. At the same time, the members of the Coalition determine the types of services that to be delivered, not only based on availability of funds and identified needs, but based upon the recognition that each community promoted and delivered education services according to their rights and
needs. The services they outlined as performed by First Nation education staff included: special education support, institutional relations, information sharing, professional development, and special projects (Indigenous Education Coalition, 2007). Another First Nation education organization was called the Mattawa Post-Secondary Program (Mattawa First Nation web-site, nd). It is responsible for services to Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake # 58, Neskantaga, and Webequie First Nations in Northern Ontario. The education counsellors of the Mattawa Post-Secondary Program (MPSP) are seen to play an important supportive role enabling students to succeed at the higher education level. In addition to administrative duties, the MPSP counsellors provide:

- Social and academic counselling
- Course/Program selections
- Resource information
- Orientation
- Monthly newsletters
- Post Secondary preparation (meet with grade 12)
- Direct Deposit (banking/payment distribution services) Referrals
- Setting up tutors
- Application process
- Monitoring
- College/University Visits
- Social events (s) i.e. Orientation, Christmas and Fall gatherings, Career Fairs, Classroom presentations, etc.
- Database (tracking system for maintaining student files)
- Continue to upgrade program
- Other services that the students may need to assist them with meeting their education goals (Mattawa First Nation web-site, nd).

While some of duties performed by both groups of First Nation education counsellors were noted as similar in nature (administration of finances and sponsorship for post-secondary programming), the review also demonstrated that the counsellors performed different duties (e.g. social counselling, social events, monthly newsletters and special projects).
projects). Both groups affirmed their responsiveness to the needs of the communities they served.

As evidence of the evolving nature of roles and responsibilities of First Nation education counsellors, they work and are responsive to a variety of education professionals providing advocacy for cultural sensitivity and cultural components within curriculum and within education services specific to First Nations students. The Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario developed the “Fourth R Aboriginal Perspective Curriculum” based on feedback from a number of groups, including First Nation education counsellors, regarding culturally based issues such as non-violent strategies with conflict (Ministry of the Attorney General, 2008). The Association of Canadian Community Colleges recognized the need for Aboriginal counsellors to be involved in anti-discrimination counselling (2005). From this perspective, First Nation education counsellors were demonstrated to support students through cultural advocacy. However, research was very limited specific to this area, and it would appear that this role was engaged more often by the First Nation education counsellors working at the elementary and secondary school levels. As an observation, these workers would have more opportunity to participate and provide cultural advocacy as a result of their proximity and work within the local schools. In contrast, post-secondary education counsellors would have less opportunity to support cultural advocacy for their students given the distance and increased number of institutions attended by PSE First Nation students.

From a review of the limited research materials specific to First Nation education counsellors, I found a number of researchers who advocated for growth and further development of the First Nation education counsellor role.ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED FOR COUNSELLING PROGRAMS TO GROW TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS, THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSULTATION ON IMPROVING POST-SECONDARY OUTCOMES FOR FIRST NATIONS AND METIS STUDENTS (2007) RECOMMENDED THAT “EDUCATION COUNSELLORS SHOULD BUILD ON THE BEST PRACTICES OF COMMUNITIES LIKE NORWAY HOUSE, WHOSE EDUCATION COUNSELLORS’ HAVE ONGOING CONTACT WITH STUDENTS IN WINNIPEG AND BRANDON AND OFFER STUDENTS’ PRACTICAL SUPPORTS, COUNSELLING AND ADVICE” (PP.47). THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLE (1991) STATED A NEED FOR FIRST NATION STUDENTS TO HAVE ACCESS TO A
variety of educational professionals to enhance their academic success, including Aboriginal education administrators, psychologists, speech pathologists and other professionals in education-related fields, as well as increased number of Aboriginal counsellors for a smaller ratio of students to counsellors.

In summary, First Nation counsellors hold primary responsibility for the administration and monitoring of financial matters relating to student sponsorship. Enhancement of roles and responsibilities vary depending on the policies and priorities of each First Nation. The majority of First Nation education counsellors work on-reserve, or work for a regional or tribal authority on behalf of students from a number of First Nations. Only counsellors working with elementary and secondary students participate in teaching or developing curriculum, often specific to the culture or language, acting as a supplemental resource to the existing curriculum. Through the examination of their role, I would suggest that they have continued to expand their duties in response to their students and their First Nations’ needs.

**Ontario Native Education Counselling Association**

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association is a provincial organization that was created as a support and advocate for First Nation education counsellors. It is committed to providing advocacy, capacity building, information and other resources to its membership. Membership is not exclusive to First Nation education counsellors, but is open to First Nation and Aboriginal education specific administrators, workers or support staff who include First Nation education counsellors at the First Nation and/or tribal office level; Aboriginal education workers or support staff within educational institutions, including elementary, secondary, training, and post-secondary institutions; and government or other non-governmental staff working specifically with Aboriginal education. Associate members include those who work in a supportive role in the field of education in the province of Ontario, education program specific student members, honorary members who support the aims of the association, and life members who were previously employed as a Native Student Counsellor in the province of Ontario for a minimum of ten years, who are retired and who have been active members of the Association for a minimum of ten consecutive years. Based on review of the ONECA
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membership directory, ninety-four of its members had direct responsibilities for First Nation post-secondary students as of 2007-2008 (ONECA, 2007).

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association identified the following objectives to support the vision of enhancing and supporting of Aboriginal education:

“To be a safe haven for the healing of counsellors and a source for future educators.

To continue developing a stronger organization that will produce leadership for current and future ONECA development.

To establish programs of learning to meet the many different needs of the ONECA membership including culturally appropriate skills training that enhances and maintains the quality of educational services to Native people.

To ensure that ONECA retains an identity as an independent organization with a diverse membership.

To ensure the transfer of knowledge of our Native traditions through the sharing of our experience, strength, and the traditional teachings of our elders.

To establish an ONECA Training and Healing Centre.

To develop and promote a strong counselling network for all counsellors working with Native youth.

To provide the opportunity for the holistic and spiritual growth of each helper, so that he/she can enhance the spirit of self and others.

To develop a board of public relations initiatives which will promote ONECA as an organization committed to holistic development of the First Nations.

To become economically self-sufficient.

The ONECA members and staff will maintain the role of advocacy for the rights and interests of the students” (ONECA web-site: http://www.oneca.com).

As discussed earlier in profiling First Nation education counsellors, their educational background varied within each First Nation or regional authority. As a result of no standardized requirements for education, First Nation education counsellors are found to have varying degrees of education and previous work experience. In response to identified training needs, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association began offering a Ministry of Education accredited post-secondary program called the Native
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Counsellor Training Program (NCTP) in 1977 (Royal Commission, 1991). The focus of the program is on enhancing the education and skills of First Nation education counsellors working with Aboriginal students at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary level. In 1985, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association assumed direct responsibility for the administration of the program. Funding for the program is the product of collaboration between the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Ontario government renewed their commitment to provide full funding and provincially recognized accreditation for the NCTP in 2006 after withdrawing financial and accreditation recognition in 1995 (Aboriginal Education Office, Ministry of Education, 2007). Between 1995 and 2006, the program continued to run despite no funding or formal accreditation from the Ministry. Graduating students, during this time, received an ONECA training certificate.

The program is offered in three consecutive sessions over the course of three summers, and with a mandatory completion of all three sessions in order to receive the NCTP accredited certificate. The curriculum includes: Counselling Practicum and Theory Part I, School and Career Guidance Part I, Sociology of Native People, Education Systems in Ontario, Counselling Practicum and Theory Part II, School and Career Guidance Part II, Native Issues, Information Process/Career Planning, and a five week Field Practicum. The skills acquired in the program are cited to equip graduates for careers in diverse sectors of the counselling field. Graduates have obtained employment in such designations as “Youth Workers, Prevention, Student Support, Elder Programming, Health Care Workers, Government employees, and Community Initiatives” (ONECA web-site, nd).

There are a number of options through which potential students can be admitted into the NCTP program. The NCTP admission criteria require the following:

1. The successful completion of secondary school
2. The successful completion of grade 11 and a minimum of one year experience in counselling
3. The successful completion of the General Education Diploma (GED), and a minimum of five years of counselling experience
4. Mature student status\(^1\), and a letter of recommendation from the First Nation administrator (band manager) or an official of a Native organization.

5. In order to be admitted into the final session, or Part III of the program, students are required to provide a criminal record check, and a current First Aid and Certified Pulmonary Respiration (ONECA web-site, nd).

In 2005, ONECA entered into an articulation agreement with Canadore College between the Native Counsellor Training Program (NCTP) and Canadore College’s Indigenous Wellness and Addictions Prevention (IWAP) program. With the NCTP certificate, Graduates of the NCTP may receive credits from toward the IWAP, reducing the amount of time and financial resources to complete the additional diploma program. Objectives of the articulation agreement were to:

“Ensure quality programming for Aboriginal students; improve Aboriginal accessibility and retention in post secondary training programs; respond to the employment and training needs within Aboriginal communities; contribute to Aboriginal advancement towards self-governance, economic development and self-sufficiency” (Canadore College\(^2\), 2005, Increasing Pathways for Aboriginal Students, no page number).

As a recent development for the Native Counselling Training Program, when the Ministry of Education renewed their Aboriginal Education Strategy (AETS) in January, 2007, the NCTP was one of the programs to receive funding. As described earlier in the chapter, the purpose of the Strategy is to encourage and sustain Aboriginal student success by the provision of additional funding to “help close the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and to increase knowledge and awareness about Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives among all students” (Ministry of Education, 2007). As one of the $12.7 million dollar initiatives that the Ministry announced funding, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association received funding to “support the Native Counsellor Training Program in training qualified Aboriginal Education Counsellors, who would provide counselling services to First Nation, Metis, and Inuit students in elementary and secondary schools.” As a note of

\(^1\) The ONECA web-site did not define “mature student status.”
\(^2\) Canadore College web-site: [http://www.canadorec.on.ca/NewsandEvents/Increasing-Learning-Pathways-for-Aboriginal-Students.cfm](http://www.canadorec.on.ca/NewsandEvents/Increasing-Learning-Pathways-for-Aboriginal-Students.cfm)
interest, First Nation education counsellors are hired specifically, or as part of their duties, to work with First Nation post-secondary students. The funding announcement was specific to education counsellors working with elementary and secondary students. Since the NCTP also enrols students who are education counsellors to post-secondary students and the training includes components relating to career planning, it was unclear as to why the government funding announcement did not include that the training was also for the benefit of education counsellors working with post-secondary students.

Further, given the identification of the training would enable education counsellors to work with First Nation, Metis and Inuit students, it would appear that the scope of the program has expanded beyond training specific to Aboriginal students. It will be of interest as to whether the NCTP curriculum will be revised or will incorporate a multicultural diversity examination of all Aboriginal populations, including the Metis and Inuit.

The Association also offers their membership an annual conference specific to the needs of education counsellors who work with First Nation and Aboriginal students. The objective of providing a conference to its membership is “to provide a culturally relevant and informative conference program which will increase the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of First Nations Education Counsellors through training; the mutual sharing of experiences, practical applications of effective education counselling methods; networking in the dynamic First Nation environment thus enhancing the quality of service to the client groups served” (Learning Disabilities Resource Community, 2005). The conference held in 2005, for example, covered topics relating to “Programs and Services”, “Skill Development”, and “Advocacy.”

In terms of the place and recognition accorded to the organization within the larger world of education counselling, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) is an international body that recognizes that “that for different target groups and different guidance tasks different qualifications are necessary (teaching career education, individual counselling, counselling for students, minorities, multicultural groups, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged, older persons)” (2007). With this as one of its considerations, the IAEVG prioritized the development of International Counsellor Qualifications Standards. The Ontario Native Education

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Counselling Association is listed on the web-site of the IAEVG) web-site under the Counsellor Resource Centre link. The International Association identified that while there were some countries with national training requirements that no international standard exists for counsellor training requirements. The international body recognizes that “for different target groups and different guidance tasks different qualifications are necessary (teaching career education, individual counselling, counselling for students, minorities, multicultural groups, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged, older persons)” (2007; no page). With this consideration, the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance set out, in 1999, to develop the International Counsellor Qualifications Standards. The International Competencies for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioners was approved of by the IAEVG in 2003. The competencies, unfortunately, were not reflective of the role of counsellors, rather they focused on educational and vocational guidance practitioners instead. Further, the role of the First Nation education counsellors was not included in the development of the standard since the IAEVG deviated away from its original intent of standardizing counsellor training at a national level.

The Ontario Native Education Counsellors Association continues to play a significant role with First Nation education counsellors since the majority of them have full membership within the organization. The Association provides advocacy and capacity building opportunities to its members. My strong familiarity with ONECA and the Native Counsellor Training Program were the result of my working relationship with their staff and board over a five year span. I recall my experiences with pride, and have a deep respect for the work and efforts they continue to accomplish on behalf of their membership.

Comparisons of First Nation Education Counsellors to Other Education Counsellors in Ontario

A number of Ontario education counsellor associations were reviewed in order to use as a standard for comparison of the roles and responsibilities of First Nation
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education counsellors. The Counsellor Resource Centre\(^3\), an international web-site on Career Development, identified education counselling associations in Ontario which included the Catholic School Guidance Association (CSGA), the Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA), and the Ontario School Counsellors' Association (OSCA) (2007). The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association was reviewed in greater detail previously.

The Ontario School Counsellors Association members are identified as curriculum specialists, consultants, counsellors, and coordinators. They provide the following services:

- “The Curriculum Specialist teaches, writes curriculum, provides career information, trains students in job search skills and facilitates curriculum integration.
- The Consultant works with subject teachers, special needs teachers and administrators to develop programs across the curriculum to show the relevance of in-school studies and future educational and career opportunities.
- The Counsellor provides both an intervention and prevention model service for personal, social, educational and career-related issues.
- The Co-ordinator links your school with the community, business/industry, social service agencies and other educational institutions, to enhance the smooth transition of students from one environment to another.
- The Catalyst identifies students at risk and ensures that programs are in place to meet their needs, modifies programs, trains teacher/mentors and peer helpers, and initiates liaison with parents, social workers and other support staff.” (Counsellor Resource Centre, [www.crccanada.org](http://www.crccanada.org)).

Membership into the organization is voluntary, but opened only to certified education counsellors in elementary and secondary schools. Membership privileges are similar to ONECA in the following ways, the members are entitled to listserv privileges, full access to all OSCA materials, a copy of the Ethical Guidelines for Ontario School Counsellors, a copy of the Membership Directory, and the members have the right to vote.

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at the Annual General Meeting and/or at any other time that a matter is brought before the membership. Further statutory members also have the right to hold office as a member of the Board of Directors and/or Executive.

According to Service Canada, education counsellors are found under the National Occupation Code 4143, and are employed at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary level. Their employment requirements include:

“A bachelor's degree in social sciences or education is required for counsellors in school settings.

A master's degree in counselling or a related field such as educational psychology, developmental psychology or social work is usually required.

Academic counsellors in post-secondary settings require an undergraduate degree and may require a graduate degree. A particular academic specialization may also be required.

A teacher's certificate from the province of employment and some teaching experience is usually required for counsellors in school settings.

In Quebec, membership in the professional association is mandatory for counsellors in school settings.

Educational counsellors in colleges and universities may require licensing from a provincial regulatory body governing psychologists, guidance counsellors or social workers” (Service Canada, nd, no page number).

The role of the First Nation education counsellors who work within a First Nation or Tribal Region or Authority also differ from the role of the Aboriginal counsellors who work specifically for Aboriginal students within post-secondary institutions. First Nation and Metis Services within the Indigenous People’s Centre at the Brandon University is an example of services intended to enhance access and success for Aboriginal people entering the university. The services are not specific just to First Nations, but open to all Aboriginal, Metis and Inuit students. The services provided include “holistic and developmental advising, orientation, and academic supports and counselling” (Brandon

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University, 2008). Similarly, the University of Toronto provides a variety of services in addition to academic and personal counselling that includes: “financial aid information, housing, daycare, employment referrals, tutoring, a resource centre, and numerous cultural events throughout the year” (University of Toronto, nd). As part of counselling, Aboriginal and other students have access to an elder program aimed at helping students experiencing interpersonal issues and/or have a desire to receive traditional and cultural teachings. Post-secondary Aboriginal counsellors provide an environment within the institution where Aboriginal students can receive student support services that are culturally relevant. The Association of Community Colleges (2005) summed up Aboriginal counselling services in Aboriginal and mainstream colleges, universities, and institutes as a provision of support services aimed at “facilitating Aboriginal learners’ participation and success in programs: tutoring, Aboriginal gathering places on campus, learning centres, financial assistance, support to find housing, support from community Elders, daycare services, mentor programs, health services and Resident Elder services” (pp. 3). While working in the Aboriginal departments at the college level, I recall that our department often hosted First Nation education counsellors on-site, providing them with space to meet with their students on campus and throughout the school year.

It was difficult to compare First Nation education counsellors to other categories of student counsellors given that their role differs not only from general population education counsellors, as well as from each another. For example, the educational standards for education counsellors in the province of Ontario are specific and according to each category of counsellor (i.e. elementary, secondary, and post-secondary). I observed that increasingly higher levels of education tend to be the requirement for each level of education. This makes sense since counsellors within higher education administered increasingly more complex education counselling responsibilities including administration and interpretation of such tests as aptitude, personality, or other vocational assessments. Ontario education counsellors may also have responsibilities specific to teaching in addition to their counselling services. As another comparative aspect, the educational requirements for First Nation education counsellors differ as a result of the standards for their positions having been set by each First Nation, or tribal authority. Most Ontario bands sanction their First Nation education counsellor to enrol in the
standardized Native Counsellor Training Program offered by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association. However, it is not a mandatory program, and while First Nation education counsellors have successfully completed the program, it is not necessarily a mandatory requirement to successfully secure their position. The review had demonstrated that the education of the First Nation education counsellors differs greatly from what is required and taken by education counsellors who work in non-Aboriginal school settings and at all levels of education. It would appear that the difficulty in comparing the groups levels of education are a result of the different roles they play. While their titles are similar, their responsibilities are quite different and as a result, so are their educational qualifications.

**Factors Contributing to First Nations Post-Secondary Success**

This section provides an overview of research examining post-secondary level services and programs developed and implemented to enhance Aboriginal student academic success.

Studies have shown that Aboriginal students are more likely to achieve academic success with a greater number of relevant support services, especially when the services are culturally relevant (Hachkowski, 2007; Kurszewki, 2000). Their research also demonstrated that greater academic success was achieved by First Nation students participating in Native specific programming, and/or where culturally specific student services are available. The following is a review of some of the curriculum and services currently available within PSE.

First Nation Education Institutes in Ontario have demonstrated the ability to provide culturally relevant and First Nation specific curriculum and supports that enhance student success. The Institutes bring specific Ontario college and university programs on-site and within their own territories. Upon successful completion of the programs, First Nation and Aboriginal students receive accreditation from the universities or colleges with whom the Aboriginal education institute have accreditation agreements. Hill (2004) cited that the nine Institutes educate over 4000 learners each year, and have student academic success rates between 90% and 98%. Student centered support environments offered in First Nations institutions include: “academic, career, social and financial counselling; cultural and spiritual teachings; peer support; elder support; student housing;
and assistance in accessing community organizations such as childcare, transportation and other social programs”.

First Nation and Aboriginal students experienced greater academic success when non-Aboriginal higher education institutions offer Aboriginal specific student centres and/or Aboriginal services, such as education counsellors, students support workers, etc. Forbes, Brown and Ahulwalia, 2005 in research developed on behalf of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) stated that Aboriginal students need Aboriginal academic-based role models so that they can help others to overcome feelings of high stress, isolation, inadequacy, and discrimination. Looker and Lowe (2001) found that Aboriginal PSE student participation is favourably influenced by access to student supports services. In 2009, the Ontario government provided $6 million through the Access to Opportunities Strategy to support “counselling, tutoring, career planning and cultural awareness services at colleges, universities and Aboriginal institutions specific to Aboriginal PSE student populations, recognizing the need to “build and improve access to postsecondary opportunities for Aboriginal students and boost the number of Aboriginal graduates in Ontario” (Ministry of Education, 2009). As an example of Aboriginal specific services, the University of Western Ontario developed the First Nations Services program in 1993 that provides an orientation for incoming Aboriginal students, and social and academic supports throughout the year (University of Western Ontario, [http://www.law.uwo.ca/Programs/aboriginal.html](http://www.law.uwo.ca/Programs/aboriginal.html)). Aboriginal or culturally relevant support services provided within PSE institutions have the ability to enhance First Nation students’ retention and academic successes.

Pre-college or access program offerings also support the success of Aboriginal students’ in meeting eligibility requirements of specific programming, specifically programs with prerequisites involving maths and sciences. Aboriginal students with previous histories of unsuccessful attempts within the post-secondary programming tend to be more successful when they become involved in an access or supportive program. Access programs are specific certificate or diploma programs that enable the student to work towards the successful completion of an academic program, supported by a wide variety of supports including student supports, financial support, academic support, remediation, and personal supports. As an example, the Native Nurses Entry Program at
Lakehead University has developed academic supports to assist Aboriginal students with such subjects as biological science and chemistry contributing to greater academic success in health related programming at that institution (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2007). In a study of access programs, Alcorn and Levin (1998) found that students graduated at a rate of 40% as compared to the 5% rate of graduation success outside of the access program delivery. Unfortunately, access programs have declined in funding support, and many have disappeared through colleges across Canada since the report was published in 1998.

Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen (2002) identified a number of other elements that have contributed to increasing First Nation participation and success at the post-secondary level. They identified the following initiatives: the establishment of new post-secondary programs specific to Aboriginal students such as law, health, education, preparatory programs, Native Studies, and other emerging programs. The Aboriginal Canadian Portal (nd) provided a comprehensive overview of existing Aboriginal post-secondary programming in Ontario. Ontario universities offer a variety of Aboriginal specific programs. A sampling of programs include: Community and Economic Development, Algoma University; Native Education Programs, Brock University; Aboriginal Studies, University of Toronto; and Aboriginal Health Program, University of Ottawa. As well, a number of community colleges provide Aboriginal specific programs. A sampling of the programs include: Aboriginal Studies – General Arts and Sciences, Algonquin College; Aviation Pilot – Fixed Wing – Aboriginal Program – Canadore College; Native Community and Social Development, Georgian College; and Native Clothing and Crafts Artisan, Northern College. Aboriginal specific programs within each higher education institution are offered as long as they are viable and there is sufficient enrolment to justify their implementation.

Ensuring access to post-secondary programs and culturally relevant services will contribute to the academic success of a greater number of First Nations students. While the academic success attained by an increasing number of First Nations students has not decreased the educational gap with other Canadians, there are more First Nation people attaining a PSE than ever before. We must savour these successes and what higher
education rates mean to the First Nation and aboriginal communities. The advancements are likened to ripples in water - they have implications well beyond each person.

**Obstacles to First Nation Participation in Post-Secondary Education**

As discussed, academic success has come slowly to First Nations populations, and with great personal effort and cost. A review of some these factors was undertaken that include funding restrictions, institutional barriers, and a brief outline of the impact of socio-economic conditions.

**Government Funding Caps and Restrictions**

A key impediment to moving Aboriginal education forward has been the inadequacy of funding provided by the federal government to one of the most disadvantaged groups in Canada (The Planning Committee for the Consultation for Improving Post-Secondary for First Nation and Metis Students in Southern Manitoba, 2007). In the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, a primary reason stated by study’s respondents for not participating in higher education was financial considerations (O’Donnell and Tait, 2003). In 2000, the Indian and Northern Affairs Department transferred $272 million to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program. In comparison, the government transferred approximately one billion dollars to First Nations for social assistance and support programs (Auditor General, 2004). Since increasing the level of education of the individual proportionately increases the level of his or her socio-economic well-being, funding for PSE is dramatically disproportionate to the funding for social programs.

The Post Secondary Student Support Program has sponsored a significant number of First Nation students since its inception, with more First Nation post-secondary student successes than ever before. Unfortunately, the funding has not maintained pace with an increasing number of eligible students who want to attend higher education. The current PSSSP level of funding is insufficient for the number of First Nations members who apply for sponsorship to attend post-secondary institutions. First Nations treaty rights to education are being compromised. As a foundational principle, Battiste (2005) in a background paper for National Dialogue on Aboriginal Learning entitled “State of Aboriginal Learning” identified the impact of inequities in educational funding. The
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result was that “uneven capacities” were created. Battiste put forward the recommendation to apply fiscal and tangible strategies to provide consistent and fair opportunities for all Aboriginal people seeking sponsorship to attend post-secondary programming.

Tuition and other related costs (e.g., housing, books, etc.) have continued to rise but post-secondary funding to First Nations has remained frozen by the federal government since 1992 (Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch). Prior to that time, a formula was used based on the number of eligible First Nation and Inuit students in each region and the total was comprised of an aggregate of the total number of eligible students. The formula took into consideration tuition, books and an itemized list of living expenses (including number of dependents, etc). After 1992, block funding arrangements were developed and the number of eligible students was no longer part of the formula equation. After 1997, the funding envelops were capped. As a result, the funding available for the number of First Nation students eligible to attend post-secondary level of education, and whose numbers continue to grow, has become more insufficient with each passing year. Comparatively, college and university students from the general population who successfully apply for funding from the Ontario Student Application Program (OSAP) receive more funding per school year than First Nation students. The PSSSP Evaluation Report in 2005 found that the guidelines for allocation of First Nation sponsored living allowances were outdated by an estimated fourteen years, and that First Nation students are receiving students allowances below the national average that were established under the Canada Student Loan Program over seven years ago.

Static funding for education has meant that First Nations and First Nation education counsellors must fund increasingly fewer students. Consequently, the selection criteria for successful applicants will be required to become more selective, and, potentially, increasingly segregating: between on-reserve versus off-reserve; high school graduates versus mature students; less costly programs versus more costly programs; less expensive institutions versus more expensive institutions; and two year versus three or four year programs. Maletest and Associates Ltd (2004) found that even when funding was approved that students experienced an uneasy relationship with their funders given
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that they resided off-reserve, or were of a Bill C-31 status (status was lost due to marriage to a non-native and then applied for and returned after 1985), or were given partial funding, or promised funding and then denied funding. Without revisions and expansions to the current funding formulas the existing PSSSP will lead to a longer wait times on a deferral lists, and a potential segregation between First Nations “haves” and First Nation “have nots”, as a result of limited post-secondary funding opportunities.

As eligible First Nations students are denied the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies, the number of students deferred for funding increases each year. When the process of devolution resulted in the transference of educational funding and administration to the band level, at the same time, Indian Affairs introduced program guidelines to impose more restrictive eligibility requirements and limited program funding. The outcome was that in some First Nations, applicants who meet the eligibility requirements must be deferred, often waiting on a list for more than one year at time.

The numbers confirm a decline in number of sponsored First Nation students attending post-secondary schools. In 1994-1995, there were 27,000 First Nation and Inuit students sponsored for post-secondary education. In 2004-2005, there were 23,000 who received sponsorship (The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2007).

Other research corroborates the magnitude of the funding crisis on accessibility of eligible applicants for sponsorship. In the report “Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Post-Secondary Enrolment Rates,” determined that in 2000-2001, there were approximately 8,475 Aboriginal applicants unable to access funding through the Post Secondary Education (PSE) program. The Auditor General included in a 2004 report that 9,500 First Nation students were unable to obtain federal funding in 2000. In an evaluation of the Post-Secondary Program completed by INAC (2005), the final report concluded that there were a number of issues to be addressed including that: twenty percent of applications (for post-secondary sponsorship) were deferred; there were a lack of reciprocally agreed upon performance measures; stable multi-year core funding were non-existent due to no clear policy and assured financial arrangements; and that program does not have a viable and working mechanism in place be responsive to emerging national priorities. Given an increasing population of eligible post-secondary candidates
who will not receive sponsorship in any given year, and given the current caps on post-secondary education, there exist a corresponding number of First Nation members unable to participate in higher education. In light of the multi-layered benefits of a PSE, the development is not only disappointing, it is devastating to First Nation populations.

At the same time that under funding is occurring, First Nation populations are growing significantly faster than the general population, with children and youth representing slightly less than half (48%) of Aboriginal populations in 2006 (Statistics Canada). This is occurring at a time when a reverse trend is occurring within the general Canadian population. A larger population of Aboriginal youth represents a larger number of potential post-secondary students to sponsor within the next few years. With the current funding caps, competition for sponsorship dollars will not only be stiffer, but have serious implications for a larger number of First Nation youth who will not be able to obtain sponsorship, thereby reducing their chances for a post-secondary education. If the current trends remain unchanged, the Auditor General (2004) estimated that it would take twenty-eight years to close the educational gap between people living on reserves and other Canadians, a gap that continues to grow. In a report developed by Indian and Northern Affairs entitled “Survey of First Nations People Living On-Reserve”, the primary barrier to First Nation youth not attending post-secondary was identified as financial (2002). The societal and economic implications of low education attainment are familiar and predictable. As a minoritized group, First Nations continue to lack the ability to participate as viable members of the skilled and educated workforce that Canada needs. The decision of the government to impose limiting eligibility requirements, and to cap PSSSP funding further perpetuates the marginalization of a minority that has yet to recover from the effects of the previous enforced educational system.

Culturally specific post-secondary programs and services are available within First Nation and mainstream education institutions through funding received from the federal ISSP and the provincial Aboriginal Education Strategy and Training (AETS) program funding. They have demonstrated success specific to their cultural based focus. However, many Aboriginal specific programs struggle to remain viable given low enrolment rates, lack of sponsorship eligibility (one year programs, such as access programs, are no longer sponsored by most bands), and limited funding commitments
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from the institutions. As noted earlier, the province recently made additional funding available through AETS to post-secondary institutions that had never received funding specific to Aboriginal programming and services previously. With the new funding, these organizations are given a cautionary note. The onus and extent to which each institution engages First Nations and Aboriginal students and communities in the process of development needs to be a dynamic and interactive process, and not merely “lip service.” Respect for Aboriginal cultures should not only manifest itself in the Aboriginal specific programs and services, but become integrated throughout the institution. For example, more Aboriginal specific courses should be accessible as core or elective subjects.

Cultural sensitivity and awareness sessions or materials should be available to both non-Aboriginal students and staff alike. Malatest and Associates Ltd. (2004) in a study for the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Association reported that a common barrier faced by First Nation students was due to a lack of knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture on campus on the part of non-Aboriginal students. It was my experience through the years as a college professor and then as an administrator that non-Aboriginal students and faculty talked about marijuana being smoked in the Aboriginal studies department when, in fact, a smudge ceremony had taken place. Where post-secondary institutions seek to fully engage and integrate Aboriginal cultural content in curriculum, programs and services, the PSE experience of the Aboriginal populations can only improve.

As another funding restriction, First Nations post-secondary institutions within Ontario continue to be under-funded (Hill, 2004), despite documented success of their First Nation graduates. As First Nation driven, the schools are not only limited by funding, but they are unable to accredit their own post-secondary programs. All post-secondary programming offered by First Nation institutions receive their accreditation through mainstream colleges and universities, albeit the curriculum may have been developed specifically with the First Nation education institution. Their struggles are a result of the ongoing battle between the federal and provincial governments as to who will assume financial responsibility for First Nation post-secondary education. As a result, First Nation education institutes remain chronically under-funded, and face inequities not experienced by mainstream post-secondary institutions. In 2007, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs withdrew funding from the First Nation
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Technical Institute which offers apprenticeships, under-graduate degree programs, and a master’s level program, despite public outrage. The funding was cut by seventy-five percent (Indian and Northern Affairs, 2009). The government of Ontario would not agree to assume the financial responsibilities directly because it viewed First Nation Education Institutions as the federal government’s responsibility. In a letter written by the Canadian Federation of University Women Ontario Council (2008) to the Provincial Premier, it was noted that in 2008, the federal government provided FNTI with a one-time contribution to the 2008-2009 school year. In November, 2009, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) both granted FNTI $300,000. to assist the organization to “evolve into a fully self-sufficient and sustainable educational institution” (Indian and Northern Affairs, 2009). The funding will not be on-going. As a result, all Aboriginal education institutes in Ontario remain caught in the middle of the jurisdictional struggle between the two levels of government.

In recent years, despite the known value accorded to acquiring a post-secondary education and promises made to the original peoples of Canada regarding education, the federal government has further attempted to derogate its historical and legal commitments to First Nations. In 2006, the Treasury Board of Canada explored the possibility of taxing living allowances for First Nation students, since the funding they received was used off-reserve while attending post-secondary school. The plan would have added a further blow to the existing education allocation available to First Nation students. The Board later withdrew the initiative after extensive protest from First Nation, including Resolution 41/2005 from the Assembly of First Nations entitled “Taxation of Post-Secondary Education (PSE)” (Assembly of First Nations, 2005). The implications of the proposed bill would have further undermined the participation of First Nation people in higher education. More recently, the Federal government announced no new funding commitments to the Post Secondary Student Support Program in the 2008 Budget (Department of Finance Canada, 2008). The PSSSP has significantly contributed to the increased number of First Nation students who have attained a post-secondary education since the inception of the program. It has been, without doubt, the primary vehicle for sponsoring First Nation students to attend post-secondary institutions. At a
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time, when there are more First Nations seeking an advanced education, and there are more First Nations eligible for sponsorship, the federal government has sought to penalize First Nation students from attending colleges and universities through attempts to impose taxes on their sponsorship. Further, despite increased funding to other areas and initiatives of post-secondary program, the government has opted to maintain the key source of First Nation education funding at static levels.

Financial restrictions have created barriers and contributed to the lower academic success of First Nation post-secondary students. The existing post-secondary funding for sponsorship has not grown in proportion to the number of First Nation members eligible for funding. Each year, a number of students who fit the eligibility criteria are turned away because the funding allocation to their First Nation has been tapped out. The INAC PSSSP funding formula is based on a flawed system of measurement that has repressed First Nation rights to higher education. Capping funding for education not only limits the potential of First Nations people, but will contribute to creating a more ominous future at a time when First Nation youth populations are exploding. Since First Nations experience incomes generally lower than the general population, they are already behind the eight ball in having the means to participate in higher education (The Planning Committee for the Consultation for Improving Post-Secondary for First Nation and Metis Students in Southern Manitoba, 2007). The lack of post-secondary funding based on a ratio proportionate to each First Nations population within a limited age category has created a false picture of First Nations abilities to succeed at the post-secondary level of education.

Given that the availability of PSSSP funding has contributed to a demonstrated and significant increase in First Nation post-secondary graduates, the subsequent freeze on the funding has made little sense. The provincial government has recently infused funding to enhance Aboriginal recruitment and retention within Ontario colleges and universities, it remains to seen to what extent each institution will truly engage their Aboriginal populations in the development of these initiatives, and the impact the initiatives will have in meeting their goals. Aboriginal education institutions that have demonstrated positive results, on the other hand, remain waiting while federal/provincial government’s wrangle over who is responsible for their financial support. While it remains unknown whether future government deliberations will address the current
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PSSSP funding deficits, the further enhancement of retention and recruitment strategies, and the future of Aboriginal institutions, at this time, post-secondary education for a rapidly growing and eligible population of First Nations looks bleak.

**General Challenges and Developing Trends in the Post-Secondary Education of First Nation Students**

Applying and receiving approval to attend college or university is only the first of many hurdles First Nation students will experience on their post-secondary path. Aboriginal people make up approximately four percent of the Canadian population, and only one percent of the post-secondary population (Birchard, 2006). As noted previously, Aboriginal youth are one of the fastest growing age sectors in Canada. Taking these factors into consideration, the educational potential of Aboriginal people remains unfulfilled, and it is important to determine ways in which to expedite their entry and success at the post-secondary level. The following is an examination of other key issues faced, and subsequent developments that are occurring.

Once First Nation students are admitted into a program, a significant number do not successfully complete their programs. The 1996 Census of Canada found that the proportion of registered Indians who have attained some post-secondary education increased from 23% to 37%. However, the gap between registered Indians and other Canadians who obtained a post-secondary certificate or degree did not change comparatively between 1986 and 1996 (Hull, 2000), or in the 2001 Census (Mendelson, 2006), or report from the Office of the Auditor General in 2004. The implication is that while more Aboriginal students are graduating from post-secondary studies, the general Canadian population continues to graduate in increasingly higher numbers comparatively. Further, more First Nation students take longer than the prescribed years of study to complete their program of study in order to graduate. As a result and despite inroads made within post-secondary educational attainment, the number of Aboriginal students attending and graduating from their post-secondary studies remains significantly lower than the general Canadian population.

Another key issue for Aboriginal post-secondary students is that they tend to be found in a similar pool of college programming, often grouped by gender. Among non-university programming, fifty-nine percent of registered Indian males were enrolled in
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engineering technologies and trades. First Nation women were less likely to take commerce, management or administration related college programming (39%). A greater number were found in human resource programs such as social work, native studies, early childhood education, etc. From the same study, Hull (2000) found that 55% of First Nation men and 70% of First Nation women enrolled in university within social sciences, education, recreation, and counselling programs in 2000. In 2006, Hull, using the Canada Census of 2001, found the major fields of study where more Aboriginal female students graduated were Commerce, Management and Business Administration (27%), Health Professions (17%), Social Sciences (16%), and Education (15%). These four major fields accounted for seventy-five percent of female Aboriginal post-secondary graduates.

Comparatively, men were successful in the completion of Technology and Trades (53%), Social Sciences (12%), and Commerce (10%). While the educational attainment of both genders has multiple benefits to the individuals, their families and communities, and Canada, the gender divisions within specific PSE programming requires further examination. The implications that post-secondary success is linked to gender will have an adverse impact on First Nation communities, since each First Nation requires all members to be full participants in the efforts to enhance its economic viability.

Not only are First Nation students’ experiencing a lack of success at the post-secondary level, First Nation students are not participating fully or represented in all categories of post-secondary programming (Mendelson, 2006). Areas of study requiring prerequisites such as higher level maths, sciences, and other technical based requirements tend to be underrepresented by First Nation students. These programs include aviation, health sciences, computer science, to name a few. In a sense, they are marginalized to specific enclaves of programming. Since a key barrier to meeting the admission requirements for some post-secondary programs is the result of lower pre-college or pre-university educational levels attained by Aboriginal people, they are unable to meet the eligibility requirements. A number of programs and services have been developed specifically to assist First Nation students in participating in under-subscribed categories of programming. The following is a review of some of these programs.

Post-secondary institutions have been responsive to these issues by offering foundational subjects to enable students acquire mandatory prerequisites for certain
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programs. These access or transitional programs enable unprepared students, mature
students and other disadvantaged students with the greater opportunity to succeed in post-
secondary level programming. In Manitoba, the Access programs are offered at the
university and college levels, and according to Levin and Alcorn (2000), seventy-five
percent of the participants in the program are Aboriginal. They found when a formal
review was completed in 1994 that 40 percent of the 2,400 students admitted into
programs during the review period successfully graduated. While these figures
encompass more than Aboriginal students and includes both university and colleges
within Manitoba, the study supports the benefit of the Access programs. Lakehead
University offers Aboriginal specific programs including the Honours Bachelor of
Education (Aboriginal) and the Native Nurses Entry Program (web-site:
http://aboriginalprograms.lakeheadu.ca/). These programs provide culturally relevant
curriculum and support within program areas that have historically experienced limited
Aboriginal participation.

Other colleges and universities offer specialized programs with entry
requirements intended to enhance Aboriginal participation. As examples, the Northern
Ontario School of Medicine (web-site:
http://www.normed.ca/communities/aboriginal_affairs/default.aspx?id=3878 ) and the
University of Ottawa (web-site: http://wwwmedicine.uottawa.ca/AboriginalHealth/eng/ )
reserve program seats specifically for Aboriginal students, with the goal of increasing the
number of Aboriginal physicians. The Ontario Aboriginal Institutions Consortium (web-
site: http://www.aboriginalinstitute.com/ ) have also demonstrated success in the delivery
of community based post-secondary programming. For example, Iohahi:io Akwesasne
Adult Education has delivered a Diploma Nursing Program, and First Nations Technical
Institute offers an Aviation Pilot (Fixed Wing) program. These programs have shown
success in retaining and successfully graduating more Aboriginal students than what has
been realized by colleges and universities offering the same programs. As models, these
programs have achieved positive results by the provision of culturally sensitive and social
academic supports. Programs such as these remain small, and ultimately, too few
programs focus on addressing Aboriginal specific barriers to a post-secondary education,
and the education system continues to fail to meet Aboriginal students’ needs and ability to succeed.

While Aboriginal populations continue to be underrepresented within specific post-secondary programs, it would appear that new trends are emerging. As outlined briefly earlier, Aboriginal students continue to experience low rates of participation in scientific or technical fields of study requiring requisite mathematics, computer, physical sciences, engineering, and applied sciences (The Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2002, Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2005), but were more represented in non-science areas of study such as social sciences, education and related fields. Of Aboriginal students interviewed in the Post Secondary Student Support Program Review (2002), the areas of studies most of them chose to enrol were education, social work, management/administration, and government services. Comparatively, within the general Canadian student population, the highest number of graduates was from social and behavioural sciences programs, with slightly lower numbers graduating from law programs. Following closely and descending order, the general student population successfully completed business, management, public administration, and education (Canadian Education Statistics Council). As a promising development, Richardson and Blanchet-Cohen (2000) found that more Aboriginal students are beginning to participate in a wider complement of professional occupation specific programs. In addition to education, they found Aboriginal students entering other significant areas of study such as law and economics. The researchers felt that increased enrolment in law programs to be a natural field of study given the increase in land claims in recent years. Further, Ponting and Voyageur (2001) noted that the distribution of Aboriginal students across a wide variety of programs has changed positively, and that there is less clustering in social services and education. These forays into other fields of study may indicate greater post-secondary preparation, as well as enhanced strategies to interest and support Aboriginal students in choosing programs requiring scientific and technical knowledge.

It is rewarding to know that an increasing number of First Nations peoples are participating in tertiary level education. A report entitled “The Price of Knowledge 2004: Access and Student Finance in Canada”, found that the participation rates of Aboriginal
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people attending post-secondary education had risen much faster than the general population (Kelly, 2004). Similar results have been noted in the United States where from 1982 to 1995, American Indians and Alaska natives attending college had increased by 42 percent (Almeida, 1999). The Canadian Council of Learning, using research from the 2001 Statistic’s Canada found that the number of registered Indians attending or completing a post-secondary education program had risen from 23% in 1986 to 40% in 2001 (2007). The majority of these students received their post-secondary education from a community college or trade school, and the proportion of Aboriginal students attending college or trade level training was similar to non-Aboriginal students. It was at the university level, that an increasing disparity was noted in the number of Aboriginals attending or completing this level of post-secondary education. In 2001, only 8% of Aboriginal students between twenty-five and thirty-four years of age completed a university degree, compared to twenty-nine percent of non-natives (Canadian Council of Learning, 2008). While there is evidence of positive growth of First Nation students within PSE, the struggles remain for the larger pool of Aboriginal students who lag behind the general post-secondary student population in overall participation and in graduation rates.

Employment opportunities are correspondingly limited due to the under representation of Aboriginal students within specific post-secondary programs. The Treasury Board (2000) appointed a task force who surveyed the federal public service and found a limited presence of Aboriginal people and other minorities within the ranks of public workers. In a study completed by the Public Service Commission (2000), it was noted that women and Aboriginals were overrepresented in the Public sector administrative support area, but underrepresented in all over categories of operational, executive, technical, scientific, and professional categories. The Public Service Commission (2007) found that despite recommendations made to enhance minority representation within the public sector that, in fact, the number of minority populations working for within the government had declined in 2005. As another example, Post-secondary programs with little or no Aboriginal student participation were identified in a Health Canada study (1998). The study found that only one out of every twenty-five First Nations university students was enrolled in a health profession program. Currently, there
are serious shortages of nurses across Canada, doctors in northern and remote areas, and specialists such as anaesthetists. First Nations have even more difficulty attracting health professionals than other communities, due to lower federally funded salaries and less amenable working conditions. If communities were able to promote and support their own members in areas and professions where the need was the most pressing, such as highly skilled health providers, and upon graduation, if they committed to competitive and fair compensation, they would greatly reduce their reliance on having to recruit externally for crucial services.

It has been noted that Aboriginal students face many challenges in their desire to gain a post-secondary level of education. Even with the support of transitional or access programs, fewer Aboriginal students remain in their programs, and fewer Aboriginal students successfully graduate from their program of study. Even when they successfully complete higher education, they take longer to complete their post-secondary programs, and tend to choose the same enclaves of post-secondary programming. Post-secondary program success also appears to be as much gender specific as it is program specific. More importantly, fewer Aboriginal people enter or succeed in post-secondary programs that are highly technical, mathematical or science related. These and other issues experienced by First Nation students in post-secondary programs require greater examination. The implications are far reaching. A lack of education contributes to unemployment, and the ability to compete in a competitive job market, adapt to a technologically based world, and evolve toward greater self-reliance.

Post-Secondary Success and the Struggle Toward Decolonization

Decolonization pedagogy defines power as having control over physical, financial and other resources (Burns, 2005). Aboriginal control and jurisdiction of education does not extend to financial controls or input into the funding formula, but merely to allocation controls. Most decisions regarding funding levels and allocations received are made at within senior government, and are not based on realistic population ratios or needs. First Nation people currently have the right to administer the transfer funding for education but have no say over the amount they require specific to their populations. Orr, Roberts and Ross (2008) in their review of the INAC Evaluation of the PSE Program noted that the PSSSP Administration Handbook of 1989 stated,
“Support will be provided within the limits of funds voted by Parliament. If support of the number of eligible applicants exceeds the budgets [allocated to First Nations and/or a region on behalf of First Nations], applications will be deferred according to the rules set out in each administering organizations’ operating guidelines” (pp. 58).

Hill (2004) argued that sponsorship has not kept pace with the rising cost of tuition, the cost of living and the increasing numbers of students wishing to attend post-secondary study. In 2007, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development reported that inadequate funding has had an immediate consequence of lengthening waiting lists for a longer duration and increasing the numbers of unfunded students. Many First Nations students are denied the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies due to the lack of adequate government funding support. While funding allocation to post-secondary education remains insufficient, and fails to meet the needs and demands of First Nation people seeking a higher education, it is difficult to say that First Nations have self-determination over education. Burns (2001) noted that “when funding is viewed as an allocative resource, education funding, policies, programs, formulae, and arrangements can be seen to play a pivotal role in the ongoing domination, control, oppression and marginalization of Aboriginal peoples” (pp. 61). Battiste (2005) reported that inequities in funding directly contribute to overall inequities in the capacities of Aboriginal people.

In this environment, the First Nation education counselling position was first developed. The position emerged as a response to the flow through funding that the federal government allocated to the bands for post-secondary education. Since 1987, when the responsibility for post-secondary education devolved to local control, each band signs a yearly transfer agreement, and must comply with policies and reporting guidelines for education funding, as set out by INAC through the Post-Secondary Support Service Program. The PSSSP was drafted and implemented with minimal consultations with Aboriginal communities or leadership. The argument presented here is that First Nation education counsellors dispense funding for sponsorship to post-secondary students and submit reporting on their activities following restrictive policies and reporting guidelines.
For example, the criteria limits accessibility to post-secondary education since it is based on residency, grade twelve status, age, and institute of study.

Aboriginal researchers argue that PSSSP funding has contributed to further oppression and marginalization of First Nation people (Hill, 2004; Lanceley-Barrie, 2001). Faires (2004) wrote that the transfer of funding meant that First Nations became inheritors of a ‘colonial’ system. Lanceley-Barrie (2001) expressed concern that devolution had led to a lack of adequate funding to properly run programs and services for education, thereby weakening First Nation education and employment opportunities. By extrapolation, it could be argued that the original role of First Nations education counsellors perpetuated the delivery of a program rooted in colonization.

From this perspective, there are a number of issues impacting First Nation post-secondary education that can be related to colonization, and correspondingly, contributing to the ability of First Nation education counsellors to be effective. In 2007, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development presented the report, “No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada” to the House of Commons. The report identified a number of concerns with the current Post-Secondary Student Support Program. The committee members found that inadequate funding contributed to the limited access of First Nations members to post-secondary education. The system for calculating levels of sponsorship for each band was also found to be inconsistent. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (2007) noted that regional offices use different calculations for distribution of funds to First Nations or regional offices who administer the funds with no corrective measures to address any surplus or shortfalls. The implication is that there are inconsistencies and variants in PSSSP funding transferred to the bands that may not be representative of their eligible populations. As a result, the impact of these inequities and irregularities must be dealt with first hand by First Nation education counsellors, who as front line workers, will be required to deny some band membership with post-secondary school sponsorship.

A more recent issue that confronted band-sponsored students was taxation of their student support funding. Revenue Canada was of the opinion that education payments made to status Indians constituted a taxable income. After extensive protest from First
Nation groups and organizations, the federal government did not move forward on this initiative. Hill (2004) argued that this decision would have further diminished the effect of the federal government’s fiduciary responsibility for the provision of education for First Nations. The proactive approach by First Nations governance and students to addressing the potential threat demonstrates that they have evolved to become more politically charged and knowledgeable of political process and their rights within that system.

Dominant society continues to re-inscribe colonization through its higher education policies. Historically and up to present day, members of the dominant group are most likely to succeed in areas of power or influence within the political realm. A quick review of who is currently occupying senior management roles within the various federal and provincial departments reveals a notable and consistent absence of First Nations’ presence. Senior government positions are seldom occupied by members of minoritized groups. For example, upon examining visible minorities that include members of the Chinese, South Asian and Black communities, Budhu (2001) cited their absence of representation at the policy making level. A very clear example of a neo-colonial practice is that the senior heads of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs have never been held by a First Nation person.

In a competitive world within which post-secondary education is critical for accessing employment opportunities, low academic attainment remains a serious issue for First Nations people. Ogbu (1998) proposed that First Nations belong to a category of “hierarchized” minorities. He posits that First Nations are ranked lower within a hierarchy, and that status that has persistently contributed to the inequities they face in accessing education and subsequent employment opportunities. While restrictive education and educational policies enforced through the residential school system were retracted, the discriminatory practices continue to persist. Ogbu further wrote that as a result of discrimination, First Nations have generated a cultural resistance to mainstream society as a form of collective self-defence to assimilation. The number of social-economic issues experienced by First Nations such as high suicide rates, poverty, lack of adequate housing, to name a few, further contribute to the suspicion First Nations have toward mainstream society and institutions. Forbes, Brown, and Ahulwalia (2005) found
that education outside of the community is viewed with distrust and suspicion, given the history of negative and traumatic experience First Nations people have experienced with formal institutions. Birchard (2006) suggests that the biggest barrier to the educational success of Aboriginal people is a widespread suspicion of the “white man’s” system of education. From this perspective, in order for First Nations people to become fully engaged and participating members of the educational system, that trust must be re-established.

Burns (2001) supported the engagement of those who are minoritized in educational practices citing, “the repressed in reflection leads to action on their concrete reality – critical consciousness to transformative action” (pp. 62). He connected the lower levels of academic success experienced by Aboriginal populations at the post-secondary level, to a corresponding limitation of engagement, input, and control in this environment. He posited that both the descendants of the colonizers and the colonized have difficulty in seeing how the past continues to impact the present and future, and that past history and the social conditions developed by it still impact on the ability of the groups to change history. Transformation or emancipation is only possible when critical consciousness of the colonization and oppression occurs, an indication of human existence and society are produced by people and can be changed by people. Relating to education, the education process needs to be understood in its historical context, how it fit into what was occurring as Canada was evolving as a new country. Burns noted that education and education authorities have the capacity to transform and develop critical decolonizing consciousness and activity. McLaren (1989) proposed a radical theory of education committed to those oppressed and that teachers should not be merely “managers and implementers of pre-ordained content” (pp. 2). From this perspective, the onus for educational success not only rests on the self-determined will of Aboriginal populations, but also on the genuine desire of the political powers, educational institutions, and educators to support and aid in the process of educational change for the benefit of Aboriginal populations.

Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) discussed the difference between coming to higher education and going to higher education. As long-standing institutions, post-secondary schools are intended to serve “the society in which [they] are embedded” (no page
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Students such as First Nations who do not readily adapt to the expected norms, nor do they achieve the levels of expected levels of academic success. Terms used by the institutions to describe these issues include “low achievement,” and “high attrition,” thereby placing the onus on the student. Kirkness and Barnhardt suggest that institutions need to spend less effort on adapting the students to their regime and entrenching their structures, and “present itself in ways that have instrumental value to First Nations students; that is, the programs and services that are offered must connect with the students’ own aspirations and cultural predispositions” (no page number). Chief Dan George was noted by Kirkness (1999) in the Journal of American Indian Education as saying, “You talk big words of integration in the schools. Does it really exist? Can we talk of integration until there is social integration…. unless there is integration of hearts and minds, you only have a physical presence…..” (pp. 14). Development of educational initiatives to engage more First Nation students and to enhance their opportunities to succeed may only come as a result of this understanding by those who administer and make decisions regarding post-secondary education.

While the PSSSP was initially one of the fastest growing programs within the DIAND, and appeared most responsive to the struggle of First Nations for control over education, the programs were devolved without realistic funding commitments, and have created artificial boundaries between various groups of eligible students that are not experienced by mainstream student populations (Lanceley-Barrie, 2001). Despite the fact that, in 1992, the Department enabled First Nations to set their own student support priorities (Office of the Auditor General, 2004), the government also changed the funding formula by introducing a new per capita allocation based on the population of seventeen to thirty-four years of age cohort who were members of each First Nation (Lanceley-Barrie, 2001). The decision to allocate post-secondary funding based on a specific age group did not take into consideration that many First Nation post-secondary students tend to be older in age. It was unreasonable that they were not included in the per capita calculation. As identified earlier, First Nations have been enforced to impose artificial and discriminatory eligibility requirements for sponsorship. They must make decisions as to whom within their membership will be sponsored in any given year, taking into consideration many divergent factors such as the number of applicants, on-reserve versus
off-reserve, Bill C-31, age, marital status, years between secondary school and application for post-secondary, secondary school graduates versus non-graduates, length of programming, type of programming, location and type of post-secondary institution. Depending on the First Nation and their priorities for sponsorship, there is the potential for sectors of eligible applicants to be continually overlooked for consideration for sponsorship. While transferring control of administration and funding for post-secondary programming was seen as a progression toward Indian control of education, the inadequacy of the funding has undermined the success of this strategy, and compromised self-determination.

Summary

The purpose of the chapter was to provide background information relevant to First Nations people and their foray into post-secondary education, and information relevant to my study: to ascertain the influence of First Nation education counsellors on sponsored First Nation post-secondary students’ program choices within Ontario colleges and universities. The chapter reviewed relevant literature pertaining to the evolution of First Nation education from a decolonization perspective. Sequentially, a profile was developed from available research regarding the two primary subjects: First Nation post-secondary students and First Nations education counsellors. In an effort to further understand the role of First Nation education counsellors, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association was examined, and in relation to other Ontario education counsellor associations. Finally, factors both contributing and preventing the academic attainment of First Nation post-secondary students were reviewed.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction
Initially, when I began my research, I planned on using a mixed research approach with a focus on social science methodology. Further, the research was to examine the relevance of post-colonial paradigms. From this perspective, I intended to focus on an analysis of survey results that were a combination of statistical data supported by anecdotal or descriptive information. Further, my original intention was to interpret the results from the survey materials based on the greatest number of responses. Truthfully, my original approach to the research was more reflective of my previous educational experiences and exposure to research than my comfort with the methods. As I developed the literature review and as the anticipated number of surveys did not materialize, I was required to revise my original research plan. For one thing, I found that my intention to focus on the largest group of responses was inadequate for analysis purposes given the smaller survey samples that were generated. My research evolved to become more of an examination of the individuals who agreed to participate in my study and not the group story as originally planned. As a result, my work evolved into a more interpretative and self-reflexive based approach to the methodology, one suited to examining all of the data generated from all of the participants. These changes are reflected in this chapter. The chapter further detailed the products and processes used to carry out the research based on the original and approved process of survey compilation, and in accordance with standards and guidelines set out by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Toronto. Finally, it should be noted that the ensuing discussion on the research methodology lent a more seamless introduction to the following chapter on the analysis and interpretation of all the First Nation voices who participated in a study specific to them and relevant to post-secondary education.

As an overview of what was included in the chapter, I described reasons for selecting an original design as my methodology approach and how it evolved, provided detailed information of the development of the original research tools and supporting documents, outlined the distribution process for the supporting documentation and
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questionnaires, and accounted for what was done to ensure that all ethical parameters were considered and addressed. Interspersed within the overview was discussion on how the approach taken related to a decolonizing pedagogy. While in Chapter Four the approach for interpreting the results evolved in response to the quantitative and qualitative data derived, the process by which the instruments were designed and the study carried out remained consistent during implementation of the research process.

Justification for the Methodology

There were a number of factors considered when choosing the methodological approach for the study that are outlined in this section. There were also a number of lessons learned that are shared.

The exploratory research design and the instruments were developed as a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology, infused with a post-colonial indigenous knowledge perspective. Post-colonial perspective, as described by Dr. Battiste (2004), “represents more an aspiration, as hoped, not yet achieved (pp. 1). Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) write,

“while the manifestations can vary considerably from one group of people to another, some of the salient features of such knowledge are that its meaning, value and use are bound to the cultural context in which it is situated, it is thoroughly integrated into everyday life, and it is generally acquired through direct experience and participation in real-world activities. If considered in its’ totality, such knowledge can be seen to constitute a particular world view, a form of consciousness, or a reality set” (pp. 7).

Battiste (2005) defined indigenous knowledge as” [a] dynamic knowledge system that is continually responding to new phenomena and fresh insights” (pp. 7).

The surveys used in the study included multiple choice, open ended, and ranking questions. A follow up interview was further created based on standard and open ended questions. Pelto and Pelto (1978) acknowledged the benefits of using a mixed-method approach in educational and psychological research, also known as the "multi-instrument approach". Brewer (2001), noted that mixed methods “complement other findings, expand information, overcome biases, uncover the need for further study, confirm hypotheses, and add texture (pp. 108). More specific to Aboriginal research, it was noted
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that a multi-method research design has more success in clarifying the impact of specific components of a “culturally inclusive pedagogy” (O’Rourke, Craven and Yeung, 2008, pp. 1). The Interagency Advisory Panel and Secretariat on Research Ethics (2008) advocated for using qualitative and participatory methods since it “authentically represent[ed] the perspectives and voice of [Aboriginal] participants [and] have gained greater recognition in social science and health sciences research, and …. groups have become more vocal in advocating for involvement in review and monitoring of ethical practices (pp. 11).

The data derived from the research was analyzed using an interpretative approach. Creswell (1998) defines the interpretative framework as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). According to Hull (1997), “the purpose of qualitative research is to understand human experience to reveal both the processes by which people construct meaning about their worlds and to report what those meanings are” (p. 14). As a First Nation person, I felt that I was able to build a picture of First Nation education counsellors and their relationships with First Nation post-secondary students by analyzing the responses from all participants. The strength of this approach was that I could incorporate my own experiences as a First Nation student and as someone who worked in the post-secondary sector. This view of intellectual self-determination is supported by another quote from Battiste (2005), “such rethinking of education from the perspective of Indigenous knowledge and learning styles is of crucial value to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators who seek to understand the failures, dilemmas, and contradictions inherent in past and current educational policy and practice for First Nations students. The immediate challenge is how to balance colonial legitimacy, authority, and disciplinary capacity with indigenous knowledge and pedagogies. (pp. 3 - 4). Cajete (2000) proposed that in the development of further analyses and methodologies, indigenous researchers should be involved in intellectual self-determination as part of decolonization. My research is built on this knowledge, and it is trusted that the information acquired and
formed about First Nation education counsellors and their relationship with First Nation students will provide new learning and insights to the readers.

I have further attempted to reference and thread post-colonial indigenous knowledge and application throughout my research. As outlined in Chapter Two, the road toward the decolonization of education has been a struggle for indigenous populations in Canada. While evidence of advancements toward First Nation self-determination exists within all levels of education, the current reality is that many elements of First Nation education remains steeped in colonialism. Battiste (2000) referred to post-colonial indigenous knowledge as research that draws on both the western influenced post-colonial discussion, as well as post-colonial Indigenous knowledge. She further reiterated that a key role toward the decolonization of Aboriginal education was the incorporation of indigenous languages as a means to more accurately communicate indigenous experiences (1995). As another aspect inherent in the struggle toward self-determinism in aboriginal education is recognition that indigenous research is “implicitly political” (O’Neil et al., 1993, pp. 229).

The principles of OCAP were formally recognized by the Assembly of First Nations who, as a national political body, represents the majority of First Nations across Canada. The OCAP principles represent a cornerstone in the decolonization process. Within the principles, research is encouraged to be community driven and research protocols are developed and agreed upon by the community and the researcher (Patterson, Jackson, Edwards, 2007). Within the OCAP principles outlined by the Assembly of First Nation, research was recommended to be oral in nature when feasible, and must tangibly benefit the community or communities involved in the research. There has been increasing recognition and respect accorded by researchers to First Nations in their efforts to reclaim their rights to cultural relevant research, as well as to the intellectual property of their communities’ information and data. Patterson, Jackson, and Edwards (2007) reiterated the need to shift research from being an externally driven toward being indigenous driven process (pp. 48). Mishibinijima (2009) summed up post-colonial theories as “as a grouping of social, political and moral concerns about the history and legacy of colonialism and how it shapes people’s lives” (pp.7).
Knowing that I was embarking on an indigenous led process intended to construct research processes more meaningful and relevant to First Nations people was both a comfort and an obligation to me as a First Nation person. Over the course of the research, I became more knowledgeable about concept of decolonization through the review of works and discussions with other indigenous researchers. In addition to reviewing research specific to decolonization by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, my study was based on my personal knowledge of indigenous paradigms and protocols as a First Nations person.

While a more culturally sensitive approach would have been to incorporate greater hands-on and community involvement throughout my study as noted by Patterson, Jackson, Edwards (2007), my situation as a distance student afforded me with limited opportunity. As a doctoral student working independently from my home in northern Ontario, I had financial and time considerations that limited travel to all Ontario First Nations, and colleges and universities to promote and advocate on behalf of my research and to interview potential subjects. Working with ONECA and attending their yearly conference provided me with most of my face to face contact with First Nation education counsellors and students. The use of a written survey with supplementary one-on-one interviews was the best option available to me to complete the research. As a First Nation researcher initiating First Nation specific research, I believe my work lent itself to furthering indigenous study specific to education.

In reference to incorporating the use of indigenous languages into research, there were pragmatic reasons for creating the survey tools in English. Despite recognition of the importance of promoting indigenous languages, the surveys and follow up interviews created specifically for my research were not translated into the three primary languages of the Aboriginal groups and potential subject groups located across Ontario, primarily because this option was not available nor practical for my study. Aboriginal people of Ontario are not a homogenous population and they represent many different languages and dialects. Given such diversity, multiple translations and multiple interpretations of the results were not possible since my study encompassed the province of Ontario. I felt that given my research focus on post-secondary education where strong English skills are essential, that the targeted survey groups would have no difficulty in completing the
surveys in English. Aboriginal students attending publicly funded post-secondary institutions in Ontario attend classes, listen to lectures, and complete assignments in English, with the exception of language programs or language courses. Similarly, First Nation education counsellors write reports and other communication in English to funders and to other internal and external contacts on an ongoing basis. As further support, the standard application form used by students when applying for PSE sponsorship is available in English only. As a final consideration, my primary language is English and I do not have the ability to interpret results written or spoken other languages. Ultimately, all documents related to my study were written in English.

In the end, I believe my study is sensitive to the First Nations voices who participated in the surveys, and contains lessons learned that may be of assistance to other research specific to First Nations and post-secondary education.

Research Procedures

The Research Design

The research was exploratory given the paucity of research regarding First Nation education counsellors, and more specifically to studies relating to their relationships with the First Nation post-secondary students. The decision to create original surveys to address the thesis question and supporting questions was due to the lack of other existing and culturally relevant survey tools. Davison (2005) noted that it is not clear which methods were best for adapting questionnaires to be used with indigenous people. She further added that was argued that “unique, rather than adapted, instruments should be developed for use in each new setting” (pp. 101). An added complexity to the study of First Nation education counsellors is that their role is specific and responsive only to First Nations needs. As demonstrated in the literature review, their positions were not readily comparable to the roles and responsibilities of mainstream education counsellors, or to Aboriginal service personnel who work within various post-secondary institutions across Ontario. To implement or adapt existing theories and survey tools used with mainstream education counsellors was deemed not useful for the purpose of the research.

Accordingly, the survey tools and approach were developed to loosely conform to social science modalities, and by following standard research processes. As exploratory
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research and for reasons already cited, I did not identify the process of my research with established and specified social science model or models. They simply did not fit. At the same time, I maintained standard research processes that included the maintenance of confidentiality, the security of survey materials, and the use of standardized written questionnaires. Attention was given to the adherence of cultural protocols and the development of questions with which First Nation education counsellors and post-secondary students, would be familiar. For example, the students in the survey would be familiar with the terms “Status” or “Status Indian”, and the education counsellors knew what “First Nation” meant. This approach enabled me to create appropriate tools integrating knowledge and information from my own work and student experiences, from Aboriginal specific organizations (e.g. ONECA), from Aboriginal specific organizations (e.g. AFN), and government bodies (e.g. INAC, PTO’s and First Nations).

Since methodology is intended to provide the opportunity for research to be useful, in part or in whole, toward the further development of a pool of research in a specific area of study, it is imperative that any research must detail the process by which it is carried out. I was the most comfortable with this concept since it had been a key component of my formal training over the years as a post-secondary student. Interpretative methodology involves a more narrative approach to describing the processes of the study as it took place. Taking the methodology beyond the mere description by rote of the process meant that I connected the process to what was already known about the research topic, to my knowledge and experience within First Nation post-secondary education, and to the knowledge and experiences of First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students who participated in the survey.

The Supporting Documentation

The supporting documents were developed with the following outcomes in mind: to inform and interest individuals into participating in the research; and to have relevant service providers post research information and ensure surveys and invitations were available to potential participants, and with appropriate authorization. The documents included posters, letters of invitation, and letters of appeal directed at specific audiences: First Nation students, First Nation education counsellors, and Aboriginal Student
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Services. The following is a detailed description of the documents, how they were dispatched and collected, and their usefulness in keeping with the purpose and intentions of the study.

The posters (Appendices B and C) were created specifically to generate interest in the research with First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation post-secondary education counsellors, as well as provide a brief description of my intended study. The two information/consent letters (Appendix D and Appendix E) accompanying the two survey instruments and the two information/consent letters (Appendix F and Appendix G) provided to those who were interested in participating in the follow up interviews were intended to inform potential survey takers of the purpose and process of the surveys, and to obtain their formal agreement by signing and initialling that they understood and were willing to proceed. The two letters of appeal were sent to First Nation education counselling offices (Appendix H) and to all of the Aboriginal Student Service offices (Appendix I) across the colleges and universities in Ontario, requesting that they seek appropriate approvals to have the survey made available within their physical working spaces or student areas, as well as to post information and make surveys available to potential First Nation student respondents. All correspondence was mailed, emailed, or hand delivered as arranged with the various contacts.

The layout and contents, as well as the rational for the layout and contents, are further detailed in the next few paragraphs. To begin with, both posters and letters were written on OISE/Uof T letterhead and included initial greetings to prospective candidates in the languages of the three larger cultural Aboriginal groups in Ontario. The salutations were written in Haundonoshonee, Ojibwe, and Cree. These were greetings that I was familiar having used them in both work and informal settings, and while interacting with various mixed Aboriginal groups. The intention was to create a common connection with potential respondents through our shared Aboriginal heritage. The use of salutations from the three identified languages within the supporting documentation was also considered a sign of cultural respect. The National Aboriginal Health Organization (2007) cited the importance of producing research “in languages appropriate to the First Nation,” (pp. 9). The Manitoulin Anishinabek Research Review Committee (MARRC) of Noojmowin Teg Health Centre developed Ethical Research Guidelines for Community-Based Health...
Research within First Nations within the Manitoulin Island District, North Eastern Ontario, that also reiterated the need to “encourage sound and credible research practices that respect Aboriginal culture and values” (pp. 6).

Key elements from within the identified and supporting documents were highlighted, in keeping with protocols and standards set out by OISE/UofT. The documents included a brief description of the following: the intended research; an introduction to me as the student researcher who was also of First Nation descent; of my advisor and the institution with which the research was affiliated; and the criteria of eligibility of the surveys. In addition, a description outlining the confidentiality and security measures was provided. Finally, I provided contact information for individuals seeking additional information or clarification.

At the end of all supporting documents, I also included a specified deadline for the return of the questionnaires. Participants were informed that they would be entered into a draw for a $100 gift certificate – one for First Nation education counsellors and one for First Nation post-secondary students. In support of the inclusion of such an incentive as part of the research, I opted to use the draw as a tool that is both commonly used and familiar to First Nation community members. In my experience, many First Nation community programs use draws during the delivery of prevention or promotional activities to community members or clients. When participating in career fairs or promotion of college programs, most participating booths include a draw as a means to draw individuals to their station. As further explanation for using a draw, cultural respect is accorded to others by the giving of a small token gift or sacred medicine. My grandmother often gave parting gifts to guests who came to visit her such as food, household items, and clothes. In keeping with traditional protocol, when making requests to elders or others for traditional knowledge, tobacco known as a sacred medicine is offered to them. The following quote highlights the importance of gift giving as a sign of respect:

“One way to begin a conversation on first meeting is to offer a small gift. It is customary to wrap tobacco in a cloth, usually red, yellow or white, and present it to the person you're meeting.” (Kakwirakeron and Good, 2000, pp. 1)
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“It is important to be respectful the protocol of the particular people with which you are working. At a minimum, there should be a thank you for the use of traditional lands and a gift for those of whom you are asking something.”

(Solicitor General of Canada, 2002, pp. 13)

I included a draw in keeping with the spirit of these practices, and as an incentive to ensure there was adequate participation of First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students in the study.

The supporting materials also included invitations to potential survey takers to take part in a follow up interview, and if they had any questions that they could either contact me, or contact my dissertation advisor. The value of interviewing, according to Partington (2001) is that the method enables the researcher to gain explanations and information from subjects that may not be garnered from other survey methods, such as perceptions, attitudes and values. The one-on-one interviews were intended to gain greater detail and clarification of each volunteer’s perception of the First Nation post-secondary education counsellors and their ability to influence students’ program choices.

Health Canada recommended the use of interviews as a key survey tool to community staff when developing their First Nation’s health services needs assessment, and a means by which to acquire meaningful input from those participating in the survey (Health Canada, 2005).

Further clarification was required regarding the identification of specific and affiliated organizations within all supporting materials. I described my connection as a student to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Toronto. The information provided crucial legitimacy of my research and supported my request for interested parties to participate in the surveys. The information regarding my connection to OISE/UofT also provided assurance that ethical and other formal structures and requirements were in place. The supporting documents also described my connection and the backing of my research by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (Appendix X). The Association is well known to all First Nation education counsellors across Ontario and is recognized as a strong advocate of Aboriginal education and Aboriginal education counsellors. While potentially less known to First Nation students, my link to this well respected provincial Aboriginal education organization provided
legitimacy to my research. My familiarity with the organization and the composition of its membership was derived from having personally worked with them over a five year span. I completed two contracts with them as a coordinator for the Native Counsellor Training Program, and a contract as an interim program administrator. I also included information to potential respondents about ONECA’s support of my research, including my participation in the 2007 ONECA conference, as a presenter and through a booth display specific to my research. The information was included to encourage participation in the surveys, based on the fact that the research and researcher were backed by reputable processes and organizations.

As part of my introduction of myself as the researcher, I included that I have Indian status as a member of Moose Deer Point First Nation, and that I am a post-secondary student. I self-identified as a member of a distinct indigenous cultural group and as a student within the supporting letters and posters, as a means to gain greater interest and engagement of potential participants. Further, inclusion of my personal connection to the groups investigated demonstrated my genuine interest and knowledge of the research topic. Letts, Wilkins, Law, Bosch, and Westmorland (2007) found that self-identification with the researched population increased confidence of prospective subjects in the soundness of the process of the research.

I also described how the process would deal with confidentiality, and my ability to demonstrate how I would maintain a strict adherence in the protection of respondents’ anonymity and their collected data and information. I used as open and transparent a process as possible, describing in detail the manner in which these factors were addressed in my research. First and foremost, I reiterated that respondents were not to be adversely affected by their provision of information, that they were not identifiable nor traceable to information they provided, and that they themselves choose what they wanted or did not want to respond to or disclose in the surveys.

The ability to demonstrate a high standard of confidentiality has greater significance given that my research focused on Aboriginal subjects. Over time and due to a legacy of unethical or damaging experiences, research has acquired a negativity that has lingered in the minds of Aboriginal populations, and for many good reasons. Research has documented the apprehension (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics,
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2008) or distrust (Freeman, 1993) Aboriginal people have toward research and researchers. From another perspective, Lavin and Gauthier (2005) identified the issue of “respondent burden” faced by First Nations in recent years as a result of requests for their participation in an increasing number of surveys and studies, citing that the process has become “onerous” (pp. 3). The Manitoulin Anishnabek Research and Review Committee (2005) observed that many Aboriginal communities were less likely to participate in research because they felt they experienced little control over how the research was conducted and how the information was used. Even when respondents agreed to participate in research, Meadows, Lagedyk, Thurston, and Eisener (2003) found that, despite appointments set up in advance, most of their Aboriginal research candidates were “no shows.” The reluctance to participate was seen potentially as “passive non-consent,” recruitment viewed as coercion, influence of key contacts or honorarium, lack of understanding or belief in their own contributions, or previous research experience. More pointedly, much of historical research involving Aboriginal peoples has been perpetuated by non-Aboriginal researchers, who have distorted the telling and interpretation of information garnered from indigenous populations from a colonial perspective. Menzies (2001) wrote that “to deny the colonial legacy …… is to participate in the colonial project itself.” (pp. 22). He further advocated for adapting research projects regarding Aboriginal concerns to more fully accommodate and include Aboriginal voices. The Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE) (2008) wrote that “there have been important developments in Aboriginal research and research ethics. First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities are asserting a more active role in directing research affecting them” (pp. 11). As attested from my work experience as an executive director of an Aboriginal Health Access Centre, we are currently participating in research in collaboration with the seven First Nations within the Manitoulin Island District, and in partnership with a number of different Ontario universities for a variety of health research studies. While greater participation and involvement is occurring and Aboriginal communities are more proactively engaged in research, it is my experience that research fatigue and distrust of research continue to impact scientific investigation and study of the groups’ issues and concerns.
In recent years, movement has been made toward the protection of Aboriginal knowledge and data, and a greater participation and presence of Aboriginal and First Nations in research processes, and can be seen as progress toward decolonization. For example, we can see the development of culturally appropriate tools and practices. Moreover, there has been an emergence of Aboriginal led research organizations (ex. the National Aboriginal Health Organization and Nunavat Research Institute), Canadian indigenous research organizations; Aboriginal specific journals (e.g. the Journal of Aboriginal Health and Canadian Journal of Native Studies); and the development of Aboriginal specific ethics review systems (e.g. “Respectful Treatment of Indigenous Knowledge” by the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy and “Guidelines to Ethical Anishinabe Research” by the Manitoulin Anishinabek Research Review Committee, Noojmowin Teg Health Centre). As discussed earlier, progress has been made in the development of more culturally relevant research processes, especially in the area of qualitative research methods. As a First Nation student researcher, aboriginal research paradigms greatly supported the manner in which my research evolved.

In summary, the rationale for the manner in which I developed the supporting documentation was to provide potential survey takers with succinct information regarding the research, to gain the support and endorsement of appropriate authorities (whether they were administrative or governance in nature), and to demonstrate sound practices of confidentiality for compiled data. More importantly, the supporting documents were intended to motivate First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation post-secondary education counsellors to participate in research that was about them and for them.

**The Surveys and Follow-Up Interviews – First Nation Education Counsellors and First Nation Post-Secondary Students**

Two written surveys and two one-on-one interview questionnaires were original tools I developed to engage and compile data from First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors across Ontario. The following information was intended to describe the contents of the surveys and provide rationale for the type of questions used.
General Review of the Survey and Follow-Up Interview Questions

There were a number of general considerations that I reflected upon in the process of developing the written survey and follow up interview questions.

The total number of questions in the surveys was thirty-six questions for First Nation post-secondary students (Appendix XI) and forty-seven for First Nation education counsellors (Appendix XII). The response structure of items in the written surveys included a variety of forms including closed ended or fixed response multiple choice questions, multiple response questions, and ranking lists. The final question included in both surveys was open-ended in nature, and was intended to draw further descriptive details from the subjects, based on their experiences. The open ended format used at the end of the survey provided a forum for participants to offer their final thoughts and opinions. The follow up interviews were comprised of seven questions for First Nation post-secondary students (Appendix XIII) and eleven questions for First Nation education counsellors (Appendix XIV).

The multiple choice questions were primarily closed ended in nature, with some open ended multiple choice questions. I used a number of closed multiple choice questions because this method was considered the easiest to respond to and to analyze. I also considered this approach as the best means, given my situation as a distance student living full time in northern Ontario, a means to attract and encourage subjects’ participation. As support for my use of closed multiple choice questions, I believed that I had sufficient knowledge and both personal and work experience in the area of study to include all potential responses within the multiple choice format. As an example, in the demographics section, I am familiar with all of the Provincial Territory Organizations within Ontario, and could list each one within a finite list of multiple choice responses. I further reviewed research of other Aboriginal students and researchers, examined their demographic questions, and found similar methods of questioning specific to demographics. The surveys also incorporated some open ended multiple choice options where I felt subjects could more readily identify and describe elements more appropriate to each survey participant’s reality. These questions included a multiple choice option labelled “Other.” When respondents selected the option category “Other” it was because none of the options provided were applicable to the respondents. In general, multiple
choice questions were selected as a survey medium because I felt that this approach would be familiar to prospective First Nation respondents. I found that other Aboriginal student researchers also used this approach in their research tools (Abotossaway, 2002; Grygo, 2003). Multiple response questions were the primary survey method used within my surveys for First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students.

The survey instruments and the follow up interviews also included some open ended written response questions. I took advice from my instructor and incorporated this method sparingly given that it often is best suited to one-on-one interviews. I only included open ended questions in the demographic section of each survey and in questions that had the potential for many different responses and not from a finite list of known responses. For example, each student or education counsellor was asked which First Nation they were from. Since there are 133 First Nations in Ontario, it was felt that it was a waste of space to identify them all, and that each respondent could knowledgeably identify their own band. The method was used more exclusively in the follow up interviews to provide the participants with the opportunity to provide as much information as they wanted to.

A limited number of ranking lists were used in the written survey tools, specifically to questions regarding the subjects’ perceptions regarding program choices. The subjects were asked to weigh or rank an identified list of potential influencing factors from most influential to least influential. Ranking is used, according to Shillingford (2006), when “exploring problems/constraints or options/ opportunities and helping to place these in order of magnitude, priority or preference” (pp. 44). In this case, I used this method to determine which options were considered more influential than others, and then compared the responses between the two groups of subjects. In a further effort to create a survey tool that was attractive and easy to use, the majority of the questions required subjects to check off the most appropriate responses.

The survey tools were developed so that respondents could answer the questions easily and that they found the method of questioning to be in a recognizable format. The intention was to provide participants with to feel a sense of ease and familiarity in responding to the survey. To enhance the ease of responding to the survey, non-
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threatening languages was also used in questions by including personal pronouns that included, “how many students did you sponsor?” Subjects were asked to describe their personal attitude in questions such as, “do you feel that you are influential in decisions students make regarding what post-secondary program they apply for?” It was noted that surveys completed by participants at the ONECA conference took approximately twenty minutes to complete for First Nation post-secondary students, and twenty-five minutes for First Nation education counsellors. The follow up interviews took between ten and fifteen minutes to complete.

As identified, the research tools were quite extensive for both groups of respondents. I was apprehensive that the large number of questions in each survey would deter or discourage potential subjects from participating or completing the survey. Since the questions were intended to answer a number of questions related to profiling the respondents and then gathering information about their perceptions regarding counsellor/student communication and levels of influence, I chose not to reduce the size of the survey. However, I felt that if the interest was in the subject and the purpose of the study, that the sampled groups would take the time to finish and return the survey. I was aware that there was little control over respondent interaction with others during the time that the subjects completed the survey, and that this factor could also impact on the results. Both groups of subjects had the opportunity to confer with others while completing the written survey, thus influencing their responses and changing the final results of their survey responses.

With the exception of participating in the ONECA conference and meeting potential survey respondents face to face when they approached my booth to inquire about my research was, I did not engage in face to face contact with subjects. As a doctoral student working independently within my home territory in Northern Ontario, travel between sites of potential subjects groups included colleges, universities and 133 First Nations across Ontario was not feasible. Geography was a key reason why I chose surveys as my primary tools to gain information from the intended subjects. At the same time, I was aware that the anticipated number of completed surveys would be difficult to predict given the onus placed on each volunteer to act independently, to take initiative to
complete the survey, and to ensure its return to me. The questionnaire was intended to be as self-explanatory and as “user” friendly as possible for these reasons.

In outlining factors that could have potentially affected the results of my research, I have demonstrated my awareness of both the benefits and the drawbacks of using surveys as my primary research tools, and follow up interviews as secondary and supportive research tools. I anticipated that the research methods used would acquire a greater response rate and a more varied sample across the province of Ontario.

**General Categories Found in the Surveys**

In this section, a brief overview was provided of each of the main categories of the written questionnaires for both survey instruments.

The questionnaire for the First Nation education counsellors was broken into three categories of questions: “General Information”, “Education Counsellor Specific,” and “Student Specific.” The survey tool for the First Nation post-secondary students was broken into three categories: “General Information,” “Student Generic,” and “Education Specific.” The questions found in the demographic sections were consistent with questions incorporated into the surveys of other Aboriginal student researchers (Abotossaway, 2002; Grygo, 2003).

Secondary research or general data was requested in the first section of the surveys to gather broad background or composite information about the respondents. I found that it was imperative to be mindful to ensure the anonymity of the participants. For instance, First Nation education counsellors were asked to provide demographic information about the location of their primary work site. Students were asked to identify their First Nation and where their status was derived. While both groups were asked to identify a specific First Nation, the information was not included in the results but was used to identify the specific Provincial Territory Organization that their First Nation was represented by. I kept any citation of demographic information as general as possible since the identification of the First Nation could potentially reduce the anonymous nature of the research. Given the small size of many of the bands, a number of First Nation education counsellors and post-secondary students from those bands could have been recognized by a process of deduction.
The “Education Counsellor Specific” section was intended to build a clearer picture of the counsellors, providing knowledge on the similarities and differences of the respondents. For First Nation post-secondary students, the second category of “Student Generic” was also intended to create a general picture of the students who participated in the survey. The third section and the longest section of the First Nation education counsellors survey targeted questions specific to their work and relationships with the First Nation post-secondary students for whom they were responsible. In the third section of their survey, First Nation post-secondary respondents were asked questions specific to their education, and their relationship with their sponsoring First Nation education counsellors. The purpose of final or third sections of both questionnaires, and from each groups’ perspectives, was to determine the extent that they perceived that First Nation education counsellors influenced First Nations students and their program choices. The examination of the data and the rollup of the results included my experiences as a college professor and administrator, as a university post-graduate student, and as a First Nation band manager, in addition to relevant research studies in the area of study.

In the analysis, I further included information provided by the participants who agreed to complete a follow up one-on-one interview with me. The follow-up interviews for both groups included information that: confirmed they had voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview; they understood that the process was confidential; and that they agreed to have or not have the interview taped. This section of the methodology is known as a form of phenomenological inquiry, but it was not considered the primary information process. It was used as a method to support data and information collected from the original surveys. Phenomenology “allows researchers and participants to understand the meaning of what life’s experiences are like by encouraging explanation and reflection in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of what is happening” (Melenchenko and Horsman, 1998, pp. 5). The interview questions specific to First Nation education counsellors dealt with their knowledge and relationship with the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, the current counselling strategies used in working with First Nation post-secondary students, their perceptions of their ability to influence the students, and ways in which the respondents could enhance their services to the students.
The interview questions specific to First Nation post-secondary students included: their perspective on how influential their counsellors were on their program choices; the degree of their counsellors’ helpfulness in comparison with three other key student identified influencers; general information about services provided by their counsellors while they attended school; and in particular, a description clarifying the manner in which their counsellors were the most helpful. The information from the follow up interviews re-iterated these areas briefly, and was intended to supplement and clarify responses provided in the written surveys.

The questions in the follow up interviews were asked in a fairly standardized format which meant the students and counsellors interviewed were asked the same questions within their specific category. I further added random probe items of an open-ended nature that were especially important when some participants provided one word answers. An example of a probe item was “could you tell me a little more about what you mean?” The probe responses were used to further clarify and create greater understanding of the participants’ responses. The follow up interviews were used to compare the responses of the First Nation education counsellors and the First Nation post-secondary students, offering the ability to note similarities, differences, or new insights from their responses. Upon the completion of the interview, each respondent was thanked for their time, and invited to call me if they wanted to provide additional or further information, or if they had any questions.

While face to face interviews were an option available to survey participants who agreed to further engage in my research by completing the follow up survey, when the opportunity was presented, none of the subjects opted for this interview method. Instead, all follow up interviews were accomplished through a telephone interview. This method provided me with the ability to complete the follow up interviews more quickly than scheduling a face to face interview, and was more convenient and appropriate for the sample groups. The telephone interviews were completed within five and ten minutes and given the brevity of the communication, it ensured sustained attention of the respondents who chose to talk with me.

As an important note, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) played a significant role in the research by providing relevant and significant
insight into the role of First Nation education counsellors, and by acting as a communication link to their membership via the membership listserv. Their support of my research as a doctoral student demonstrated their commitment to enhancing the educational success of Aboriginal people. The research also had the potential to contribute to research specific to their membership and their organizational priorities. With formal approval from the ONECA board of directors, I was granted permission to set up a booth display and provide a presentation describing the research to the one hundred and seventy conference attendees at the twenty-third yearly ONECA conference held from May 30-31, 2007. Further, the secretariat office of ONECA forwarded invitations from me to both First Nation education counsellors who work with post-secondary level of education to participate in the research, and to make the post-secondary student survey accessible to the students they sponsored to be completed on a voluntary basis.

**The Instruments – The Distribution Process**

Although the process for administering the surveys remained consistent for both subject groups, the approach for seeking participants to voluntarily complete the written surveys differed. In this section, I described how the questionnaires were distributed to each subject group. The distribution methods were planned and carried out to reach the greatest number of potential and voluntary participants, and from a variety of contact sites. Further, a description was included regarding the manner in which surveys were returned to me for data compilation and interpretation.

Working with the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA), I had been granted permission and access to organizational resources that included the contact information for members of their Association. I was also able to send copies of the supporting documents and surveys to the secretariat office which were then distributed to their membership through their group membership email list. The launch of the research initially took place at the yearly conference held by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) in May of 2007. The conference was available to all of the ONECA membership, and membership included First Nation education counsellors working with post-secondary students. It was noted that there were a small number of Aboriginal students in attendance at the conference. Over the course of
the three days of the workshops, I was invited to provide a brief luncheon presentation to conference participants of the purpose and intent of my research. I was also able to set up a booth for the duration of the conference. My display included posters describing my research and copies of the survey with the attached letter of invitation and consent. Copies of both surveys were picked up at my booth by conference participants who either agreed to participate in the study, or to distribute the surveys to potential volunteers. Four people volunteered to complete the survey at the conference – two First Nation education counsellors and two First Nation post-secondary students, but all four declined to participate in a follow up one-on-one interview. I was pleased and grateful for the exposure provided by the ONECA conference to such a large group of potential and research specific respondents or promoters of my research.

Following the conference, copies of the posters, letters of invitation or appeal, and copies of the two surveys were sent out by mail, fax, or email to First Nations education offices, and to post-secondary Aboriginal student service offices across Ontario. Strategically, it was felt that these offices were crucial points from which to access potential subjects. First Nation education offices were potential recruiting sites for both subject groups. Given that First Nation education counsellors were in contact with the students they sponsored, they were invited to send the student surveys to their sponsored students. They were also invited to fill in the surveys specific to their position. My knowledge of these sources of contact were a result of my experience and knowledge working for ONECA in previous employment contracts, working in a variety of capacities within the Native departments of two Ontario community colleges, and participating in a variety of post-secondary institutions as a First Nation student.

Aboriginal student service offices located in colleges and universities across Ontario were contacted to leave posters and copies of the survey with attached information and consent forms. In this way, I was able to reach eligible candidates, or contacts who could further distribute the surveys and supporting documentation. According to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (2005), approximately one third of mainstream post-secondary institutions provide Aboriginal specific counselling services. The Aboriginal support services staff approached for the purpose of the research were those who worked within post-secondary institutions, were located
within Aboriginal specific departments, and were members of ONECA. The contact information for the identified staff and services was obtained from the ONECA directory, from Ontario colleges and universities directories, and from personnel information I had acquired through my years of working with Aboriginal and First Nation education specific services within two different community college environments. These staff members or service areas were contacted by phone, facsimile, and email in order to seek their approval and make arrangements with them to send posters and copies of the survey. These actions demonstrated my intentions to make survey information as accessible and interesting as possible to First Nation students attending post-secondary institution with Aboriginal specific services, and who habitually made use of these services.

There were sixteen colleges and eighteen universities identified in the ONECA directory with Aboriginal staff and services, out a total of twenty five potential colleges and eighteen potential universities located in Ontario. These staff had current membership with ONECA. A total of thirty-four colleges and universities were approached to post survey invitation and have surveys available to students out of a total of forty-three existing post-secondary institutions in Ontario. There was also the possibility that potential student respondents from the colleges and universities with no Aboriginal specific student services could participate in the survey as a result of receiving the invitation to participate from their First Nation education counsellors, or through the ABCOM or ONECA distribution lists if they were part of the identified memberships. However, their opportunities were more limited as a result of my decision to send invitations regarding my research to post-secondary education institutions that employed Aboriginal specific service supports.

First Nation counsellors played a dual role in the roll out of my research tools. They were both contacts from which to seek potential participants from post-secondary students they sponsored, and they themselves were potential participants in the First Nation education counsellors’ questionnaire. In both cases, they were contacted by phone, fax or email at their offices on-reserve or within tribal or regional offices to seek their involvement in my research. In 2007, there were one hundred and thirty-four First Nations in Ontario (Chiefs of Ontario). First Nation education counsellors were contacted
through information posted in web-sites, from public phone books, or, through the ONECA directory. The contact information received from the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association was from the 2007-2008 ONECA Directory, and with the knowledge of the Association. First hand contact was made with a total of ninety-four First Nation education counsellors working specifically with post-secondary education students during the months of October and November, 2007. The invitation to participate and copies of the survey was successfully faxed to a total of fifty-two sites.

I implemented other communication strategies as well. A further invitation was posted on the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association listserv (composed of First Nation education counsellors, post-secondary Aboriginal service staff, and other members of the ONECA membership) in June, 2007, further posted in August, 2007, and a final posting in November, 2007. Note that the total number of members who participated in the ONECA group email was based on dependency that the contact information was recent, and that the members informed the organization of any changes. It became evident over the course of the research that contact information for some services was outdated, resulting in a number of email messages and faxes returned as undeliverable. Since the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association updated their members contact information yearly, I was able to access more current information. In addition, I contacted each First Nation education office where information was returned and requested updated contact information. With more current contact information, the requests to participate and copies of the surveys were re-sent. A total of eleven First Nation education counsellor offices contacted me by phone and a total of seven First Nation education counsellors contacted me by email, to request further copies of the survey. One First Nation counsellor from the Provincial Territory Organization of Allied Iroquois and Allied Indians Association (AIAI) contacted me to indicate that they were not approved by their First Nation to participate in my study, nor to distribute information regarding my study to their sponsored students. Given that only six respondents participated in the First Nation education counsellors surveys, other strategies are recommended to be developed and carried out in future research in order to distribute information and invitations more effectively. Recommendations include site visits to the
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various First Nation offices to provide brief presentations and obtain approval first hand for First Nation education counsellors’ participation, and endorsement from the PTO’s.

In examining the process of appeal I used to seek assistance of staff from the Aboriginal Student Services, I am unsure of the effectiveness of my strategy. In detail, what I appealed to aboriginal support staff to do was: obtain approval from administration for my research process; post invitations to First Nation students; make copies of the survey; and distribute or make surveys available. I based their willingness to assist me based on my status as a First Nation post-secondary student, and some workers’ previous familiarity with me through our shared work as aboriginal post-secondary staff. While a total of twenty-five Aboriginal student support services within higher education institutions agreed to accept and provide copies of the surveys to their First Nation student populations, it remained unknown as to whether they were able to follow through, or were able to obtain permission from their administration. Dispensing my research information and invitations was challenging since a number of facsimiles and emails returned as undeliverable. I followed up by contacting the offices of undeliverable facsimiles and emails to receive updated contact information, and then re-sent my correspondence. As further strategy to distribute information to this group, the administrator of the group listing for ABCOMM was approached and he agreed to forward a copy of my information to the listserv members. The group contact list was comprised of staff members, including counsellors, support staff, liaison workers, professors, and administrators who worked within the Aboriginal student service units within specific colleges and universities in Ontario. The acronym ABCOMM is the short form for “Aboriginal Communication”, a term described to me by one of my initial contacts who was also an ABCOMM participant.

The identified service groups were approached to forward information regarding the research and copies of the posters and survey tools to First Nation students by email, or in their offices, or areas most likely to be frequented by Aboriginal students. By the end of June, 2007, all Aboriginal service offices within colleges and universities received materials specific to my research to distribute to potential First Nation student respondents. Given that my end sample was a total of twenty nine students who volunteered to take the survey, in future research, alternate strategies are recommended to
in contacting and relaying communication to the post-secondary Aboriginal offices within higher education institutions in Ontario, in order to increase participation rates. Recommendations include on-site presentations to the First Nations and post-secondary institutions, mail-outs to all residences of all First Nation communities, and letters of endorsement from the various Provincial Territory Organizations (PTO) offices.

Students who were not informed or did not receive information of the opportunity to participate in the research may have been students who were not contacted by their First Nation education counsellor, or their First Nation education counsellor did not receive the information, or the Native studies did not receive or place posters or information in a site readily visible to students. Further, First Nation students may not have attended a post-secondary institution with Aboriginal specific student services or departments, or staff who participated on the ABCOM listserv for Aboriginal post-secondary education service providers. It was unclear whether the information was passed on, or posted as requested. The distribution of information regarding the research instruments and what the study entailed relied heavily on the support and endorsement of each First Nation, each post-secondary Aboriginal student services office, and the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA). The ability to contact and make appeals and invitations to participate in the study relied on the willingness of each group to take my requests forward, to provide current contact information, and to follow up with potential participants. On a positive note, as a result of contact with the First Nations’ education offices, the post-secondary Aboriginal student service offices, and ONECA, I was able to potentially reach a more diversified group of respondents, and, the same time, connect with a repeat pool of potential participants, but from a different source.

In summary, the self-administered surveys were made available and distributed to First Nation students and to First Nation education counsellors through a number of different sources: one time face to face contact at a booth set up to describe my research at the ONECA conference in 2007; an invitation sent to First Nation education counsellors offices requesting participation of either themselves and/or their sponsored students; a call to participate communicated to First Nation post-secondary students through existing Aboriginal support service offices within Ontario colleges and
universities; and finally, an appeal issued from ONECA to all their membership. The reason these contacts were selected as the means by which to distribute information and invitations was based on personal experience working with these groups. Since the survey participation rate did not meet projected rates of participation, I proposed a number of recommendations to other researchers to enhance the interest and participation of First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students in future research.

**Ethical Considerations**

The following section identified procedures followed to ensure that ethical standards and values were adhered to in the development of the research.

As a key ethical cornerstone, I followed the ethics guidelines and procedures as outlined by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Toronto, and received approval in May, 2007 from the institution’s Protocol Review Committee. Examples of requirements of the ethics process was that I developed the supporting documentation, providing potential respondents with comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the research, and a detailed description of attention paid to safety and confidentiality matters. The letter of invitation was attached to each survey instrument outlining the purpose of the surveys, how confidentiality would be maintained, and the rights of the participants. Prior to completion of the survey, each respondent was required to read the letter and sign the form stating their understanding of the contents of the letter, their approval of the process, and that their participation was voluntary.

As per ethical guidelines and procedures mandated by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the University of Toronto, confidentiality and anonymity are critical components of the protocol process. To this end, each introduction and consent letter accompanying a completed survey was signed by myself and each participant. All materials were kept in a secure filing cabinet. Anonymity was maintained by assigning each questionnaire submission with a different and chronological identification number with no connection to any name or other identifying information. The number allocated to each participant remained the same for both the survey and the follow up interview. While some participants identified the name of their First Nation, this information was
not included in the study, since there was a possibility that the subjects could be identified through knowledge of their community. The identification of First Nation was used to identify respondents by the Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) to which each individual belonged. The PTO’s are more general and regional bodies, and as such, the terms provide a more anonymous grouping of respondents. Further confidentiality was maintained within the transcripts of the one-on-one follow up interviews. While quotes were written verbatim or summarized in any given one-on-one interviews, the transcripts were not included to maintain anonymity of each subject. Any references to the identification of individuals or First Nations within the transcripts were omitted. Each participant was given the opportunity to voluntarily provide contact information for the following purposes: the follow up interview; and/or because the respondent wanted to be sent the final results of the research. Upon successful completion of the formal thesis process and the final results of the research have been sent to those who requested copies, all participant surveys and contact information will be destroyed.

To demonstrate an adherence to standards of ethics from a cultural and Anishnabek perspective, I sought to respect known protocols of the First Nations whom I hoped to have support for their community staff and community members to participate in the research. The research materials were created and the research carried out with awareness of the First Nation principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession). These principles entrench First Nation self-determination within all aspects of the developing research process, starting with setting the research question(s), implementation of the research, to the writing, reviewing and reading of the final academic and community publications. More specifically, the principles are intended to guide any research completed in First Nation communities. They are important to the protection of the First Nations data and knowledge and are endorsed by First Nation entities at the national, provincial, regional, and individual First Nation level (refer to definitions section in Chapter Two). Ethical guidelines for research involving Aboriginal peoples, communities and individuals have been developed in recent years, and include reference and application of the OCAP principles. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) in conjunction with its Institute of Aboriginal Peoples’ Health developed “CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People” (2007).
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The guidelines are intended to “promote health through research that is in keeping with Aboriginal values and tradition..... assist in developing research partnerships that will facilitate and encourage mutually beneficial and culturally competent research........[and] promote ethics review that enables and facilitates rather than suppresses or obstructs research” (pp. 4). In 2008, various committees working under the Aboriginal Research Ethics Initiative of the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE) developed a draft ethics process specific to working with Aboriginal populations. Key considerations outlined were respect for human dignity, for Aboriginal diversity, for indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural heritage. At the time of my research investigation, the final draft remained pending.

Ethics review processes are in place within some First Nation communities, and as such, external researchers are required to complete the ethics process put in place by each First Nation for their territory. As part of my research, I became aware of the ethics review requirements of the Six Nations Council, and the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment. In my current position, I work in close collaboration with another First Nation ethic review committee, entitled the Manitoulin Island Anishinabek Research Review (MARRC). These are a few examples of the processes developed and implemented by Aboriginal communities and where research proposals are reviewed, to determine their “fit” with the First Nation, or Aboriginal populations that researchers seek to work with and investigate. The protocols for approaching First Nation education counsellors to participate in my research were included in the initial letter of appeal sent directly to the First Nation education counsellors. In addition to describing my research, the counsellors were asked to forward the information to their managers or Chief and Council, or other proper channels for formal approval, and as required.

Aboriginal organization and Aboriginal units within non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions also played a significant role in my study. Key contacts were the Ontario Education Counsellors Association and the Aboriginal Student Services located within specific Ontario colleges and universities. The staff within these organizations worked closely with First Nation education counsellors, and their services were interconnected in many ways. Many post-secondary Aboriginal services personnel also hold memberships with ONECA. As such, they maintain contact with First Nation
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Education counsellors through the same group listserv. Further, they connect with each other during recruitment drives, and also communicate to discuss students, fax student related materials, and to arrange site visits. They may also meet each other at education specific conferences and during education related committee work. It is often said that the Aboriginal community is small. Needless to say, the Aboriginal education community is even smaller! These groups greatly assisted me with information and materials for my research, and also in the relay of communication to potential subject groups. I ensured that I was compliant with all of their required processes through formal requests and applications, gaining approval from their boards, administration, or ethics bodies. This is a further example of the growing body of indigenous researchers who delicately balance their Aboriginal relevant research between the incorporation of cultural protocols and paradigms and generally accepted research protocols.

Recognizing the need to be compliant with the policies and processes of each higher education institution approached to access First Nation students participating in their program offerings was acknowledged and cited in the letters of appeal sent to the Aboriginal student service offices. With respect to Aboriginal student support staff who worked in colleges and universities in Ontario and who were members of the listserv for ONECA or for ABCOMM, I requested that, if required, they forward my request regarding the survey to the appropriate administration level for formal approval, and as required. These individuals were approached, as part of my rationale, was because some of them were already familiar with me through previous work connections, and because, as a First Nation student, the Aboriginal student support staff is committed to ensuring students academic success through the provision of academic and interpersonal supports. Based on these reasons, I felt that they were the most likely to facilitate endorsement from their institutions for my research to proceed. One college requested that I complete their full ethics review process in order to leave posters and copies of the research within their Aboriginal service area to be available to interested First Nation students. I completed a fairly similar process to the protocol application at OISE/UofT, and received formal approval.

Ethical considerations were reflected and adhered to within my research process through a number of measures. First, supporting the letters of request and letters of
invitation outlined the attention paid to securing confidentiality and anonymity of the data and information to be collected. The supporting documents were created to align with the ethics protocols set down by OISE/UofT. Further sensitivity was demonstrated through an adherence to cultural protocols and processes of each First Nation by requesting approval from band governance or administration, depending on the policies of each First Nation and known to each First Nation education counsellor. As well, each post-secondary institution with Aboriginal student support services was to be informed of my research and approval sought by the staff of the Aboriginal student offices. There were a number of reasons for requesting assistance directly through the offices of Aboriginal student services within higher education institutions and through the offices of First Nation education counsellors: I had previous work experience with both of these groups; it was seen as respect to these offices to involved them directly; and they were considered the most committed and interested in assisting a First Nation doctoral student in the completion of her studies.

Summary
The chapter detailed the research methodology used to investigate whether First Nation education counsellors influenced First Nation post-secondary students and their choice of post-secondary programming. A detailed description was provided of the supporting documents that included letters of appeal for assistance of First Nation education counsellors and Aboriginal support staff from colleges and universities within Ontario, and posters of invitation to both subject groups. The methodology was comprised of written surveys, with the invitation for subjects to participate in a follow up one-on-one interview. The survey required responses to a combination of closed and open ended questions from which both quantitative and qualitative data could be derived and analyzed. Further description outlined the manner in which the tools were distributed, and support was provided to demonstrate that the distribution strategy was intended to reach the greatest number of potential volunteer survey takers from a diverse sampling across the province of Ontario. Ethical considerations were identified that included adherence to both post-secondary and First Nation policies and protocols.

The chapter was intended to demonstrate that the methodological approach taken afforded opportunity to gather a greater rate of responses from both subject groups, to
maintain a high degree of security, confidentiality and anonymity for the data and the voluntary respondents, and that the approaches followed ethical standards and protocols from both a western and Aboriginal cultural perspective. Using the identified methods of collecting data and information, I felt that the results would contribute positively, gaining new insights into the role of First Nation education counsellors and their relationship with their sponsored students.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The chapter summarized the findings of the investigation – to determine whether First Nation education counsellors influenced First Nations post-secondary students’ program choices. Survey data collection proceeded as described in Chapter Three, beginning on May 30, 2007 and concluding on February 28, 2008. The surveys were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In using a dual approach to gather data, my initial intention was to support explicit data with descriptive data, enhancing knowledge of the phenomena of interest through examination of the largest group of responses. A further component of the analysis was to determine the levels of influence by comparing the results of the First Nation education counsellors with the First Nation post-secondary participants. What transpired was, in fact, an evolution of my original study plan. As discussed in the previous chapter, I discovered that an interpretative approach proved more useful to the data gathered from the surveys and one-on-one interviews. Given the pool of respondents was smaller than anticipated, and there were low response rates to some of the survey questions within both questionnaires, in the end, I was able to glean more from using a self-reflexive approach in my examination of all of the participants’ responses.

Without doubt, the “story” from the data was greatly enriched by the voluntary descriptive narratives. As the completed questionnaires began to arrive at my home, it became clear that the smaller samples and unequal participation rates of the two survey groups would prohibit analysis of the results based on interpretation of the largest group of responses to each question. Upon discussion with my thesis advisory committee, they recommended that I include the viewpoints and perspectives from all the respondents rather than the largest voice from the small samples. I was comfortable knowing that my study would provide an opportunity for all of the participants’ voices to be heard. While, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of subjects’ studied, the results provide meaningful insights into a collection of First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students who, for their reasons, entered into the survey as...
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willing participants. Further, it was through the lens of post-colonial indigenous knowledge, the gathered data from the two groups of respondents, as well as my personal knowledge and accumulated experience as a First Nation student, college level professor and administrator that the study gradually came together, producing the results detailed in this chapter.

First Nation Post-Secondary Students

Twenty-nine surveys were received from First Nation post-secondary students. No respondents were filtered or eliminated given that all respondents indicated their “fit” with the criteria as detailed in the letter of introduction attached to each survey, and accompanied by their formal signature. To provide a frame of reference for the subject group, in 2006-2007 and in Ontario, the total number of First Nation students attending post-secondary level programming was a total 4,429 students with 1,997 attending university and 2,432 attending college (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007). The total number of First Nation students enrolled in universities and colleges in Ontario for 2009-2010 was unavailable at the time of my thesis submission. Given that approximately one percent of First Nation post-secondary students responded to the survey, the results are not representative of the First Nation student population in Ontario. Some of the data, however, supported existing research, and shed further light in an area little investigated.

General Demographics

Of the twenty-nine First Nation post-secondary students who responded to the survey, I found that there was no representative distribution of the students’ across the five Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO). The majority of the students who volunteered to participate in my study were from the Union of Ontario Indians (n = 20), and a lesser number of participants were from Grand Council Three (n = 3) and the Independents (n = 4). One student was a resident of Ontario but belonged to the James Bay – Northern Quebec Association (n = 1). One participant did not respond to this question. The results meant that no one participated in the survey from the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians or the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Given that the invitation to participate was distributed across all the colleges and universities in Ontario with
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Aboriginal specific service departments, these results were not predicted. Further, the results were not indicative of a north and south division within the participants since the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians represent First Nations primarily located in southern Ontario, and the Nishnawbe Aski Nation represent First Nations from northwestern Ontario. All student results were included in the findings and were not filtered.

An unexpected finding was the higher number of student respondents from the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI). The results were unanticipated since, as mentioned, the invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all colleges and universities in Ontario offering Aboriginal student specific services, and to the First Nation Education Counsellor offices that were identified within the 2007-2008 ONECA Directory. I made further invitations to participate at the booth I set up at the ONECA conference held in May, 2007, and in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. A potential factor that may have contributed to the outcome may have been the personal identification of the survey takers with me as a member of Moose Deer Point First Nation, a band affiliated with the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI). I was unable to compare the results to provincial data since my investigation into research determining whether there were more UOI students enrolled at the post-secondary level in Ontario than other PTO’s was unsuccessful. The results were not interpreted further.

Interestingly, ten of the student respondents did not know which PTO that their First Nation was affiliated with (see Table 1.1). Possibly, they were not familiar with the First Nation regional political structures, or alternatively, it was possible that their First Nation was not aligned with a specific PTO at the time the research took place. Since I had anticipated this result, I had added a further question where respondents were asked to identify their First Nation. While the identification of the First Nation was not intended to be released in order to protect the anonymity of the subjects, I used the information to accurately categorize the survey takers within their appropriate Provincial Territorial Organization. All PTO’s in Ontario and their affiliated First Nations were presented as known from the Chiefs of Ontario web-site (http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org/), and at the time my thesis submission.
Table 1.1
Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) of First Nation Post-Secondary Students Survey Respondents (n = 29) Based on Self-Identification and Based on Identification of First Nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Provincial Territorial Organization</th>
<th>Frequency – Self-Identification of PTO</th>
<th>Frequency – Based on Self-Identification of First Nation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. of Iroquois and Allied Indians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Council Treaty 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishnawbe Aski Nation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Ontario Indians</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Know/Unsure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the students lived off reserve when not attending school (n = 18), while fewer students lived on reserve while not attending school (n = 10). One student indicated that he/she lived both on and off reserve while not attending school. Given that research has confirmed a pattern of Aboriginal people who migrate between urban and First Nation settings more often than the general population (Statistics Canada, 2001), it was possible for a respondent to live both on and off reserve.

Table 1.2
Location of Primary Home of First Nation Post-Secondary Students When Not Attending Post-Secondary School (n = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Respondents Living Off-Reserve</th>
<th>Percent- age</th>
<th>Survey Respondents Living On-Reserve</th>
<th>Percent- age</th>
<th>Survey Respondents – Other</th>
<th>Percent- age</th>
<th>Total Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Total Percent- age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results supported findings of a population study released by Statistics Canada (2007) that reported that the more Aboriginal populations are living off-reserve. In contrast, all of the First Nation education counsellors who took part in the study lived on reserve. As noted earlier, in a review of the ONECA directory, I confirmed that most of the work sites of the First Nation education counsellors who were members of ONECA were situated on reserve. Since the sponsorship for post-secondary education funding
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(PSE) is managed by each First Nation, or regional education authority, it was expected that the majority of First Nation education counsellors lived on-reserve, or near the First Nation band office, or education authority. While the study did not explore the on and off reserve differences of sponsored First Nation students, it would be of interest to further explore whether First Nation education counsellors were able to maintain the same communication with sponsored students who lived within the First Nation, and were potentially known to the counsellors, and sponsored students who live in other urban or rural communities.

**Student Specific Demographics**

Students were next asked to respond to a number of generic and personal questions in order to form a comprehensive profile of those who participated in the questionnaires. It was found that more mature students took part in the study than younger students. As discussed in Chapter Two, each post-secondary school, faculty or department have definitions for a mature student that may be unique and different in each institution. From observation, it was fair to define a mature student as someone who did not enter post-secondary education having directly graduated from high school. For example, Waterloo University did not define mature in terms of age, but based on each applicant’s level of academic background, as well as the number of years since he or she last attended an accredited high school (University of Waterloo web-site: [http://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/?pageID=10204](http://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/?pageID=10204)). Niagara College defined a mature student as someone 19 years of age or older, who did not complete high school, and had been out of high school for a minimum of twelve months (Niagara College web-site: [http://www.niagaracollege.ca/mature_students_guide.htm](http://www.niagaracollege.ca/mature_students_guide.htm)). Taking these definitions into consideration, sixteen of the twenty-nine respondents were twenty years of age or older. Four respondents chose not to reveal their ages, and nine students indicated they were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. Comparatively, the ages of the First Nation student survey respondents corresponded to national findings that found that more mature Aboriginal students attended post-secondary than recent high school graduates (Educational Policy Institute, 2008). O’Donnell and Tait (2001) found that Aboriginal students tended to be thirty years of age and over and accounted for the largest proportion of all post-secondary Aboriginal enrolment, confirming that most Aboriginal students...
begin their post-secondary education later in life. These results will be reviewed later in the chapter as part of the discussion regarding influences.

In terms of gender, more female First Nation post-secondary students participated in the survey (n = 21) than males (n= 8). These results corresponded to other studies that found there were, representatively, more Aboriginal females than Aboriginal males attending higher education. Within the general population, according to Statistics Canada (2002), sixty-seven percent of young women pursued post-secondary education, compared with fifty-seven percent of young men. Specific to First Nations, in summary reports provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2007), between 2006 and 2007, there were a total of 1,348 males and 3,081 females in post-secondary education. Broken down further, in Ontario, there were 799 males and 1,633 females attending college, and 549 males and 1,448 females enrolled in university. The results meant that more than half of the Aboriginal post-secondary student population in Ontario was female in that particular school year. Similar results were cited nationally. From the same report and same year, there were a total of 4,709 male First Nation students and 11,289 female First Nation students post-secondary school in Canada. Broken down by type of institution, there were 2,510 males and 5,473 females attending colleges and 2,199 males and 5,816 females attending universities across Canada. The gender divisions in my study corresponded to the gender profiles of Aboriginal students participating in post-secondary education. As discussed in an earlier chapter, that Aboriginal males are underrepresented at the tertiary level of education have far reaching implications that require further and more specific attention.

As a small note of interest, research also suggested that female respondents were more likely to participate in research surveys. As further support, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2007) found that 61% of survey respondents were female at college entry survey, and 63% of survey respondents were female at end of term survey. These findings were consistent with the emerging profile from my survey.

In response to the survey question regarding the marital or conjugal status of the participants, the greatest number of respondents were single (n = 21), while the next largest group were married or in a common law relationship (n= 6). A smaller number of participants were divorced (n = 1) and widowed (n = 1). A note of interest was while
more of the students were mature in status, many of those who participated in the study were also single. The implications of the findings remained unexplored.

Specific to dependents, more of the respondents did not have children (n = 16), as opposed to survey participants with biological children (n=11). Two student respondents, respectively, were raising a non-biological child, or child related by blood. The next largest group of respondents had between one to five biological and dependent children. Two respondents were responsible for raising a non-biological child and one child related by blood respectively. The data supported other research findings that a significant number of First Nation students attend school while holding other responsibilities specific to the care of children (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website: http://www.rhdcc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/learning_policy/sp_890_12_08/page07.shtml). Raising a family and attending post-secondary school at the same time creates additional challenges for Aboriginal students who are already at risk, and who already confront social-economic stressors that may interfere with their academic success. From a personal perspective, I worked toward both post-graduate and graduate degrees as a mature student with three young children, and found it very challenging. I could not have managed without a variety of supports. While the benefits of gaining these designations enhanced the quality of my life, I am familiar with the challenges that were a part of the journey. I came to further respect the tenacity of Aboriginal students in my role as a college professor. In an anecdotal account, one student graduate came to mind. This individual would work all night, sleep in the school parking lot until awaken by other students, study with them, go to classes, and then return home to care for her home and child. On top of those challenges, her one hour travel to and from the school was both extensive and difficult, especially during the winter months. Additional responsibilities, such as caring for children, create their own stressors and challenges, making the attainment of the degree or diploma for Aboriginal students that much more difficult.

**Post-Secondary Education Experience**

Relevant to their educational experiences, First Nation post-secondary students were asked to list the levels of education they achieved to date. The respondents had successfully completed elementary or grade school (n = 12); secondary or high school (n
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_equal_); partial community college (n = 6); community college (n = 12) (with three of the respondents obtaining three diplomas, and two respondents successfully completing two diplomas); partial university degree program (n = 11); and university (n = 7) (two respondents completed two separate degree programs and one respondent had previously completed three degree programs). The results show that almost half of the students who participated in my research had already acquired a previous diploma or degree, and a small number had more than one degree or diploma. The findings support that the students who participated in the study were a distinct group, a minority within a minority, given that many of the participants had multi-designations at both the college and university levels. One possible reason the respondents had multiple diplomas or degrees may be due to the fact that a number of Aboriginal students begin their post-secondary education at the college level, gained confidence in their abilities and success, and moved on to the university level.

Seven hundred and twenty-nine Aboriginal college students participated in a study completed by Holmes in 2005. They were asked to describe their career considerations upon the completion of their current college program. Roughly twenty-four percent indicated that they would pursue another college program, and twenty-two percent said that they would pursue a university program. This was in comparison to the forty-four percent of the respondents who intended to seek employment. These results paralleled my post-secondary journey since I completed a college program prior to moving on to graduate from bachelor and post-graduate level university degrees. As a college professor, I found that each year, there were a number of Aboriginal college students who, upon graduating from college, applied for transfer credits or to attend university in the following fall. The results of the study were unusual in that more of the student survey participants had multiple degrees or diplomas, suggesting that high achievers demonstrated more interest in participating in my study.

It was perplexing that in the second part of the same question that none of the respondents identified which program they were currently taking. It was possible that the respondents missed this part of the question, or experienced respondent fatigue or confusion. Otherwise, reasons for their lack of response remained unclear. In future
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studies, I support requesting one response per question from participants, and keeping the questions as brief as possible.

As a further observation regarding the identification of the levels of education acquired by the respondents, it appeared that they also experienced some confusion regarding the term “Partial [completion of] Other Post-Secondary Institutions” since three respondents wrote “General Arts Native Students, Public Relations/Introductory, and Public Administration.” As clarification, the question was intended to identify other post-secondary institutions and not post-secondary programs. The item was meant to assess participation in other post-secondary institutions such as the First Nation or Aboriginal Education Institutes, Toronto School of Business, etc. The result was that respondents appeared confused by the question given their lack of appropriate responses. The issues reinforced my findings that the sections of this specific question needed to be reworded.

Further results were gathered from the completed questionnaires. It was found that more of the First Nation students who completed the survey were attending university (n = 18) than community college (n= 9), or an Aboriginal Education Institute (n = 1) (Table 1.3). Based on data collected in 2007 by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, more First Nation post-secondary students attend college than university. The composition of the respondents in my research did not correspond to the general distribution of First Nations students as cited from INAC data. The results occurred despite the fact that the survey was distributed in a manner to promote equal opportunity for participation from both college and university students where Aboriginal student services existed. Factors that may have contributed to the distribution of the results included: the availability or lack of availability of information regarding my research within the various post-secondary institutions or First Nation education offices; the potential that there was greater interest in research with university level students given the focus of their studies on research; and the possibility that university students were more likely to support a fellow university student’s research. The factors cited were not exhaustive.
Table 1.3
Type of Post-Secondary Institution Attended by the First Nation Post-Secondary Student Survey Respondents (n = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Aboriginal Education Institution</th>
<th>No Response/ N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of what type of post-secondary programming subjects were enrolled at the time the survey was distributed, they were taking the following programs, in descending order of sample size: four year undergraduate university degree programs (n = 16), three year college diploma programs (n = 4), two year college diploma programs (n = 2), and three year university degree programs (n = 2). Three participants were enrolled in post-graduate programs that included a one year post-graduate college certificate program, a master’s level program, and a doctoral level program. Two respondents marked “No Response” and “Not Applicable”, respectively (Table 1.4). The results confirmed findings from the previous question that found the majority of the students participating in the survey were taking university level programming, suggesting it was possible that communication regarding my study was more available within the participating universities than colleges. Further, it may be interpreted that more university students were interested in the study than college level. University students have more research requirements as part of their course work, and as a result, may have demonstrated greater interest in my research. Ultimately, the reason for the higher response rate from university level respondents than college level respondents remained unknown.
Table 1.4  
Type of Post-Secondary Institution Attended by First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents (n = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Post-Secondary Program of Respondents</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two year college diploma program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three year college diploma program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three year university degree program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four year degree university program</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate program – masters level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate program – doctorate level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year post-degree certificate program</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: One year post-graduate college certificate program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another two part question, students were asked to identify the specific post-secondary program they were enrolled in, and the institution they were attending at the time they participated in the survey. The information gathered was used to cluster their program choices within the broader categories of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP). I found that more respondents, attending either university or college, were enrolled in Social and Behavioural, and Law than any other CIP category. Table 1.5 provided an overview of the categories of programs taken by all of the student survey takers. In 2001, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs completed a study that found that the highest enrolment rates of First Nation and Inuit college students were programs within the Business and Commerce category, followed by the Humanities and Social Sciences. In the same report, First Nation and Inuit University students had the highest rates of enrolment in General Arts and Science programming, and second highest
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rates of enrolment in Education, and Social Sciences programming. Interestingly, the programs that the respondents of my survey were enrolled in were clustered within the same CIP categories but at varying rates, and similarly absent in the categories that the INAC study identified as having weak Aboriginal student representation. The results bring further attention to the ongoing gaps in Aboriginal representation in specific areas of study and specialization.

Table 1.5
Types of Post-Secondary Programs Enrolled in by First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents Based on Classification of Instructional Programs (n=29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIP Categories</th>
<th>No. of University Respondents</th>
<th>No. of College Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and behavioural science, and law</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, management and public administration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and life sciences and technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics, computer and information science</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and related technologies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, natural resources and conservation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks, recreation, health (other than medicine) and fitness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 – No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (out of 29 students)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Appendix XV for identification of sub-categories
The second part of the question focused on identifying the post-secondary institutions the participants were attending. The intention was not to list specific institutions, but to add to the general profile of the students. In fact, the identification of specific institutions would not have been included given the need to protect the anonymity of the First Nation students who invariably comprise a small minority within each post-secondary school. In comparison to the larger group of students who were attending university, a smaller number of participants were attending college, and the smallest group was enrolled in Aboriginal Education Institutes. I was able to determine that the institutions attended were fairly equally represented between Northern and Southern Ontario. A ratio of fourteen students attended colleges or universities in Southern Ontario and twelve students’ attended colleges or universities in Northern Ontario. One student attended a northern university in a partnership program with a southern college, one student attended an Aboriginal education institute in a partnership program with a southern university, and one student attended a southern Aboriginal education institute in a partnership program with a southern university. Out of the twenty five publicly funded Colleges of Applied Arts and Technologies and the eighteen publicly funded universities in the province, the student respondents represented eight universities, three colleges, and two Aboriginal education institutes in partnership programming with two different universities.

To be noted, not all colleges and universities in Ontario were expected to be represented within the sample student group given that posters, invitations and questionnaires were only sent to the colleges and universities with Aboriginal specific student services, to Aboriginal staff who were members of ONECA, and to the members of the ABCOMM listserv to be distributed to First Nation students. Further, invitations to participate in my study were distributed only to the specified Ontario colleges and universities since delivery of services and programming differ somewhat within other Ontario post-secondary sectors of education, including the Aboriginal Education Institutes. Despite the fact that invitations to participate in the research were not sent directly to the other post-secondary institutions, I still anticipated that students from other higher learning institutions could learn of the survey invitation. It was possible given that information passed among Aboriginal educators, Aboriginal education supports, and
Aboriginal students interconnects and is shared, humorously referred to as the “moccasin telegraph.” The end result did not support my initial assumption, however, and with one exception, a student attending an Aboriginal Education Institute participated in the survey. How these factors impacted the delivery and receipt of copies of the survey remained unclear. The fact that more university students participated in the study may not be as relevant given that each student’s experience and perceptions of the influence of his or her counsellor would be similar given the process and requirements of sponsorship remain the same at all levels of First Nation post-secondary funding.

The following section of the survey dealt specifically with band post-secondary sponsorship.

Respondents were asked how long they had been sponsored at the time of the survey to attend post-secondary school. The majority of respondents were in second year or higher, as opposed to the first year of their studies. The breakdown of which academic year they were enrolled in was: 2nd year (n = 4); 3rd year (n = 5); 4th year (n = 8); and “Other” included: 5th year (n = 3); 6th year (n = 1); and 7th year (n = 1). One respondent provided no response. Interestingly, only one student was in their first year of PSE. It should be noted that this did not necessarily mean that the other students were not in the first year of a program, merely that they had more than one year of uninterrupted post-secondary experience. It remained unclear as to why only one first year student completed the survey. Possibly, since the study was offered in the fall, first year students were inundated with information, requirements, and deadlines (e.g. purchase of books and supplies, scheduling, orientation, etc), or had limited exposure or information to the survey. It was possible, therefore, that their knowledge, availability or opportunities to complete the survey were limited. Reasons for their lack of participation remain unknown.

Upon further exploration of the results, I noted nine students were in post-secondary school more than four years. Four respondents did not complete their college program in consecutive years of study. Rather, they returned to college after an interruption in their studies for an unidentified period of time. Five participants graduated from college and then enrolled in university. In reverse order, one participant completed a university program, and then attended a college program. The results confirmed that
some First Nation students receive band sponsorship beyond one post-secondary program and for a number of possible reasons. As outlined in Chapter Two, bands often provide funding for students to attend college, and then university, or in reverse order. The results also suggested other options that included students extending the length of time to complete their post-secondary program, attending university (involving a longer length of time in school as opposed to most college diploma programs), or, at some point, the students obtained other sources of sponsorship or funding to continue with their studies.

Students were next asked to identify the number of times they had applied for post-secondary sponsorship from their First Nations prior to receiving funding. The majority of the respondents were successful in obtaining sponsorship the first time they applied (n = 17). Four students applied more than once, and eight students applied three times prior to receiving sponsorship. For clarification, in order to re-apply for band funded sponsorship, First Nation applicants who are eligible but have been denied funding must wait one full semester (meaning they may apply for the winter session), or one full year in order to resubmit their application. Often bands will fund band members who are on a waiting list inter-year, given that a number of the students may drop out, are unsuccessful in the first semester, or the band withdraws funding for other reasons based on their policies. Reasons cited by nine of the respondents as to why they were not approved for sponsorship included: the list of students applying for funding was greater than the sponsorship available from the First Nation (n= 5), did not know why they were unapproved (n = 2); and “Other (n = 2). The participants who selected “Other” included the following comments as rationale for no funding approved: “Mature student (low priority)”; and “Took two years off.”

In 2007, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association cited that close to 3,000 Aboriginal students were denied funding through band sponsorship for postsecondary education. From my college experience working as Aboriginal counselling support, some applicants re-applied for sponsorship over multiple years prior to receiving funding. The decision as to when a student’s funding is withdrawn differs with each First Nation and may be dependent on the band policies. These decisions are made by the First Nation education counsellor, and supported by the First Nation band manager or Chief and Council, or are decided solely by the latter. In one extreme circumstance that
occurred while I was working at one college, a First Nation withdrew sponsorship funding from their band members half way through the school year due financial deficits experienced by the band. While there are many factors that impact on sponsorship, the findings of the survey found that some students were funded with their first application, and others had to re-apply more than once. The results supported previous findings by the Assembly of First Nation (2008) that a number of students are losing out on post-secondary opportunities due to a lack of adequate post-secondary funding. We often refer to education as a gift and treasure. For First Nation students, accessibility to post-secondary education has many challenges, and even sponsorship has not been taken for granted.

In the following question (Table 1.6), students were asked to check off all reasons applicable to them as to why they were approved for post-secondary sponsorship. Their responses were ranked in order from highest to lowest number of responses and included: a band member living off-reserve (n = 16); high school graduate (n = 16); band member living on-reserve (n = 7); students who already had a degree or diploma (n = 7); mature student (19 years of age plus) with children (n = 4); mature students (19 years of age plus) with no children (n = 3); students who failed once previously (n = 3); did not know (n = 2); and students who failed more than once previously (n = 1). There were no responses for two factors: retired band members (60+); and non-status. The results indicated that more of the respondents sponsored by their bands were living off reserve and/or were recent high school graduates. In descending order, fewer of the subjects were band members living on-reserve, students who already had a post-secondary designation, mature students with or without children, or students who had failed previously. While the results supported other findings that more First Nation students who are academically successful have their home base off reserve (Mendelson, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2006), it was unknown whether most sponsored First Nation post-secondary students in Ontario live outside their First Nation territory when not attending school. The results confirmed that First Nation high school graduates were more likely to be funded as a priority and before other applicants. Since the literature review found that there are more mature Aboriginal students participating in post-secondary students than Aboriginal students
coming directly from secondary school, the results bring critical attention to the low secondary school graduation rates of First Nation students.

Table 1.6  
Factors Relevant to Approval for Funding Sponsorship According to First Nation Post-Secondary Students – Ranked According from Highest to Lowest Response (n = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band member living off-reserve</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band member living on-reserve</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who already had a degree or diploma</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature student (19 yrs. +) with children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature student (19 yrs. +) with no children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who failed once previously</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who failed more than once previously</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired band member</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-status</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages were calculated based on the total number of responses per factor and divided by the total subject population of twenty-nine survey respondents.

Student respondents were asked whether they had ever been sponsored as a part-time student. The definition of part-time may vary between different colleges and universities in terms of number of credits or courses that constitute part-time versus full-time. It was my experience that to determine whether the student was considered a part-time student, each First Nation education counsellor would contact the post-secondary institution to confirm what constituted full time and part-time at the school. Most of the students participating in the survey (n = 25) had not been sponsored to attend school part-
time. Four students received sponsorship as a part-time student. Of the students who received sponsorship to attend a post-secondary program on a part-time basis, two respondents were enrolled a Bachelor level of Science (for an undetermined length of time), and a Master’s level in Education (for five years), respectively. One student was sponsored to take one course offered for a week in duration. One student did not respond. Based on my work experience as a First Nation band manager, education dollars were prioritized, first given to full time students applicants and then, with any remaining funding, the band would consider funding applicants enrolled in part-time programs. An investigation of the First Nation post-secondary education policies published on-line uncovered policies that were unique and specific to each community (Temagami First Nation, 2005, pp 8; Garden River web-site: http://www.gardenriver.ca/ps10c.asp; Dokis First Nation, nd, pp.4). It was further noted that sponsorship of part-time students invariably differed from sponsorship of full-time students. For example, in some bands, full time students were subsidized for items such as tuition, living allowance, accommodations, books and supplies, while part-time students received more limited for funding for tuition, books and supplies, depending on the type of program or course they were enrolled in. Guidelines of Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) exempt funding part-time students for living allowance. The results of the current study confirmed that some First Nations sponsor students to attend post-secondary part-time.

Investigating the types of sponsorship which may be provided to post-secondary students, the respondents were asked whether they had received band sponsorship to attend a post-secondary institution internationally. The question was intended to determine the scope or parameters of each band’s commitment to higher education. Only one respondent confirmed that he or she received band sponsored to attend a school internationally, and that sponsorship was to attend a community college in the United States. Within their post-secondary education policies, Temagami First Nation confirmed that a student may be sponsored if they were “accepted into an accredited International post-secondary institution (2005, pp.11). In my experience, students were sponsored to attend studies in other countries such as France and England. The study results corroborated other findings and information that some First Nations sponsor band members to attend post-secondary programs outside of Canada.
Students were asked how much money they received for their post-secondary education sponsorship in order to assess their level of awareness regarding the financial investment made in them by their First Nations. The question was broken down by tuition, living allowance, and book/supplies, and as outlined in the Post-Secondary Education criteria provided to each band by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. In a general review of the responses, it became clear that financial assistance received by students varied with each First Nation or education authority. Further, it was noted that a number of the student participants were unaware or vague about the amount of aid paid on their behalf for tuition, or for books and supplies, yet most knew how much they received as a living allowance. This observation was found to be most accurate regarding the identification of tuition costs. Instead of stating expenses in financial figures, sixteen out of the twenty-nine respondents wrote descriptive comments to demonstrate their knowledge of the tuition paid on their behalf by their band that included, “full”, “unsure”, “complete”, “paid by sponsor”, “yes”, “paid direct to institute,” and no response. Seven out of twenty-nine of the respondents replaced financial estimates with descriptive comments for books and supplies costs. Their comments were “paid by sponsor,” “yes,” or no response. Eight of the twenty-nine respondents did not respond to the question regarding living allowance, or added the following descriptive comments “no job training” and “none”. The reasons some respondents did not identify the cost for tuition, books and supplies, and living allowance were unclear. It was unknown as to whether their lack of response was due to an absence of knowledge or information regarding the payment schedule for their tuition and book and supply expenses. The observation was supported by students’ comments including “paid by sponsor: and “paid directly to the institute.” Students may not have known tuition costs, for example, because these costs were covered by direct transfer payments to the post-secondary institutions by each band or education authority. A reason why more students were familiar with the amount they received for living allowance was likely due to the fact they received the money directly.

The next question related to students’ access to other sources of income, in order to determine the degree of reliance on band sponsorship (Table 1.7). Students were asked to identify all sources of income while attending PSE from a pre-set list in addition to receiving sponsorship. The results varied and ranked in descending order of sample size:
eleven students were able to generate their own income; seven students said they had no other income; seven students collected scholarships or bursaries; five respondents obtained additional loans from financial institutions; four students received additional financial support from other family members; one student had other income generated by a working spouse or partner; and five students selected “Other.” The group who selected “Other” included the following descriptive information: “Child Tax and UCCB [unknown term],” “Residential school compensation,” and “Work study program.” One of the respondents who listed “Other” did not explain what the other source of income was. Two of the pre-identified categories not populated were “Income Generated by Another Government Source of Funding (e.g., OSAP, WSIB, pension, etc)” and “Financial Support From Other Than Family (e.g., church, friends, etc).” The results determined that a larger number of respondents had accessed or generated other sources of income in addition to receiving band sponsorship. The amount of additional income they acquired or received in addition to band sponsorship remained unexplored. The results suggested that the living allowance received by the students was insufficient, and that they were required to seek additional sources of funding or funding opportunities to supplement their living allowance while attending post-secondary. Sinclair (2006) noted that Canadian government implemented a practice of “funding a substantial part or all of the costs of postsecondary education for First Nations people and implementing policies and programs to ensure that they have access to postsecondary education” (pp. 2). In an evaluation of the PSSSP it was found that “over seventy-seven per cent of the graduated and enrolled students participating in the evaluation stated that they would have not attended post-secondary institutions if they had not received PSSSP support” (INAC, 2005, pp. 18). From these results, sponsorship would appear to be the primary source of income available to First Nation students while attending school, but not necessarily the only means of income. It appeared that some students were required or able to access other financial means in order to supplement their living allowance.
Table 1.7
Other Sources of Income Generated by First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Sources of Income</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Other Income</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generated by student him/herself</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generated by working spouse/partner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generated from another government source of funding (e.g., OSAP, WSIB, pension, etc)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support from other family members (e.g., parents, etc)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support from other than family (e.g., church, friends, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans from financial institutions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships/Bursaries</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Other: including Child Tax and UCCB, Residential School Compensation Work Study Program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: one student listed employed under “Other” and it was added to line “Income Generated by Student.”

Changing the course of questioning, participants were asked to respond to questions specifically about the program they were taking. When asked whether they knew what program or programs they wanted to attend, prior to applying for sponsorship, overwhelmingly, most student respondents confirmed that they had known and had identified their program choice prior to applying for sponsorship (n = 26), very few did not know what program they wanted to take prior to applying for sponsorship (n = 2). One student gave no response. When asked how they chose the program they were currently in, their responses were, ranked highest to lowest (see Table 1.8): twenty-one said based on their personal interest and choice; five indicated their choices were recommended by family and friends; three selected the category “Other” and included the descriptors, “university web-site”, “recommended by employer”, and “saw a sign [advertisement]”; two had participated in a co-op work experience in high school that led to their choice; one student chose his/her program as recommended by First Nation
education counsellor; and another student selected the high school education counsellor or teacher category. None of the students selected the option, “attended a career fair” which was of interest since many First Nations offer career fairs to their student populations each year. On the other hand and as noted earlier, many of the student respondents lived off-reserve, and were less likely to access a career fair offered in their communities. While the survey did not examine the respondents’ perceptions of their programs, the results were of interest when examined in the context of findings from the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students completed by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges in 2008. The study found that, compared to non-Aboriginal students, fewer Aboriginal students were happy with their program choices. Eighty-one percent of non-Aboriginal students versus eighty-four percent of non-Aboriginal students said that they would recommend their program to other students, and eighty percent versus eighty-four percent of non-Aboriginal students indicated that they would remain in their program in the next semester. Twelve percent of the Aboriginal students polled from the study said that their current program was not what they wanted. In 2005, a higher percentage of Aboriginal students (17%) were not enrolled in their first choice program, compared to non-Aboriginal students (14%). The implication that students may self-select their program, yet potentially be unsatisfied or unhappy with their program choice has implications that require further exploration.
Table 1.8
Factors Influencing First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents’ Choice of Post-Secondary Program (33 responses from 29 survey participants)

In exploring the relationship between students and their First Nation education counsellors, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their contact with their counsellors over the course of one year or two school semesters. They were asked to identify the number of times they had contact with their First Nation education counsellor, or education office. More students indicated that contact ranged between one and five times a year (n = 17). While fewer in numbers, other students had more contact with their First Nation education counsellors: five estimated six to ten contacts per year; and three students estimated contact between eleven to nineteen times. None of the respondents chose the category twenty times or more per year. Two students indicated that they had no contact with their First Nation education counsellors. Two respondents
did not answer the question. The results demonstrated that most respondents were in communication with their sponsors at some point in the school year.

I was curious as to how it was possible that two students cited no contact with their sponsors in the school year given that, based on my PSE work experience, communication was an essential part of the sponsorship process. When First Nations members apply for post-secondary sponsorship, they need to request and submit completed sponsorship applications, invariably to an education counsellor. Once an application form has been completed, the counsellor may contact the student to request additional information or for revisions to the application. In both situations, contact or communication must occur between the two parties. When approved or not approved, even when the application was completed through distance correspondence, the applicant would be informed of the results and, often, their signature would be requested on the sponsorship contract. Even during the school year, students are reminded to submit receipts, grade reports, and other documentation. From this base of knowledge, it was improbable that a First Nation education counsellor and a First Nation post-secondary student would not be in contact with each other in any given year. At the very least, applicants would be curious about the outcome of their applications. Upon further review of the responses of two survey participants that they had no contact with their First Nation education, it was assumed that they misunderstood the question, or that their contacts for sponsorship were made with a person other than a First Nation education counsellor.

When asked who was responsible for most of the contact with the other party, twenty-three out of the twenty-nine respondents, or the majority of the students, perceived that they initiated most communication with their First Nation education counsellor rather than vice versa. Three participants said that their contact with their education counsellor was mutual in nature, and one respondent did not feel that the question was applicable to him or her. One respondent did not provide a response. Later in the chapter, the results were examined in line with responses given by the First Nation education counsellors to the same question. No research was located with relevancy to the current study and regarding communication between First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students.
To gain further understanding of the contact between the two groups, students were asked to describe the types of contact they had with a First Nation counsellor, how many times per year, and the purpose of the communication. The results were ranked from the most common type of communication to the least in the following areas: telephone, email, facsimile, meeting with First Nation education counsellors in their office, First Nation education counsellor in contact with post-secondary institution directly, First Nation education counsellors and First Nation students meeting directly at the post-secondary institution, First Nation education counsellors meeting directly with students and their families, and other (for further reasons students identified). The results (Table 1.9) revealed that the most common communication between the respondents and their First Nation education counsellors was telephone contact (n = 22), and with the following rates of frequency: less than five times per year (n = 9); five time per year (n = 4); eight times per year (n = 1); ten to fifteen times per year (n = 1), and no response (n = 5). Reasons cited for telephone contact were varied and included “for funding application”, “[for] workshops”, “[for] cheques” (n = 2), “[to] drop a course’, “[for] questions (n = 2) [or] updates”, “[for] education’, [:to request for additional book money’, “[for] grades”, “[for] scholarship”, “[for] questions regarding reimbursement of school”, “[for] documentation”, “[for] funds not received”, “[for] allowance”, “[for] delay in funding”, “[to ensure band received application”, “[for] available funding”, “sponsorship”, and “[for] reminder to send forms.” It is to be noted that each comment was made by one respondent with the exception of where a comment was repeated by more than one respondent. In that case, the number of respondents was identified in parenthesis next to the comments. Three students gave no response.

Email correspondence was the second most common means of communication (n = 16). A student cited email communication occurred between 12 and 15 times during the year, for three other students, contact was between 5-10 times per year. More of the student respondents listed email correspondence with their First Nation education counsellor at a frequency of five or less times during the school year (n = 9). Reasons for exchange of emails included “did not respond to phone calls”, “updates”, “questions”, “education”, workshop/allowance/loan”, “funding for conference”, “questions – reimbursement of school”, “documentation”, “issues/marks”, “progress in school/funding
questions”, considered dropping a class”, “information”, “admin[istration] affairs”, updates, “information”, and no response. As a newer development, more First Nation education offices encourage their students to send transcripts electronically than by other means (Garden River First Nation web-site: http://www.gardenriver.ca/ps02.asp).

The third ranked means of communication used by students was meeting with their counsellors at their office (n = 12). Broken down further, two respondents met in the office of the education counsellor approximately five times per year, while seven other respondents met with their counsellors once during the school year. Three students did not communicate how many times they met with their First Nation education counsellors. Reasons given for the face to face meetings included “for funding – books”, “visited the reserve”, “funding purposes”, “refresher”, “drop off receipts/sign tuition”, “sponsorship letter”, “school application”, and “to hand in forms”. Four respondents did not provide any descriptors. Since the funding application must be filled in and signed, it is common for counsellors to schedule face to face meetings with students approved for sponsorship.

From personal experience, as a sponsored First Nation student, I was required to meet face to face with my counsellor prior to each year of sponsorship to discuss my year of study, receive reminders of my obligations, and complete and sign my sponsorship application and agreement.

Nine First Nation post-secondary student respondents communicated with their First Nation education counsellors through facsimile, as the fourth ranked means of communication between the two parties. Two students sent or received an estimated four faxes during the school year. Five students sent or received faxes between one to three times per school year. Narrative information provided by the respondents indicated that the purpose of the communication by fax included; “[sent] receipts, grades, etc.”, “if needed”, “funding for conference”, “sent unofficial mid-term marks/final documentation”, “sent transcripts, grades, applications”, “application”, “admin[istration].” Two respondents did not identify purposes of faxed communication.

It appeared that most of the faxed correspondence sent to First Nation education counsellors by students was to submit requisite documentation related to their education and academic progress. Working closely with college student support staff, I was familiar with the extensive documentation sent back to the First Nation education departments by
students over the course of the school year. From my past experience, I predicted that faxing would be the most essential means of communication between students and their counsellors. A quick review of the web-sites of various First Nation education counselling offices found that students were encouraged to submit applications and other documents by fax, for example, as noted on the Dokis Education Department web-site (http://www.dokisfirstnation.com/eduservices.html#docs).

Since First Nation education counsellors communicate directly with the institutions and services on behalf of their sponsored students, the participants were asked to confirm whether their First Nation education counsellors directly contacted the post-secondary institution they attended, and to identify reasons. Only six of the twenty-nine student respondents verified that their education counsellor contacted their school on their behalf, and that this type of communication occurred between one to two times per year. Reasons cited were “grades, tuition, and amount of course”, “start/end education”, “progress in school, tuition”, “information for the purposes described”, and “to receive tuition statement”. In my experience, education counsellors contact the registrar and accounting offices of post-secondary institutions to make arrangements for payment for tuition, books, supplies and other expenses on behalf of the student. As a result, it was possible that students in the study were unaware of the ongoing communication completed on their behalf. In summary, the communication between students and counsellors was primarily conducted via electronic means – email, telephone, and fax rather than face to face.

Table 1.9
Types of Communication Between F.N. Post-Secondary Students and F.N. Ed. Counsellors On Average/Year
When descriptors for all of methods of contact between First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors (e.g. email, telephone, etc) were examined collectively, two key themes emerged regarding the purposes of the communication (Table 1.10). One theme is “Funding” (e.g. requests relating to funding), and the other is “Documentation” (e.g. requests and information relating to requisite documentation, and as required by the First Nation education counsellors). Three of the descriptors provided did not fit with the other two categories and were labelled “Other.” Documentation, by way of explanation, referred to the fact that First Nation education counsellors require specific paperwork from students, such as grades, transcripts, receipts, and applications. Funding referred to any comments that were specific to communication regarding financial matters. “Other” referred to miscellaneous comments that could not be categorized within the first two categories. The categories were created with the knowledge that each theme was interconnected and inter-dependent. The descriptive comments were generated by a total of twenty-two out of twenty-nine of the survey participants. The twenty-two respondents generated a total of forty-nine qualitative descriptors when asked to detail the purpose of the various types of communication with their First Nation education counsellors. Twenty-eight comments were categorized within “Documentation Purposes” as the predominant reason for student/counsellor contact during the school year. Twenty of the descriptions were
categorized as “Funding Purposes,” and three respondents provided descriptors placed within the category “Other.”

Documentation, from my work experience as a post-secondary educator and administrator working with First Nation students and their sponsors, and from my experiences as a sponsored student, is a critical First Nation education counsellors’ job requirement. If appropriate reports and other paperwork are not remitted, students could be penalized by not receiving their next monthly allowance, or the First Nation would not remit payment for the next semester or year’s tuition, or for books or supply expenses. From the perspective of the First Nation education counsellors, they required documentation to complete mandatory reporting requirements to Indian and Northern Affairs, and in compliance with policies and procedures of their First Nation employers. Consequently, communication with students is vital. The results of the survey supported that communication for documentation purposes occurred between most of the respondents and their counsellors.

The second most common reason for communication between the two groups was for “Funding Purposes.” Funding specific communication as outlined by the student respondents included: requests for allowance, for reimbursement of items student paid for, for applications, and additional money for books, workshops, conferences. I was familiar with these requests while working in the college environment, students often came to the Native studies department seeking assistance in order to contact their counsellors and/or bands. Since a number respondents indicated repeated requests for release of their funding or allowances, I can confirm that while working as a PSE educator and administrator that students’ living allowance were not always forthcoming or remitted on a consistent basis by some bands, or that their funding was held back for purposes specific to their sponsorship agreement. Possible rationale was that students were late in submitting requisite documents and other paperwork to their counsellors, or that their grades were inadequate or incomplete at mid-term or year-end, or that the First Nation band office or education authority was late in sending out the allowances. The list of potential factors was not exhaustive. The results demonstrate that financial concerns appear to rank high in the communication between the respondents and their counsellors.
As noted, documentation required by First Nation education counsellors was closely linked to funding. The surveyed group of students perceived their primary contact and communication with their sponsoring counsellors was for sponsorship reasons. These factors appeared to be more of a priority as perceived by the survey group as opposed to social counselling, social supports, traditional supports, academic supports, and or other duties as described as part of the First Nation education counsellors’ role in Chapter Two. The observation was reinforced in the follow up and one-on-one interviews completed with four interviewees. They described assistance provided by their First Nation education counsellors as: “…Assisted me financially, no counselling…. Basically send in your application, send in your marks…. As you are continuing forward, there was basically no feedback. If I had a question, sometimes they reply the same day, but am still waiting for a reply from end of January and this is the end of March…… very impersonally really”; “Can’t think of any“; “No way, [although] some encouragement and emailed me.” This section supports the financial and administrative role of the First Nation counsellors as the primary reason for student/counsellor communication.
Table 1.10
Reasons Described by the First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents for Purpose of Communication with First Nation Education Counsellors Ranked by Categories of Funding, Documentation, and Other Purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Purposes</th>
<th>Documentation Purposes</th>
<th>Other Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Funding</td>
<td>▪ Administration</td>
<td>▪ Did not respond to phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ For Funding Application</td>
<td>▪ Questions/updates</td>
<td>▪ If needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Checks</td>
<td>▪ Questions</td>
<td>▪ Visited the reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Education</td>
<td>▪ Grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Request for additional book</td>
<td>▪ Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ money</td>
<td>▪ Documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Workshops/allowance</td>
<td>▪ Ensure band received application/paid fees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Questions-reimbursement of school Supplies</td>
<td>▪ Reminder to send forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Funds not received</td>
<td>▪ Updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Allowance</td>
<td>▪ Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Delay in funding</td>
<td>▪ Documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Books/text, available funding</td>
<td>▪ Issues/marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Sponsorship</td>
<td>▪ Considered dropping a class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Education</td>
<td>▪ Drop Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Workshop/allowance/loan</td>
<td>▪ Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Funding for conference</td>
<td>▪ Admin. Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Questions-reimbursement of school Supplies</td>
<td>▪ Updates, information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Progress in school/funding questions</td>
<td>▪ Receipts, grades, etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Funding for conference</td>
<td>▪ Sent unofficial mid-term marks/final marks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ For Funding - Books</td>
<td>▪ Documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Funding purposes</td>
<td>▪ Sent transcripts, grades, applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Admin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Refresher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Drop off receipts/sign tuition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Sponsorship letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ School application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ To hand in forms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 20 Responses                                                                 | 28 Responses                                                                             | 3 Responses                          |

Recapping the communication between the student respondents and their education counsellors over the course of the school year, the most common methods of communication were telephone (n = 22) or email (n = 16). From the results, the frequency of the communication, on average, was between 1 to 5 times a year by phone (n = 12), and 1 to 5 times per year by email (n = 10). For some students, there was a lot of
contact with their education counsellors, which may suggest there may have been a more supportive role provided by the counsellor. Two students talked to or emailed their First nation education counsellors between ten to fifteen times per year. As a comparison with other methods of communication, the student respondents experienced fewer face to face contacts, and on average, met with counsellors in their offices between five or less office visits. While the results showed that the students communicated with their counsellors, on average, through face to face contact as opposed to faxed correspondence, the results were of limited relevance. The least used method of communication identified was between the counsellors directly with the post-secondary institutions for student specific purposes. The results generated by the question regarding communication confirmed that most First Nation students and First Nation education counsellors have contact with each other over any given year using some form of communication.

Students were then asked to compare the amount of contact that they had with their First Nation education counsellor in the current compared to other years of study. It was not surprising that since the majority of the student respondents were in second year of study or higher that only one respondent felt the question was non-applicable to him or her. In response to the question, sixteen respondents specified that amount of contact with their First Nation education counsellor remained consistent throughout their years of schooling, seven cited less communication in other years, and five respondents perceived that there was more communication between themselves and their education counsellors than in the previous year or years. It would appear that whatever was established for communication between the two parties was carried out throughout the years of the program taken by the students. These results were of interest since I had assumed that the students may have required additional supports in the first year of their studies. It was possible that given the mature status of most of the respondents, that they already had access to other supports, limiting their need to request or receive assistance from their education counsellors.

To further investigate the frequency of communication between First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors, respondents were asked to identify when and how many times contact was made between them and their First Nation education counsellor on specific occasions over the course of one school year.
Table 1.11 provided a summary of the findings outlining the frequency of contact between First Nation post-secondary students and their education counsellors, prior to and during the sponsorship application process, during the school year, and upon completion of the school year. Twenty-five out of the twenty-nine students participated in the question. The results showed that more contact was made prior to and during the application process than during or upon completion of the school year. In relation to contact prior to and during the sponsorship application process, students said they contacted their counsellors between one to two times (n = 15), had no contact (n = 6), between three to four times (n = 3), and more than nine times (n = 1). Once again, I found it of interest that six students cited no contact with their counsellor during the sponsorship application process given my previous description detailing the sponsorship process. No information was available to shed further light on these findings.

Once the sponsorship process was completed, contact between the two parties during the school year was listed as no contact (n = 10), between one to two times (n = 8), three to four times (n = 4), five to six time (n = 1), seven to eight times (n = 1) and more than nine times (n = 1). For the ten students participating in this question who did not have contact with their counsellors during the school year, it was interpreted that no further documentation was required, and that the students’ counsellors afforded them uninterrupted opportunity to focus on their studies. Another possibility was that the students involved in the survey, given that most were in second year or higher, were experienced with knowledge of what was expected from them for sponsorship, and therefore, they had limited reasons to contact or be contacted by the education office. For the students that continued to have communication with their counsellors during the school year, the results confirmed the need to communicate, if only for transcripts and other documentation purposes.

Seventeen of the twenty-five respondents cited that they had no contact with their counsellors at the end of the school year, while six students were in contact with their counsellors between one and two times, and two students connected with their counsellors between three and four times. At the end of the school year, the students who participated in the survey had much less or no contact with their education counsellors compared with during the sponsorship application process and/or during the school year.
From my experience, the purpose for year-end communication included submitting final marks, and providing final receipts or other documentation. Reasons why some respondents indicated had not contact at the end of the school year remained unknown. It was possible that they had submitted their sponsorship requirements earlier.

What I found was most perplexing about the results was that, once again, students consistently and at some point in the entire process of sponsorship - prior to and during application process (n = 6), during school year (n = 10), and upon completion of school year (n = 17) – indicated they had no communication with a First Nation education counsellor (Table 1.11). First Nation education counsellors within a regional office or a First Nation have key responsibilities for the administration of post-secondary sponsorship. At some point in the process, students are required to sign sponsorship contracts, submit bank account information, send mid-term and final grade reports, or receipts, to name a few requirements. Based on this knowledge, I was unable to account or interpret the responses that found that no contact had occurred. As a result, while highlighted, no further interpretation could be provided.

Table 1.11
Frequency of First Nation Education Counsellors Contact with Sponsored First Nation Post-Secondary Students Over a School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Contact</th>
<th>Number of Times Contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to and during the sponsorship application process</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the school year</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon completion of the school year</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response to question</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To clarify the types of services First Nation education counsellors provided to them, student respondents were asked to identify all services they received from their First Nation education counsellor, from a list of possible services. The pre-selected list of
services was generated from previously researched information (see Chapter Two) on services commonly provided by education counsellors to general populations. The services include:

1. Academic Counselling;
2. Interpersonal or Social Counselling;
3. Aptitude or Personality Testing, or Setting Up For Aptitude or Personality Testing;
4. Financial Assistance Support (above and beyond living allowance);
5. Advocator (appeals to school or band on behalf of student);
6. College Preparation Assistance (applications or other post-secondary paperwork);
7. Social and Cultural Support (e.g., Socials, celebrations, etc);
8. Other (describe).

As a note of explanation, the duties related to the financial administration of sponsorship were intentionally omitted from the list of potential counselling services outlined within this question. The rationale was that processing and dispensing of sponsorship was a known element of their positions, and one confirmed and explored at length in earlier research and in current survey questions. The purpose of the immediate question was to identify other potential services First Nation education counsellors performed on behalf of their students.

The respondents were asked to rank each possible service provided to them by First Nation education counsellors as “Often”, “Sometimes”, “Rarely” or “Never”. Responses to each broad service area varied according to the number of students who responded to each factor, and was dependent on whether the respondents used such a service as offered or not offered by their First Nation education. As noted in Table 1.12, more students selected “Never” as their top ranking and for all services: Academic Counselling (n = 21), Interpersonal or Social Counselling (n = 23), Aptitude or Personality testing, or setting up for Aptitude or Personality testing (n = 26), Financial Assistance Support, above living allowance (n = 18), Advocator (n = 23), Post-Secondary Preparation Assistance (n. = 22), and Social and Cultural Supports (n = 24). The following results showed that students did not use many of the potential services
Determined Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

provided by the First Nation education counsellors. In the next category of “Rarely,” responses were dramatically lower when compared to the category of “Never.” The results for the ranking “Rarely were: Academic Counselling (n = 5), Interpersonal or Social Counselling (n = 3), Aptitude or Personality Testing, or setting up for Aptitude or Personality testing (n = 2), Financial Assistance Support, above living allowance (n = 9), Advocate (n = 2), Post-Secondary Preparation Assistance (n = 3), Social and Cultural Supports (n = 2). The number of students who identified use of a specified service as “Sometimes” were: Academic Counselling (n = 2), Interpersonal or Social Counselling (n = 1), Aptitude or Personality testing, or setting up for Aptitude or Personality testing (n = 0), Financial Assistance Support, above living allowance (n = 1), Advocate (n = 3), Post-Secondary Preparation Assistance (n = 1), Social and Cultural Supports (n = 1). In the column “Often”, there were no responses with the exception of two students who cited that they often received services from their First Nation education counsellors in the areas of College Preparation Assistance and Social and Cultural Supports. More of the student group perceived the services they received from their First Nation education counsellors to be limited. While few of the respondents received services from their counsellors in the identified areas “Rarely” or “Sometimes,” and only two students received services under the category of “Often,” and these were identified as college preparation and social and cultural supports.

Based on responses to the question, the role of the First Nation education counsellor, for most of the students, appeared to be limited, given that the ranking “Never” was the top response. While the frequency was low, some students received academic or interpersonal counselling, advocating on their behalf, post-secondary preparation assistance, and social and cultural supports. It appeared that none or few of the education counsellors provided aptitude or personality testing, or referrals to such services listed on web-sites of individual First Nations specific to the services provided by their education counsellors. In keeping with findings from previous questions specific to sponsorship, the results suggested that, for this group, First Nation education counsellors worked primarily in the capacity of financial or sponsorship administration, versus other potential determinants.
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

Table 1.12
Types of Services Potentially Available from First Nation Education Counsellors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Services</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Academic Counselling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Interpersonal or Social Counselling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Aptitude/Personality testing, setting up for testing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Financial Assistance support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Advocate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Post-Secondary Preparation Assistance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Social and Cultural supports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Other (describe): No Response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of ensuring an appropriate understanding of the next section that further examined influence, a definition was provided to the respondents. An “influencer” was defined as someone or something that had the power to sway or affect based on prestige, wealth, ability, or position, and as such, are external in nature. Eighteen of the respondents indicated that their First Nation education counsellors had no influence on their choice of post-secondary program, four participants cited that First Nation education counsellors’ influence was non-applicable to their decision making, three respondents said that the counsellors were little influential, one person felt that his or her counsellor was somewhat influential, and two respondents believed their counsellors to be very influential. One respondent gave no answer. Of the four students who participated in one-on-one follow up interviews, three indicated that counsellors were of no influence in their program selection decisions. Their descriptive comments were:

“Nothing…. There was hardly any contact, actually. I told them what I wanted to take….”; “Not a lot. I went and did an aptitude test [to help me with my decision]”; “Nothing (no elaboration).”

In contrast, one student found her counsellor to be very influential saying,
“The counsellor was a part-time employee, and the permanent employee [was] on leave. The [full time worker] had told me to fill in application. Follow up was with the part time [staff member]. [The part-time worker] told me that I was more qualified to go to university, despite the fact that the program was more costly. [I was] surprised. [The part-time worker] told me the amount of the program, and told me to put in for the Native Teacher and Human Service Program. [I was] accepted. [The part-time worker continued to] encouraged [me].”

However, her experiences with the full-time worker were not as positive, and the subject found that the full time staff person did not follow up or ask questions.

Eleven respondents added further descriptive comments on how their counsellors influenced their program choices. Three respondents agreed that their counsellors encouraged their program selection based on the “Cost of the Program.” Three students cited that their counsellors’ influence on their program choices was a result of a “Preference for a Specific PSE Institution”. Five students selected the category “Other” and added the following descriptors:

“It depends [on] what the student’s career goals are”, “Education Counsellor told me that I had the work experience all ready, just had to write them down and go to university”, “The Education Counsellor is fully aware of my interpersonal skills, commitment, as well as compassion for working with people. We communicate through email and in person during work hours”, “I really wanted to go back to college to take an Environmental Studies program but I exhausted my college funding. My counsellor informed me that I had to either go to university or go through OSAP”, “Support and encouragement, availability, excellent counselling skills”.

As observed by the comments offered by eleven students who perceived their First Nation counsellors to be influential in their program decisions in some manner, it appeared that they felt their First Nation education counsellors influenced them through discussions about the cost of programs, their knowledge of the students capabilities, their preference for specific institutions, or through their general support for decisions made. The degree to which influence was exerted by the counsellors which impacted on
students’ decisions was not available from the results, nor was there any indication as to whether the students’ program choices were a direct result of the counsellors’ influence.

In the next question, students were asked to rank a fixed list as to who had the most influence in their selection of post-secondary programs. The results were especially difficult to analyze given that not all respondents ranked each item from one to fifteen as requested. What transpired was a grouping of non-standardized responses where some respondents gave the same ranking to more than one influencer, others gave a number (not necessarily a ranking) to some influencers and none to others. Other respondents ranked the list correctly and as requested. The results pointed to respondents confusion as to what the ranking meant, or, potentially, to respondents fatigue. It was possible that my request for subjects to rank a list of fifteen factors was excessive. This interpretation was substantiated given that the ranking of the list of fifteen factors became less populated further down the list, as if the respondents ran out of energy or interest in ranking all identified factors. These results suggested that the format of the question was difficult or not favoured by the respondents.

Despite the issues identified with the question, some of the results were of note. I found that more of the respondents ranked “Self Influential” as their top influencer (n = 21), and “Personal Interest” ranked in second place (n = 10). The high ranking of these two factors lent support to previous findings from the survey that the respondent considered themselves and their personal interests to be more influential in their program decision making than other factors. Since personal interests were anticipated as being important, this finding was expected. However, none of the other influences stood out as more important than others in the results. What was interesting was that the ranking of First Nation education counsellors as an influence scored low with respondents ranking their First Nation education counsellors with the following scores: 2nd place ranking (n = 1), 4th place ranking (n = 1), 8th place ranking (n = 1), 9th place ranking (n = 1), 10th place (n = 2), and 12th place in ranking (n = 1). Only in the last place, rank fifteen, did First Nation education counsellors receive a higher number of responses (n = 6). The information corresponded with results from the previous question where the respondents found that First Nation education counsellors had limited or no influence in their post-secondary program choices. The results found that more students saw themselves as their
top influencing factor. This was of interest and explored more fully in the following chapter.

When asked whether they believed that they would successfully complete their programs, the participants in the survey were quite positive. Twenty-seven out of the twenty-nine respondents predicted that they would successfully complete their programs, one student said “no” and another student did not respond. When they were further asked whether they believed that their First Nation education counsellor contributed to their academic success, ten of twenty-nine respondents agreed, eighteen did not agree, and one did not respond. This would indicate that while more of the respondents did not feel that their counsellors were influential in their program choices initially, some felt their counsellors contributed, in varying degrees, to their academic success.

To further explore the area of influence, students who said that their counsellors contributed to the successful completion of their program were asked to describe how they contributed. Seven respondents provided descriptive comments outlining how their counsellors played a role in their academic achievements. As outlined in Table 1.13, the comments focused on the financial support and arrangement of their relationship, and on the moral support and encouragement provided by counsellors. In a one-on-one follow up interview, one respondent felt that his/her counsellor was helpful to him/her as explained in the following statement: “The part-time counsellor said that I had backbone, skills and abilities. I asked my uncle and he told me to go to university. It made me confident. Also, asked my mom.” The results confirmed other research that First Nation education counsellors provided financial (Temagami First Nation, 2005, pp. 19) and interpersonal (Constance Lake First Nation. 2008, pp. 5) support services to sponsored students.
Table 1.13
First Nation Students’ Descriptive Comments of Their Perceptions Regarding Contributions of Their First Nation Education Counsellors Toward Their Post-Secondary Study Successes (n=7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Financially helped me.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The contribution would be allowing me to be band funded for college and university education.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Financial wise and letters of references for scholarships, bursaries and awards.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Footing the bill”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She is always very positive about my success thus far, she identifies my personal commitment with school, employment and family.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She will say to me, ‘I know you can do it.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Support, guidance and excellent listening skills. Great communication skills. He is a graduate from NCTP program. [Name of First Nation education counsellor] is a great counsellor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By providing me with the money needed and by ensuring I stay on top of my work.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sixteen out of the twenty-nine or fifty-fifty percent of the participants provided descriptive comments as to why they felt their First Nation Education counsellors did not contribute to their academic success. Their comments were included in Table 1.14. The gist of the comments detailed a description of issues experienced by the students with their First Nation education counsellors, their financial relationship, or a lack of ongoing involvement (with the exception of financially specific communication). In the one-on-one follow up interviews, three students expressed concerns regarding the lack of support from First Nation education counsellors as indicated in the following descriptions:

“I would probably say [they] were not very relevant. I wouldn’t go to them because they are so impersonable [impersonal].”

“Not helpful, family was more helpful and boyfriend.”

“A former employer and my wife [were more helpful to me] than the education counselling in making my financial choice of program to take.”
One exception was the student who described interpersonal supports and assurances from a temporary position counsellor whom he/she felt contributed to his/her academic success. Since many of the students in the sample were older students and in their second or higher year of school, it is possible that they were more autonomous, with less need for supports from their counsellors. As a result, they neither sought nor were sought out by their counsellors for ongoing services. These factors may explain why some students perceived they required less need for supports from their First Nation education counsellors.

**Table 1.14**
First Nation Students’ Descriptive Comments of Their Perceptions Regarding the Lack of Contribution from First Nation Education Counsellors Toward Their Post-Secondary Study Success (n = 16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No compassion, lack of interest, lack of professionalism, didn’t know what she was talking about, lacks educational skills and knowledge, really suffers from reality.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Could check with student periodically.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No calls to me to inquire about progress without fear of taking away funding. Checking up needed. Needs to be on email.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As a person, we only discuss finances. That indeed will contribute to my success. However, academically my counsellor has not provided much help. I haven’t asked either though.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I didn’t have support except for living allowance, tuition and books in the past. I don’t expect it now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Besides just giving the sponsorship that I need to pursue my goals, they never helped me otherwise.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was an education counsellor who was working temporary education counsellor, she was the 2nd major influence, to take the step [toward] higher education in my field (schooling), she believed in me and told me everything was going to be alright.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No encouragement, not much contact.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “Not really involved. Only a liaison between the school. Not involved on a
personal level. Does liaisoning(?) on an adequate level.”

“I was rarely informed or contacted about fields of interest. (Maybe because of my age).”

“First Nation counsellor has provided no service whatsoever.”

“Complicated things and added stress. She was not supportive and I had to fight to secure funding I was entitled to.”

“We have very little contact outside of professional questions. They have never contacted me for personal support. I have always had to contact them.”

“The ed. services were not accessed as I was capable on my own. I know many of our current students access the ed. counsellor.”

“I feel that all the credit of my success goes directly to me because I am the one doing the work and the one who is away from home.”

“My success will be reflected upon the Post-Secondary Student counsellor but is not a result of their stellar performance.”

“I don’t feel as though I’ve gotten much insight or counselling from them, but this may be my fault for not contacting them. I am not dissatisfied with the counsellors.”

Upon review of the responses outlined in Table 1.13 and 1.14, many highlighted the financial and sponsorship relationship between the students who participated in the survey and their counsellors. The responses supported earlier findings that suggested that the influence of First Nation education counsellors for these students was limited or non-existent at the point when students chose their post-secondary program options. While many of the respondents in the survey were older and in second year or higher of their studies, it was possible that they did not need assistance, other than financial. Of note, more students provided descriptions as to why they felt their First Nation education counsellors did not contribute to their success than those who felt that the level of services from their counsellors contributed to their academic success. As an observation, it was possible that there were more students participating in the study who were somewhat disgruntled with services from their counsellors than students who were
satisfied with their counsellors’ services. At the same time, the results found that some students felt their counsellors contributed to their overall academic success.

Students were then asked to rank the level of service they perceived they received from their First Nation post-secondary education counsellors with the following results: very high level of service (n = 3), somewhat high level of service (n = 2), acceptable level of service (n = 8), minimal level of service (n = 8), very little or very limited service (n = 6), no service (n = 0), and not applicable (n = 1). One student did not respond. Overall, thirteen out of twenty-nine students believed that the services provided by the First Nation education counsellors were at an acceptable level or higher, while fifteen felt the services provided were minimal or lower. The results demonstrated a fairly equitable split in the surveyed group’s perceptions regarding the level of services provided by their counsellors (Table 1.15).

Table 1.15
Level of Service Provided By First Nation Education Counsellors As Perceived By First Nation Post-Secondary Student Respondents (n = 29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Levels of Services From F.N. Ed. Counsellors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were invited to add descriptive comments as to why they received the level of services they did or did not receive from their First Nation education counsellors. Upon review of the descriptors, I broke them into common themes that I
entitled “Bias or Limitations”, “Services”, “Interpersonal Interactions”, and “Other.” The categories described common qualities of behaviour of First Nation education counsellors as described by the students. “Bias or Limitations” was defined as descriptions of pre-conceived attitudes of the First Nation education counsellors. The category “Services” referred to comments specific to the job related activities performed by the counsellors. The term “Interpersonal Interactions” grouped comments together that described the personal quality of the interactions between the students and counsellors. I believe that the invitation to add descriptive comments regarding the level of services provided by counsellors was neutral, and a way of acquiring both positive and negative feedback about the students’ experiences. I found was that there was a balance between the student observations from both a critical and a positive perspective. I believe that the feedback given by an anonymous group of students presented a unique opportunity for all First Nation education counsellors to access frank student perceptions and to develop new insights to aid in their own work.

Within the category, “Bias or Limitations”, several themes emerged from the twelve students who described concerns with the services they received from their First Nation education counsellors. The statements from the respondents described: a general lack of effectiveness with respect to their First Nation education counsellors; a lack of adequate qualifications for the position; a lack of counsellor initiated and on-going contact with students; and nepotism or favouritism as to who received funding sponsorship, or which students were contacted during the school year. While the respondents voiced frustrations with their experiences working with their First Nation education counsellors, some also acknowledged that First Nation education counsellors were understaffed and under-funded.

In the category “Services”, six of the eleven respondent comments centred around the fact that they perceived the primary function of First Nation post-secondary education counsellors’ as financial administrators. To a lesser degree, the students also identified other roles that their First Nation education counsellors performed including advocating, guidance, and support and encouragement. It was also noted that two respondents felt they received positive vibes from their counsellors, and that despite their counsellors being busy, they felt they could contact them when they needed to. The results reinforced
the participating students’ perception that the primary role of First Nation education counsellors to be financial administration.

From comments included in the category “Interpersonal Interactions”, four respondents described the interpersonal qualities of their relationship with their counsellors, especially noting the encouragement and support they received from their sponsors. One student cited a lack of support from his/her counsellor, and the fact that he/she received more support from others, more specifically from his/her partner and family.

As a final observation, comments of the respondents were broken down as positive, of concern, or neutral in nature (Table 1.16). Upon review of the statements, thirteen students voiced concerns, eight expressed positive messages, and six stated neutral statements. Two survey takers did not respond. The results further demonstrated the diversity and complexity of the relationships and nature of communication between individual students and their education counsellors.

Table 1.16
Descriptive Comments by First Nation Post-Secondary Students Grouped into Categories Regarding their Perceptions of the Level of Service Received from their First Nation Education Counsellors (n = 29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Descriptors</th>
<th>Detailed Descriptive Comments by First Nation Post-Secondary Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biases or Limitations</td>
<td>Of Concern Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 11)</td>
<td>“Lack of educational levels, lack of knowledge about the outside world and living in an urban setting, bias, nepotism, I wasn't related to her, lack of personality, professionalism, and organizational skills, unqualified to do any types of career or aptitude tests.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Off-reserve-why I received lack of support -- funded/ sponsored/ counsellor checks on my academic progress.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I feel that the counsellors only support you when you ask questions, or if your grades are beginning to take effect. At times, it also reflects on who you are”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories of Descriptors</td>
<td>Detailed Descriptive Comments by First Nation Post-Secondary Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(what family you come from) - more like favouritism.”</td>
<td>“a) Politics, who you are and what your last name is. It is also like that in terms of bursaries and awards. b) Understaffed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't believe my counsellor has contacted me or encouraged me that often because she feels I don’t need it. I've already completed 2 college degree programs(successfully) so she must feel that I am confident enough. Also very hard to get in touch with her-always away from her desk or on holidays. On the other hand she does want me to succeed but doesn't &quot;actively&quot; show it.”</td>
<td>“Some First Nations Educational Counsellors need more training, and the level of service tends to focus on younger groups.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Inept, counsellor -really doesn't care. Hassle to even get a hold of.”</td>
<td>“She doesn't care about her job or the students she is suppose to help.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not qualified”</td>
<td>“[Recommend] mandatory minimum requirements.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services (n = 12)</td>
<td>“Because she is busy. Because I am not living on-reserve and have never met her. Because our contact is minimal via phone/email. But without her I wouldn't be able to go to university because of financial reasons.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are limited in funding (No travel dollars). There are only 2 counsellors (1 college and 1 university). These are only assumptions.”</td>
<td>“Although we do not deal with much else besides financial, I feel as though if I ever needed something else I would be able to ask/approach my counsellor about it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have never contacted me.</td>
<td>“I receive financial”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “The Education Counsellors at my First Nation are administrators, not counsellors. Currently, they just issue checks.” | “I did not think that the counsellor was there to interact on a personal basis, so with this in mind, her level of assistance has been
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Descriptors</th>
<th>Detailed Descriptive Comments by First Nation Post-Secondary Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of Concern Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The only time was before first year to ask why I had not sent in my address info etc. Two years in a row now/ I have had to pay [$$$$] out of my own pocket to avoid deregistration from classes. They forget to send my sponsorship letter by the time that it is due. I've had to go out of my way to call days before and visit to make sure. They always seem to &quot;forget&quot; about me. One time they did not pay the $$$$ because they only &quot;cut cheques on Wednesday&quot;. They have frustrated me numerous times”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Note: comments are a continuation of comments of concern by one student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Provided information and guidance in academic counselling, one on one counselling, encouragement and support, great listener, open minded(his personality is great), easy to get along with.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Interactions</td>
<td>“They have a lot of confidence in me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 4)</td>
<td>“She is very</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Descriptors</th>
<th>Detailed Descriptive Comments by First Nation Post-Secondary Students</th>
<th>Of Concern Comments</th>
<th>Positive Comments</th>
<th>Neutral Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>compassionate. Very good listener.”</td>
<td>Other (n = 2)</td>
<td>“Not sure. It's my right?”</td>
<td>&quot;Don’t need service&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Nation Education Counsellors

Eight First Nation education counsellors responded to the survey. The response rate was out of a total of a potential ninety-four First Nation post-secondary education counsellors across Ontario. The identified total number of First Nation education counsellors was based on figures retrieved from the membership list of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) directory from 2007-2008. The ONECA directory was used since the organization updates its membership list on an annual basis and the directory included contact information and descriptions of all its’ membership. According to the ONECA secretariat, most First Nation counsellors in Ontario are members of the Association. I identified the counsellors eligible to participate in the survey by reviewing the membership list, noting the members who worked with “post-secondary” students exclusively, or as part of their responsibilities. Of further note, some counsellors had multiple duties. For example, one education counsellor may be responsible for all levels of students - elementary, secondary, and post-secondary - within their community. I further cross referenced the description of the position with the location of their employment within a First Nation, or First Nation tribal or regional education authority. ONECA membership also included a number of other groups: First Nation education counsellors working with elementary and secondary level students; post-secondary students; education counsellors and Aboriginal service workers employed within post-secondary institutions; and staff working within other educational organizations. As a result, I had to sort through the ONECA directory manually. Care was taken to ensure that the survey targeted the appropriate sample group since only First Nation education counsellor’s on-reserve or within First Nation regional offices are responsible for administering First Nation post-secondary sponsorship.
The respondents who participated in the survey comprised approximately eight percent of the potential sample of First Nation education counsellors working with post-secondary students exclusively, or as part of their responsibilities. Upon closer review of the completed surveys, five of the eight respondents’ worked with post-secondary school students specifically. It was decided to include the responses from the other three participants for the following reasons. Two respondents were First Nation education counsellors whose primary responsibilities were with students at the elementary and secondary levels of education. While these counsellors work predominately with other student groups, they would also be knowledgeable of the sponsorship structure, as well as the reporting requirements and responsibilities to INAC. Further, given my personal experience working with First Nation education counsellors, I am aware that they work with each other, and to a degree, their work tends to overlap given they serve the same student population at one time or another. One other respondent identified in the follow up interview that he/she was a First Nations education committee member responsible for advising the First Nation education department. This individual cited their role to include making recommendations for students to be sponsored, reviewing academic progress of sponsored students, recommending terminations for student sponsorship, to name a few responsibilities. As a result of reviewing the surveys and understanding the conditions in which these individuals worked, it was decided that the all subjects were highly knowledgeable regarding post-secondary students and the sponsorship process. As a result, no surveys were filtered or eliminated.

**General Demographics**

The results were not representative of the entire province of Ontario or of the five Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO’s): the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), Grand Council Treaty #3, Independents, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Union of Ontario Indians (Table 2.1). The eight respondents who completed or partially completed the surveys were from the PTOs’ of Grand Council Treaty #3, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and the Union of Ontario Indians. The geographic area in which the respondents resided was Northern and Central Ontario. Invitations to participate in the survey were specifically declined by two southern Ontario First Nations. On average, the populations of the FN communities where the respondents worked were 1,150 residents.
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

or less living on-reserve. This would indicate that most of the respondents worked in smaller First Nation educational units, or were part of a larger northern education authority.

Table 2.1
Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) of First Nation Post-Secondary Education Counsellor Respondents (n = 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Provincial Territorial Organization</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. of Iroquois and Allied Indians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Council Treaty 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishnawbe Aski Nation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Ontario Indians</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education Counsellor Specific**

A picture emerged from the responses of the eight counsellors who participated in the survey.

All respondents were Status Indians. This was of interest since it is likely that the counsellors who participated in the survey were not only of a similar cultural background to their sponsored students, but were members of the same First Nation. The results are supported in several ways. In addition to selecting candidates based on relevant skills, education and experience, it has been my experience, that the majority of the bands prioritize the hiring of community members for band employment opportunities when possible. In my review of the ONECA directory, I noted that based on their last names, it was likely that many of the counsellors were of First Nation or Aboriginal ancestry, or had married a First Nation male. It is quite likely that the majority of First Nation education counsellors across Ontario are of First Nation or Aboriginal descent. From this perspective, First Nation education counsellors have a strong basis on which to build positive and supportive relationships with their sponsored students, and throughout the students’ post-secondary career, cemented through their common cultural connection.
The results found that the respondents varied in age. Four counsellors were between ages 41-50 years old, two were between 31-40 years of age, one counsellor was between the age of 20-30, and one counsellor was between 50-60 years of age. No research was found to determine whether the findings were comparable to the representation of ages of First Nation education counsellors across the province of Ontario.

Relative to their personal status, five of the First Nation education counsellor respondents were in a common law relationship, one was married, one was single, and another was a widower. At the time of the survey, one respondent had one child, three respondents had two children each, three respondents had three children each, and one respondent had four children. In addition, one respondent was pregnant at the time she participated in the survey, one respondent was raising a non-biological child, and one respondent was raising two non-biological children. The marital status and the number of children of the participants were varied.

The gender of the counsellors who participated in the survey included seven females and one male. The results were comparable to a review of genders of the First Nation post-secondary education counsellors within the 2007-2008 ONECA Directory. I found that among the seventy-six members who were post-secondary counsellors fifty-eight were female and eighteen were male. The results confirmed other known findings that more First Nation education counsellors are female. For future study, it would be of interest to determine the implications of female dominance within both First Nation education counsellor and First Nation post-secondary student populations.

Collectively, the participating counsellors were found to have attained a divergent range of PSE education. Figures for the grades lower than high school or partial high school were not included given that only one respondent cited that he or she had completed these levels of education. Likely, most of the counsellors filled in responses for highest levels or post-secondary levels of education attained. Four of the eight surveyed completed high school; three respondents graduated with a college diploma program; one survey taker had partially completed a two year college diploma; four successfully attained university degrees; two successfully completed two separate degree programs each; and one had partially completed a degree program. Two respondents
further confirmed that they had successfully completed the ONECA accredited Native Counsellor Training Program (NCTP). Another respondent also partially completed a program identified under “Other” types of programming. From such a small sample group, the results revealed that the participants had completed a large number of post-secondary programs. Further, that they had completed the programs as mature students\textsuperscript{5}. The results corresponded to other research as noted in the literature review that a significant number of First Nations people began their higher education career as an older student. The results also found that all the participants attended post-secondary education at either the college or university level, affirming their ability to be mentors and role models to the students they sponsored. Further, those who participated in the survey had a clear sense of what their sponsored students were experiencing as they attended college or university.

The post-secondary programs taken by the respondents were categorized using the Classification of Instructional Program 2007 (CIP). All of the programs taken by the respondents were reviewed and found to be under the categories of Social and Behaviour Sciences and Law (n = 7); Humanities (n = 3), and Education (n = 2) and Unknown (n = 1). It was noted that the number of accredited programs identified were greater than the number of survey respondents and the result of the respondents’ completion of multiple degrees or diplomas. The ramification of one respondent with more than one degree or diploma was understood to contribute to a larger grouping within the CIP of Social and Behaviour Sciences and Law, based on the greater possibility that the degrees or diplomas acquired beyond the initial post-secondary program were interrelated. Between the eight respondents, they had completed or partially completed a total of fourteen post-secondary accredited programs. To their credit, the participants in the survey are among a rarefied group of First Nations populations in Canada who have attained a post-secondary level of education. Given the size of the sample, the results were not known to be generalizable to the existing populations of First Nation education counsellors in Ontario.

There were several observations available from the results. Most of those who participated in the survey had acquired a degree or diploma in the category of Social and Behaviour Sciences and Law, and more specifically, in an interpersonal counselling post-

\textsuperscript{5} See Definitions for description of mature student.
secondary program. These results indicated that the survey respondents possessed the appropriate skills and knowledge to provide their sponsored students with personal and social counselling. Only two of the respondents completed a program specific to education counselling, and more specifically, the ONECA Native Counsellor Training program (NCTP), a certificate program, with curriculum components specific to education counselling. This meant that more of the group who participated in the study had an educational background appropriate to personal counselling, as opposed to education or guidance counselling offered by high school or post-secondary counsellors. It was likely that the skills to provide educational support and services to First Nation students by the counsellors who did not participate in a specific education counsellor post-secondary program, were acquired on the job, or through job related training. From another perspective, as a result of their educational attainment, the counsellors’ academic experiences enhanced their ability to understand the challenges and processes experienced by the students they sponsored.

As a further profile of the subjects, six respondents were employed in their position between four to five years and up twenty-two to twenty-five years. This finding indicated that the group had extended work experience as First Nation education counsellors. All respondents were employed in their positions in a full-time capacity. One respondent noted that as part of his/her position that he/she was also designated to sit on specific community committees. Some respondents were responsible for multiple levels of education: elementary (n= 2); secondary (n = 3); postsecondary (n = 2); or all levels of education (n = 2). The responses confirmed previously known information that First Nation education counsellors in some First Nations have duties for multiple levels of education. Two participants did not answer this question – one explaining that he/she was on the First Nation education school board. The results corroborate that the survey volunteers were appropriate for inclusion in the study given their understanding of the nature of work completed by First Nation education counsellors.

Given the relevance of the role of the Ontario Native Education Counsellor Association as described in Chapter Two, I sought to determine its importance to the survey participants. Six First Nation education counsellor respondents cited familiarity with ONECA and confirmed their membership with the Association. Seven respondents
perceived ONECA to have assisted in the enhancement of their skills and knowledge as counsellors. Three out of the eight respondents indicated they had participated or successfully graduated from the Native Counsellor Training Program, the post-secondary accredited certificate program delivered by ONECA. The findings confirmed that the respondents of the survey had a strong connection to ONECA as noted by their familiarity, their positive receptiveness to the organization, and the fact that some of the respondents had participated in the accredited education counsellor program offered through ONECA.

The yearly salary levels earned by the counsellors who participated in the survey were reviewed. The salaries varied widely, from between $21,000 to $25,000 and $46,000 to $50,000. Broken down, the results showed that: one participant earned between $21,000 to $25,000.; two respondents earned between $26,000. to $30,000.; two earned between $31,000. to $35,000.; one earned between $36,000. to $40,000.; another earned between $41,000 to $45,000.; and one earned between $46,000. to $50,000. There appeared to be no continuity in salary rates, and supported the likelihood that each First Nation set their own salary rates. For comparison, salary ranges of mainstream education counsellors in Ontario who work in elementary, secondary or post-secondary institutions ranged between a low yearly wage of $24,024 to $57,657.60, an average wage of $31,304 to $45,947.20, and a high yearly wage of $49,192 to $79,144 (Service Canada, 2006). The results of salaries of Ontario education counsellors were calculated from an hourly rate in order to demonstrate a viable comparison. The highest salary identified by the First Nation education counsellor respondents fell into the category of the lowest wage category for mainstream education counsellors, despite the fact that some of the survey group had experience working as counsellors that well exceeded twenty years of experience, and despite the fact that most of First Nation education counsellors in the survey had post-secondary school education. While the results may be reflective of the differences in education requisites for education counsellors working in mainstream education institutions, further investigation is required. From these results, Indian Affairs and Northern Development is encouraged to enhance the funding of First Nation education counsellors in order to create wage parity. With the exception of the counsellor certificate program provided by ONECA, post-secondary institutions have
been slow to develop extended programs or courses specific to First Nation education counsellors’ academic requirements and needs. Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998) found that Aboriginal teachers experienced a devaluation of their credentials earned from Aboriginal specific teacher education programs manifested in comparatively lower wages. The wage inequities currently experienced by First Nation education counsellors suggest a similar devaluing of their accreditation and training. I recommend this as an important area of consideration by ONECA for further study.

**Experience Working with Post-Secondary Students**

Of the counsellors who responded to questions regarding sponsorship, one individual estimated sponsoring between 6 and 10 students in 2006-2007. Another sponsored between 41-50 students, and two counsellors sponsored over 76 students. To determine whether it was feasible that a First Nation in Ontario sponsored over seventy-five students each year to attend post-secondary school, I investigated but was unable locate statistics identifying the number of students sponsored by individual bands each year. By deduction, and given the significant size of some First Nations, there was a good possibility that a single First Nation was able to fund a large number of students.

A supporting question was asked to identify the number of students who applied for sponsorship. The question was posed to get a sense as to whether counsellors were able to fund as many applicants as applied. Two counsellors reported being able to fund as many students as applied (Table 2.2). One respondent was unsure of how many applied (beyond whom they sponsored), and another confirmed that there were more applications than available funding. These results corresponded to findings from the 2009 Audit of the Post-Secondary Education Program by INAC that some bands were able to fund all eligible students while others were not able to accommodate the demands. Moreover, the report noted that the full extent of surpluses or deficiencies were unknown given that no systematic process was implemented at the time of the report to track them. The fact that not all bands are able to fund all applicants was further substantiated by findings that twenty percent of applications for PSE sponsorship were deferred due to lack of funding (INAC, 2005). In 2006-2007, as an example, Six Nations had to deny funding 200 eligible community members due to a lack of adequate funding (Grand River Post-Secondary Education Organization, 2008, pp. 1).
Overall, I experienced difficulties in locating specific First Nation statistics relating to the number of students each First Nation sponsored in any given year. From my work experience, the number of the students sponsored depended on the PSSSP funding allocated to each band in any given year. One First Nation with a population of approximately three hundred on and off reserve members recently funded between seven to eight full time students (living allowance, tuition, books and supplies, and travel) and two to three students taking part-time studies (tuition and/or books only). The survey results confirmed that the number of students sponsored varied among First Nations, and that the number was dependent upon PSSSP funding received by each band and the programs applied for by the students.

Table 2.2
Comparison of Number of First Nation Students Approved for Sponsorship and the Number of First Nation Students Who Applied for Sponsorship in 2006-2007 (n = 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Identifier</th>
<th>N of F.N. Students Sponsored</th>
<th>N of F.N. Applicants for Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent #1</td>
<td>6-10 students</td>
<td>6-10 applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent #2</td>
<td>41-50 students</td>
<td>51-75 applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent #7</td>
<td>Over 76 students</td>
<td>Over 76 applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent #8</td>
<td>Over 76 students</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to list the year of post-secondary study that their sponsored students were in at the time of the survey, four of eight participants responded. Their responses showed that they sponsored more first, second and third year students than students enrolled in fourth or higher years of study. While the sample was small, the results were of interest since I noted a similar finding from the student survey. Possibly, there may be less students in the higher years of PSE study given that the First Nation students enrol in shorter programs (e.g., two or three year college diplomas, three or four year university degrees, etc), or that a number of students are unsuccessful in their year of study and, as a result, were not eligible to continue. The academic struggles of Aboriginal populations are well documented. The likelihood that academic difficulties were a contributing factor was further observed given that two counsellors sponsored fewer students in second year than in first year. On the other hand, the results confirm that sponsorship continues for the length of the students’ post-secondary programming, since the counsellors describe
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entering into multi-year sponsorships with students. The findings further support that bands entered into new sponsorship agreements with new or re-applying PSE applicants each year given that the counsellors granted sponsorship to first year students.

The responses also corroborated that some First Nations sponsor students on a part-time (PT) basis. Four of the eight counsellors indicated that they sponsored part-time students as a consistent practice. The types of programs or courses sponsored by the counsellor participants were: Native Language Instructor; Special Education; Aboriginal Teacher Education; Law; Medical Management; Art Therapy; and Social Work. Based on the CIP Broad Categories, PT sponsored students identified in the survey were enrolled primarily in program categories of Education, Law, Medicine, and Social and Behavioural Science. It was noted that this list of programs was similar to the CIP Broad Categories identified for students attending PSE full-time. While the sample was small, the results supported concerns regarding the under-representation of Aboriginal students in specific sectors of college or university level of programming.

The respondents were asked whether their community members were given more than one opportunity to apply for sponsorship after receiving sponsorship previously. The results were broken down between college and university programming. As a supporting question, they were further asked to delineate between students who applied for a college or university program taken at an Aboriginal Educational Institution. The research was not intended to investigate specific reasons as to why individuals were re-sponsored, only that they received sponsorship more than once. Five survey participants responded, three indicated they sponsored students to attend a college program more than once, and two approved of sponsorship one time only. One respondent clarified their response by describing that repeat sponsorship was not their band’s policy. When asked the number of times students were eligible to re-apply for sponsorship after participating in a college program, two participants re-sponsored students up to two times, one respondent indicated sponsoring applicants up to four times, and one individual indicated that there was no repeat sponsorship of students. Regarding re-sponsoring students to attend university, five out of the eight counsellors responded to the question. Two respondents confirmed that their bands approved of multi-applications for sponsorship, and three counsellors did not sponsor more than once. Of the two respondents who funded students
to attend more than one university program, one sponsored students more than twice. The results suggest that multi-sponsorship of PSE programs may be a consistent practice for some bands at both college and university levels of education. From my experience, I received partial sponsorship to attend bachelor, master’s and doctorate levels of PSE.

When asked whether they funded students to attend a PSE program through an Aboriginal Educational Institute (AEI) more than once, four of the eight surveyed respondents. Two participants confirmed that this was part of their practice and two participants said their funding was one-time only per student. In terms of the number of repeated sponsorships to attend an AEI, there were only two responses. One individual indicated that re-sponsorship occurred twice, and another subject had approved a student to attend a post-secondary program at an AEI up to six months.

In view of these results, it was not apparent whether students were successful in one PSE program and then re-applied for another, or whether they were unsuccessful in the completion of one program, and then re-applied for sponsorship for the same or another program. From my experience, First Nation students are more likely to be sponsored upon successful completion of an accredited college or university program to then enrol in another program at the same post-secondary level or higher of education in order to enhance or upgrade their existing knowledge and skills. At the college level, each year a number of Aboriginal graduates transfer credits or apply as a first year student to university. It appeared that exposure to college programming provided these students with the skills and confidence to further explore and enhance their academic opportunities at the university level. Conversely, since some counsellors provided multiple sponsorships to students (e.g. up to six times), it was unlikely that these students successfully completed all the programs they received band sponsorship to attend. On a more positive note, repeat sponsorship possibly enabled some students to achieve academic success since it is known that more aboriginal students take longer than the identified length of a program to successfully complete it. Extended PSE exposure would provide these students with enhanced familiarity with an academic environment, building their comfort level, and possibly augmenting their knowledge acquired from previous courses and programs through each new re-application.
Three of the eight First Nation education counsellors responded to the question regarding how many sponsored students lived on or off-reserve. One person sponsored five or less on reserve, and sponsored fifteen or less off-reserve. Another respondent sponsored ten or less on reserve and ten or less off-reserve. The final respondent sponsored twenty or less on-reserve and twenty-five or less off-reserve. The sub-sets were based out of a group of five students per category. While the results of the study slanted toward more off-reserve students being funded than on reserve, this result was not necessarily significant given the limited number of respondents, and there were no similar studies with which to compare. Statistics Canada (2009) found that off-reserve First Nations people (46%) were more likely to have a university degree or college diploma than on-reserve (35%). Since no indication was given as to how they were funded, the results were not useful in determining whether more on or off reserve community members receive sponsorship.

Three respondents acknowledged a practice of sponsoring students to attend post-secondary programs outside of Canada. One person cited that his/her First Nation did not fund students internationally, and one participant offered the comment that no one had applied to date. These students were approved to attend schools in the United States (n = 3), and one student was sponsored attend school in Greece. As a sponsored First Nation student, I knew of other students who went to France, England, United States, and Spain to go to school. The results provide support that some bands approve of international educational opportunities. However, how frequent or widespread the practice was is unknown.

First Nation members who apply and are successful in receiving sponsorship to attend post-secondary school are selected based on a criteria laid out by each First Nation. The counsellor respondents were requested to rank a list of pre-set criteria that I pre-selected based on my work experience at both the community college and First Nation band level. The results were not presented in the study given that interpretation was not possible. I found that four out of eight respondents ranked the factors in a non-standardized manner, and as a result, ranking did not occur from highest priority to lowest priority, some factors were ranked and others were not, and some factors were given the same ranking. It appeared that the question was not easily interpreted or clear to
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the respondents. The extensive number of factors to be ranked may have contributed to survey fatigue, or lack of interest in the question.

In terms of annual post-secondary budgets, five of the eight respondents estimated their budgets were from $121,000 to $150,000 (n = 1), or higher than $500,000 (n = 4). They were asked to break down the costs per student based on tuition, living allowance, and books and supplies, and to provide the calculations based on whether the students attended college or university. Specific to college and on average, three respondents allocated up to $3,000 for tuition in 2006-2007 (n = 3) and two provided the same level of sponsorship in 2007-2008. Two counsellors dispensed between $3,001 and $5,000, consecutively for tuition. For a living allowance, one counsellor paid out $6,300 to $8,100 per year ($700 to $900 per month) in 2006-2007. Another respondent provided a monthly allowance of $8,110 to $9,900 per year ($901 to $1,100) in both 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. A third respondent paid $9,910 to $11,700 per year ($1,101 to $1,300 per month) to students in college in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, while a fourth respondent paid out $11,710 to $13,500 per year ($1,301 to $1,500 per month). For books and supplies, First Nation post-secondary students were paid between $500 or less, to as high as $1,001 to $1,500 per year. Four out of the six respondents indicated that their First Nations paid between $501 and $1,000 per year on average for books and supplies for college level First Nation students.

Specific to university, the counsellors surveyed paid between $3,000 to $5,000 in 2006 and 2007, and in 2007 and 2008 for student tuition. For a monthly living allowance, the amounts paid out were more diversified. Of the four individuals who responded to this question, each identified a different amount paid for monthly living allowance to their students. The calculations based on the individual students were: one respondent sponsored monthly living allowances of between $6,300 to 8,100 per year ($701 to $900 per month) in 2006 and 2007; another respondent provided between $8,110 to $9,900 per year ($901 and $1,100 monthly) for living allowance in both 2006 and 2007 and 2007 and 2008; another participant dispensed between $9,910 to $11,700 per school year ($1,101 to $1,300 monthly) in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008; and another respondent paid $11,710 to $13,500 annually ($1,301 to $1,500 per month) in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 for living allowance. The total expense paid for books and supplies per university student
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was: $501 to $1,000 (n = 2) in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, and $1001 to $1,500 in 2006-2007 (n = 2), and $1001 to $1,500. in 2007-2008 (n = 3).

Comparing figures of tuition paid for college and university students, it was noted that the respondents spent approximately the same on tuition for college and university bound students – between $3,000 and $5,000. They also paid the same amount for living allowance of between $700 to $1,500 per student and per month. However, when comparing sponsorship for books and supplies, it was noted that more money was spent on behalf of university students than college students. One respondent indicated that he/she had paid $500 or less for books and supplies for a college student, but none of the other participants indicated they spent $500 or less on university students. While some counsellors indicated that both college and university students received between $501 and $1,000 for their books and supplies, in the next category of $1,001 to $1,500 more counsellors (n = 3) sponsored university students for these amounts than college students (n = 1). While the size of sample was small, depending on the program, college expenses appeared to be less costly than university expenses for tuition and books and supplies.

The results demonstrated that both college and university bound students received similar living allowances. Living allowance costs were found for British Columbia bands for 2007-2009 (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2009). Their rates were $435 a month for a single student living at home, $1,046 a month for a single student living away from home, $1,332 a month for a single parent (excluding costs of child[ren]), and $2,06 a month for student and spouse (excluding costs of child[ren]). Cost of dependents was $559 a month. While the rates were not comparable to my results given that I had not requested a breakdown of the rates for the different categories described above, the information did correspond with my findings that some bands pay both university and college students the same amount for living allowance. It would have been interesting to compare the research to rates of sponsorship broken down by tuition, living allowance and book and supply costs between the various bands across Ontario but the information was not readily available. What the results did demonstrate was that in addition to the existence of differing allocations for sponsorship, the schedule of rates is not uniform across the communities and is created by each First Nation.
The counsellors were requested to identify the following information about each sponsored student: the post-secondary program taken, whether the program was taken at college or university, and whether the students were on or off reserve. The results were intended to be compared with the programs taken by the students who participated in the student questionnaire. Only one participant completed the question in its entirety. A respondent explained that he/she did not complete the question given that he/she was responsible for one hundred and four sponsored students and that there were too many to list their individual programs.

Inquiry was further made into whether the counsellors had more contact with first year First Nation post-secondary students than students in other years of schooling. Of five responses, two counsellors spent more time with first year students than other students, while three counsellors spent more time with second year students or higher. The question was intended to determine whether support was provided to students when they were most vulnerable to exiting their programs, during the first year of studies (Ryan, 1995). In terms of the amount of contact, respondents contacted first year students consistently between one and three times prior to and during the application process for tuition, books/supplies and/or living allowance, during the school year, and upon completion of the school year. The students surveyed identified more communication with their First Nation counsellors than the counsellors who participated in the study. During the school year, the students identified that the average telephone communication with their education counsellor occurred approximately five times, email correspondence took place five times or less, and face to face meetings happened, on average, once during the school year. Further, the student respondents cited consistent contact with their counsellors throughout all of their years of PSE education. More of the students also said that they initiated most communication with their education counsellor. No previous research was available to support or explain the findings.

The next question presented to the counsellors related to student success. They were asked how many first year students were successful in completing their first year. Three participants responded, but their answers were difficult to summarize given that their responses were not in any consistent format. For example, respondents did not include the number of first year students sponsored for comparison purposes, and
different measurements were used by each respondent (e.g., a number versus a percentage).

Given that the counsellors noted that not all students are successful in the completion of their programs, they were asked, on average, how many chances or opportunities the first year students were given to re-enrol. Three of the eight respondents approved of re-sponsoring students despite previous failures up to two times (n = 2), and up to ten times (n = 1). One individual did not check off any of the information boxes but wrote that “[a] second chance is given to students who fail for the first time attending college or university.” Another respondent wrote “policy states if a student fails the program, the result is two year probation then [they] can re-apply.” The results provided support that the policy and manner in which students can reapply for sponsorship vary between each First Nation.

A key duty of First Nation education counsellors is to track the academic progress of students while attending school. The participants indicated that the manner in which they contacted students for this purpose was by calling them directly (n = 4), and a total of between 4-6 times (no = 1), eight to eleven times (no = 1), and twelve times and more (no. = 1). Respondents (n = 4) also indicated that they contacted the staff of the post-secondary institution (e.g. the registrar’s office, accounting office, campus counsellor, Aboriginal services, etc) directly to track students progress. Of those who communicated with the post-secondary institutions, one respondent made contact between one to three times, and another respondent estimated between four to six times. Two survey takers did not respond. In descending order of methods used to track students’ progress, the First Nation education counsellors used the following approaches: emailed students (n = 3); sent facsimile (n = 2); met with students (n = 2); visited students (n = 1); and met with students and their families (n = 1). From a general perspective, the results provided an opportunity to review the process by which education counsellors track their students’ academic progress.

In addition to tracking students’ progress, respondents were asked what type of services and the frequency in which they provided services to the students they

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6 The list of services potentially offered by First Nation education counsellors was outlined in the definition section of the current research.
sponsored. The list they selected from was pre-scribed and the same one used in the students’ survey. Four of the eight respondents cited that the duties they provided most often to students related to budget administration and other student specific administration duties. Three respondents provided academic counselling “Often” and one respondent provided academic counselling “Sometimes”. Counsellors provided interpersonal or social counselling “Often” (n = 2), and “Sometimes” (n = 1). Report writing specific to their work with First Nation post-secondary students was done by counsellors “Often” (n = 2), “Sometimes” (n = 1), and “Never” (n = 1). Advocacy or appeals made on behalf of the students occurred “Often” (n = 1), “Sometimes” (n = 2), and “Rarely” (n = 1). As for testing administration, or testing analysis, one participant cited that he/she “Sometimes” provided these services, and one respondent noted that he/she “Rarely” provided these services. Two respondents offered no type of academic testing (e.g. aptitude), or analysis for students.

As seen in Table 2.3, more of the respondents perceived a key element of their responsibilities to be budgetary and administrative in nature. These duties focused on the management of processes. The respondents felt they provided less academic and interpersonal/social counselling. From this perspective, their role differed markedly from education counsellors more commonly found in secondary and post-secondary schools.

Table 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Service</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Academic Counselling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Interpersonal or Social Counselling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Scientific Student Testing – Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Scientific Student Testing - Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Advocating/Appeals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Budget Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Report Writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what portion of their time was spent on each of an identified list of services as a percentage, between five and seven participants responded depending on the service. Broken down, the counsellors provided academic counselling less than 5% of their time (n = 1), between 5% and 10% (n = 2), between 11% and 20% (n = 2), and between 21% and 30% (n = 1). They provided interpersonal or social counselling less than 5% (n =1), between 5% and 10% percent of their time (n =2), between 21% and 30% percent (n = 1) and over 50% of the time (n = 3). Responsibilities for budget administration varied from: not part of their responsibilities (n = 2), between 11 and 20% of their role (n = 1), between 21 and 30% of their duties (n = 1), and greater than 51% of their position (n = 1). As for other student specific administrative duties, these were cited to be 5-10% of their position (n = 2), 21 and 30% of their duties (n = 2), or greater than 51% of their duties (n =1). Student advocating or making appeals on behalf of the students consumed none of their time (n = 1), less than 5% (n = 1), between 5 and10% (n = 2), between 11 and 20% (n = 1), more then 51% (n = 1), or non applicable (n = 1). Report writing took up less than 5% of their time (n = 2), between 5 and 10 % (n = 2), between 11 and 21% (n = 1), or was non-applicable (n =1). Overall, the results demonstrate that each counsellor spent differing amounts of time completing specific duties for students. Other research confirmed that similar duties as described in the study are performed by other First Nation education counsellors (Mattawa First Nation, 2008; ONECA, 2008).

The next section of the survey dealt with ascertaining the degree of influence counsellors perceived they had with their students. Seven out of the eight respondents agreed that they were influential in decisions students made regarding the post-secondary programs applied for. One respondent clarified this by stating, “most of the time, students are dead set with their education goals/careers.” In determining the degree to which they were influential, three respondents felt that they were “very influential”, two perceived that they were “somewhat influential,” and two others believed that they were a “little
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

influential”. A written quote provided by one of the counsellors was “being there for them supports/assists them….having an office here helps them – e.g., computer access, photocopying, etc.” While the sample was small and there was limited corroborating research, the counsellors who participated in the survey believed that they were influential, to varying degrees and in general terms, in their sponsored students’ post-secondary program choices.

The respondents were then asked what potential factors they took into consideration when influencing post-secondary students and their responses included:

- cost of the program (n = 1);
- expense of attending a post-secondary institution (n = 1);
- preference for a specific post-secondary institution for reasons other than financial (n = 3);
- test score results for aptitude or other academic testing for appropriateness to attend a specific program (n = 1).

Three counsellors selected “Other” and included the following descriptive comments:

- “Question [student] personal wellness.”
- “Community needs.”
- “Students are [have] usually already selected their education choices but having an office or having a counsellor available to talk to, assists them greatly.”
- “I support the students’ choice and assist them in any way possible.”

The results were divergent and did not point to any clear manner of influence. Each counsellor expressed different reasons for influencing students while they made program choices.

To further explore the role of counsellors’ influence, participants were asked, from their perspective, to rank a list of influencing factors from one to fifteen, ranking one as the highest influencer and fifteen as the lowest. As a factor, First Nation education counsellors were included as a potential influencer to determine where those completing the survey perceived that they fit in with other listed influencers. Seven of the eight respondents completed the question. The results were difficult to interpret given that the participants did not follow any standardized method of ranking. Some gave the same numerical rank to more than one influencer, while others did not rank all factors. What I found was that scores were distributed over the chart, with no factor more relevant than others. “Friends” scored slightly higher than others as a highest influencer (n = 4), while
“Chief and Council” and “Band Members” garnered the most scores, at rank thirteen, as the lowest influencer (n = 4). Two counsellors considered themselves to be their students’ number one influencer, while the other three counsellors saw themselves ranking second, fifth, and sixth, individually, as an influencing factor. Three respondents considered themselves to be in seventh place as an influence in their students’ program decisions. The responses confirmed other study findings that counsellors perceived themselves to be influential to their students, but not necessarily the most influential factor that students consider when making their program choices. No other research was found to substantiate the results.

To ascertain their ability to influence their students’ choice of post-secondary institution, the respondents were asked to rank a list of thirteen potential influencers that included themselves. In the ranking scheme, one was the most influential and thirteen was the least influential. The list varied from the previous list of influencers for program choices given that some of the factors were non-applicable. For example, “Previous experience within a cooperative [high school] program was not relevant to the institutions selected but to the program choices made by the students. Once again, the results were difficult to interpret given that some of the respondents ranked one or more influencer exactly the same, while others did not rank all factors. Consequently, and similar to the previous question, no clear pattern emerged. The highest score given for any ranking was “Distance or Proximity to Home” and it was ranked as a second priority (n = 4). This result corroborated research cited earlier in the literature review where approximately sixty percent of a given student population was found to live near the post-secondary institution attended. Similar to the previous question, the role of Chief and Council or Band Members was ranked by five respondents in the twelfth rank. The results were similar to findings from the First Nation post-secondary students survey in that both results found First Nation political or community influences were considered to be minimal in students’ preferences of post-secondary programs and institutions. As for the influence of the education counsellors in what educational institution students decide to attend, the rankings were one (n = 1), two (n = 1); five (n = 1); six (n = 1); and seven (n = 3). Seven of the eight respondents felt they were influential in post-secondary institution choices of sponsored students to varying degrees. One respondent wrote that the question
“did not apply because all students are treated the same because of the large population, it is first come, first serve basis.”

Next, counsellors were asked to compare the amount of services provided to specific categories of students based on “more service,” “less service,” and “same service.” The categories of post-secondary students were: on-reserve (recent high school students); off-reserve (recent high school students); on-reserve mature students (no kids); off-reserve mature students (no kids); on-reserve mature students (with kids); and off-reserve mature students (with kids). The results showed that the counsellors felt they gave “more service” to all categories of students rather than “less service”, or “same service” to various categories of students. There was a slighter higher response rate of “more service” for on-reserve (recent high school students) and for off-reserve mature students with children but the sample size was too small to define a clear pattern. Descriptive comments were provided by some of the participants as reasons for lower contact and services to sponsored post-secondary students. The written comments were: “time management, scheduling;” “the [name of the district and organization] employs two Aboriginal Youth Liaison Officers to work specifically with students in its elementary and secondary schools;” and “all the students I work with are either elementary or secondary student – mainly off-reserve “Nish” kids.” The results demonstrated that the counsellors participating in the survey provided varying levels of services to different types of students, and the levels of services provided varied from counsellor to counsellor. Their rational or criteria for providing varying levels of service to different types of students remained unexplored.

Table 2.4
Level of Service Provided by F.N. Ed. Counsellors to Different Types of FN Sponsored Students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Student</th>
<th>More Service</th>
<th>Less Service</th>
<th>Same Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. On Reserve Post-Secondary High School Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Off Reserve Post-Secondary High School Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. On Reserve Mature Students – No Kids</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Off Reserve Mature Students – No Kids</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. On Reserve Mature Students – With Kids</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Off Reserve Mature Students – With Kids</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

The chapter provided a detailed review of the results compiled from the two written surveys self-administered by two groups of voluntary subjects: First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students. The results also incorporated additional information gained in follow up interviews completed by a handful of survey takers who agreed to further contact with me for this purpose. In all, there were twenty-nine First Nation post-secondary students and eight First Nation education counsellors who completed and submitted the survey questionnaires. Of the six follow up interviews, five were completed by students. The results were stated and interpreted to the extent that comparable research was available, and based on my personal work experience within Aboriginal specific post-secondary departments, and exposure and work with First Nations education counsellors.

Some of the survey questions received low response rates, or were answered in a non-standardized manner by respondents, mostly within the counsellors’ survey. Little or no interpretation could be elicited from these questions. Further, the sample sizes were small and the two groups were of unequal sizes. The result was that responses from the two groups afforded limited ability for comparison, and there was limited ability to extrapolate the results to the larger populations that the two groups of respondents belonged. Despite gaps in responses and the limited scope of the study, however, the available data proved to be enlightening and informative. The study, explorative in nature, was able to provide insights from the unique perspectives of the First Nation
education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students who participated in the surveys.

Overall, both groups were found to be highly motivated, articulate, and well-educated. While their perspectives on the influence of First Nation education counsellors on First Nation post-secondary students’ program choices differed, most survey participants agreed that counsellors positively influenced students through their financial and/or administrative assistance. The study was able to contribute to further understanding about the role and responsibilities of First Nation education counsellors and their relationship with PSE students, and as a result, provide a good basis from which to respond to the original research hypothesis and research questions in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

General Overview of Research

The chapter will provide discussion on general patterns observed emerging from the data acquired from the twenty-nine students and eight education counsellors who participated in the study. More importantly, the chapter will address the original research hypothesis and research questions through interpretation of the new data as it was relevant and specific to each question and to a decolonizing pedagogy. The interpretative approach consists of reflection of the data from the current study, supported with relevant findings from other available research and information, and from my own extensive work and First Nation student experiences within post-secondary education. From these deliberations, a number of implications, limitations, and recommendations emerged that I trust will support and encourage future research specific to First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students. As an ultimate goal, the exploration within a little researched area of study will enhance understanding of the important role played by First Nation education counsellors, and their ability to further contribute to First Nation students’ academic success.

General Patterns of Data

The sample sizes of both surveys were smaller than anticipated and as proposed in the initial dissertation proposal submission. The projections were based on available information regarding the number of First Nation education counsellors working with post-secondary students in Ontario, and the number of First Nation students enrolled in post-secondary programs in Ontario. In the end, the total number of surveys received from First Nation post-secondary students was twenty-nine, and the total number of surveys returned from First Nation education counsellors was eight. While neither sample was representative of the two identified groups, the data was explored in a tentative way, as an area of limited exploration. I further came to recognize that the sample sizes were not as relevant to the study given the valuable perspectives and insights offered by each volunteer. It has become a rare window of insight that others can view, learn something, and be challenged to advance the cause of First Nation PSE education.
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

As part of demographic information, not all Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO’s) were represented within the subject groups. Student respondents who participated were from the PTO’s of Grand Council Treaty No. 3, the Independents; the Union of Ontario Indians; as well as another PTO outside of Ontario called the Northern Quebec Association (James Bay). None of the student sample was from the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians or the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Interestingly, more students who participated in the survey were from the Union of Ontario Indians than the other PTO’s. In comparison, First Nation education counsellor respondents were fairly evenly distributed over the areas of Grand Council Treaty Three, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and the Union of Ontario Indians. None of the counsellors were from the Association of Iroquois or Allied Indians and Independents. Collectively, more of both groups of subjects were from northern First Nations than southern First Nations in Ontario. While each PTO is the umbrella organization for a number of First Nations, they were not approached directly to endorse my research. This was one approach that I might have considered when I planned my initial strategy for relaying invitations to participate in the research. With respect to appropriate protocols and in support of the OCAP principle, however, it was important that each First Nation was approached separately for their endorsement of their counsellor’s participation, and received general knowledge regarding research specific to the role of a First Nation position, and completed by a First Nation doctoral student.

As part of general demographics, the two survey groups were asked whether they lived on-reserve or off-reserve. Given that the positions of First Nation education counsellors are often located on-reserve or within a First Nation organization, it was expected that the majority of the workers would be of First Nation ancestry. It was based on my previous knowledge and experience that I am aware that many First Nations promote hiring for band employment opportunities from within their communities when possible. The results confirmed that all of the counsellors in the study were of First Nation ancestry, and it was assumed that they either lived on-reserve, or near their place of employment, given their need to reside near their place of employment. It was further assumed that all of the participants of the post-secondary students’ survey were of First Nation ancestry given that this was a key eligibility requirement for their participation in
the study. In the First Nation student sample, there were more students who identified themselves a living off-reserve than those who were living on reserve. The results correspond to findings from Statistics Canada (2007) where more First Nation people lived off-reserve (60%) than on-reserve (40%). While these findings have been disputed in a report on the Indian Registry (Bailey, 2008) and the Assembly of First Nations (2002), the study mirrored the rates cited by Statistics Canada. The reasons as to why there was more participation of off-reserve post-secondary students in the study than on-reserve students remained unknown. From the study and a review of the ONECA directory, it was found that more counsellors lived on-reserve yet more students participating in the study lived off-reserve. While the two groups held common links as a result of their First Nation heritage, it would be of interest to determine whether their place of residence had any impact on the counsellor/student relationship.

Next, the ages of the respondents were compared. The largest individual category of student respondents was between the ages of 18 to 24 years of age, a total of seventeen out of the twenty-nine respondents. The other age categories – ages 25 to 30; ages 30 to 40; and ages 40 to 59 – had a fairly even representation of participants each. None of the student respondents were aged 60 or over. The study sample supported the finding that Aboriginal students are more likely to participate in higher education as an older student. Out of eight First Nation education counsellors, more were over the age of thirty. While the sample size for First Nation education counsellors was too small to represent a cross-sectional sample of First Nation education counsellors in Ontario, I found it interesting that many First Nation post-secondary students are older, many students are potentially the same age or older than their sponsor. The dynamics of the older student and similar aged sponsor is a possible area for further investigation.

For both groups of subjects, there was a much higher population of females who responded to the surveys than males. Twenty-one out of the twenty-nine First Nation post-secondary students and seven out of the eight First Nation education counsellors were females. The results supported other research findings that there are more female than male First Nation students participating in post-secondary accredited programs. As noted from the ONECA directory, the majority of the education counsellors were also female. Further investigation is recommended to determine the relevance of a larger
female population in both First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students, and the ability of First Nation education counsellors to be more or less influential in sponsored students’ academic success.

The results just examined compared the demographic information compiled on the two subject groups. The interpretation of the general demographic information provides a setting from which the subsequent responses to the dissertation questions are placed in perspective.

**Addressing the Research Hypothesis and Research Questions**

The results of the two surveys – for First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors – and follow up interviews were used to respond to the following research questions that were generated to support and provide clarification of the research hypothesis.

1. Does the level of influence that First Nation Education Counsellors have on First Nation post-secondary students sufficiently impact the students’ choices of post-secondary programming?

The survey tools developed specifically for the study included direct questions intended to ascertain the level of influence that First Nation education counsellors potentially wielded in their sponsored students’ college or university accredited program choices. The data accumulated from the surveys and the interviews were based on the perceptions and experiences of each member of the two subject groups. Specifically, several questions in the students’ survey and the education counsellors’ survey were referenced to develop and support the response to the first research question.

The students who responded to the survey were asked whether they had known what program they were going to apply to prior to making an application for band sponsorship. Twenty-six of twenty-nine students reported that they had already selected their program of choice prior to applying for funding. Consequently, most of the students had already pre-selected a specific program when they applied for funding. The students were then asked to identify from a prescribed list who had recommended the post-secondary program they enrolled in (Question #22 – Student Survey). Despite some respondents’ confusion that resulted in a total of thirty-three responses from twenty-nine
students, one factor received a much higher response rate comparatively. Most subjects perceived their “Personal Interests and Preferences” to be the most crucial factor in their selection of the post-secondary program they were taking at the time of the survey.

The students were then asked questions specific to influencers. They were requested to rate the level of influence First Nation education counsellors had on their program choices from a range of scores - from “Very Influential”, “Somewhat Influential”, “A Little Influential”, to “No Influence At All”. Eighteen of twenty-nine respondents indicated that their education counsellors were “No Influence At All,” four students said that the influence of counsellors was Not Applicable” to them, and three students ranked their counsellors as “Little Influential”. It was unknown why some of the subjects chose “Not Applicable”, since no descriptive comments were provided to clarify their ranking. In a lengthier ranking question, the students were requested to rank fifteen potential influencers from the most influential to the least influential. While the question was completed in a non-standardized manner by most participants, the highest ranked responses were “Self” and “Personal Interest”. First Nation education counsellors scored much lower in the students’ ranking overall, as discussed in greater detail in the results chapter, indicating that most respondents considered their sponsoring counsellors to have minimal influence on their post-secondary programs decisions. No corresponding research was found to support these findings.

Since more of the students who completed the survey already knew which post-secondary program they were seeking entry into prior to applying for sponsorship, it was extrapolated that other influences assisted them at some point prior to when they in selected a program. From previous findings, other influencers included interpersonal factors such as friends, spouses, partners, and family, or other aspects such as program quality or availability, or cost of living (Saskatchewan High School Leaver Consortium, 2000). Given that more of the students selected their program based on their personal preferences and interests suggested they may have had a higher degree of self-initiative. This was possibly due to the fact that many of the students in the survey were older students. The study confirmed previous findings that many Aboriginal students attended post-secondary school at a later age, also referred to as delayed entrants, were married or had partners, and had children (The Educational Policy Institute, 2008; Holmes, 2005;
As further support that First Nation post-secondary student subjects presented a high degree of autonomy over their program decisions, Weenie (2002) found that resiliency through such factors as self-efficacy, vision, faith, stability, compassion, and resourcefulness were characteristic of Aboriginal students who persevered despite adversity. As many Aboriginal students start post-secondary as an older student, and more mature First Nation post-secondary students participated in the current study than younger students, it was likely that time and the previous life experience of the mature students contributed to their choice of programs they perceived best suited to themselves. The results also suggested that the respondents had a higher degree of familiarity with their post-secondary opportunities given their choices were based on their personal interests and preferences.

That many of the students in the survey self-selected themselves as their greatest influencer when choosing their post-secondary program is seen as progress and support toward First Nation self-determination and self-empowerment. That these same students were also enrolled and engaged in their studies at the time they took the survey, Battiste (2005) would consider them to have a clear understanding of themselves in the work and in relation to others (pp. 6). As empowerment comes with education, then the students in the study were successfully engaged in what Battiste termed as “intellectual decolonization.”

As a concern, it was found that seventeen percent of the Aboriginal students who participated in a previous study were dissatisfied with their program choices (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2008), and that the number of Aboriginal students who successfully completed their programs was much lower than the academic success achieved by the general Canadian student population (Malatest and Associates, 2004). The results suggested that Aboriginal students would greatly benefit from more and knowledgeable supports when choosing their post-secondary studies than what the students in my survey or previous research received or requested. This is an area of potentially enhanced research, and where First Nation education counsellors could play a larger role as a knowledgeable support.
From a different perspective, the First Nation education counsellor respondents were asked whether they felt that they were influential in the decisions their sponsored students made regarding what post-secondary programs to apply for (Question #41 – First Nation Education Counsellors Survey). Of eight respondents, seven answered positively that they believed they were influential in this specific decision made by their sponsored students. In the subsequent question, they were asked to rank their influence as very influential, somewhat influential, a little influential, and not influential at all. Three perceived that they were “Very Influential”, two identified that they were “Somewhat Influential”, and two perceived themselves as “Little Influential”. One respondent did not answer the question. No respondents perceived that they had “No Influence” over students’ program choices.

The First Nation education counsellors who participated in the survey believed that they were more influential in their sponsored students’ choices, than the students perceived. All the counsellors agreed they were influential to varying degrees, and for a number of reasons. Factors they cited to support their ability to be influential included that they imposed financial constraints as part of their responsibilities for financial administration, they had preferences for specific post-secondary institutions, they acted as support and encouragement for student decisions, they were concerned about potential students’ personal wellness, some of the counsellors used academic or other testing to determine and promote areas of interest of students.

These factors were summarized from written comments provided by the participants. While one counsellor believed he/she was influential in students’ decisions regarding program selection, he/she included the following anecdotal comment, “Most of the time, students are dead set with their education goals/careers.” Based on this statement, the participant felt that he/she was influential with a few students, but that most already knew the program they wanted to attend. The comment highlighted a need for further clarity regarding the extent to which First Nation education counsellors influenced some or specific students.

In summary and in response to the research question, survey answers were reviewed to determine whether the level of influence First Nation Education Counsellors held on First Nation post-secondary students was sufficient to impact on the students’
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

choices of post-secondary programming. The results found that there was a distinct difference in perceptions between the two subject groups, and in fact, the results were polarized. The students perceived themselves to be more independent of influence of First Nation education counsellors, whereas First Nation education counsellors perceived themselves to be more influential on the students’ selection of post-secondary programs. As stated, both roles are complementary and do not represent polarity in how students reached the point where they selected and enrolled in their post-secondary studies. While it was interpreted that some First Nation education counsellors used their influence to support students program choices, further study is recommended to determine whether the results were applicable to a larger sample size, especially the disparity noted in the responses. While of interest, there was not sufficient information available to determine why counsellors were perceived to be of so little influence by many of the First Nation students who participated in the study. Further, it was suggested that the autonomy demonstrated by more of the students in the study was a sign of self-determination, contributing to their personal decolonization from an intellectual perspective.

2. What role do First Nation education counsellors play in First Nation post-secondary students’ selections of post-secondary programs?

Both groups were asked to provide further details on the role each perceived First Nation education counsellors to play in First Nation post-secondary students’ decisions regarding their program choices. It is to be noted that the response given to this question overlaps, somewhat, with the response provided in the preceding question.

As noted in the earlier response, more of the student respondents did not perceive their First Nation education counsellors to be influential in their decision making specific to selecting a program. For the few students who identified some influence, it was difficult to determine the degree to which they felt the influence of the counsellors. Overall, more of the students perceived their counsellors to have little influence to no influence at all in their program choices. It was suggested that since more of the students’ demonstrated autonomy and independence in choosing their programs that their actions were self-determining in nature. Hence, the actions of a predominately mature group of
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

students supported growth of a segment of an indigenous student population toward intellectual decolonization.

At this point, I examined the smaller group of students who believed their counsellors were influential to a greater degree in their program choices. They were asked to identify in what manner their First Nation education counsellors may have influenced them. Specifically, they were asked to select from a pre-identified list of potential factors. The list included: “The Cost of the Program”, “Expense of Attending Post-Secondary Institution”, “Preference for a Specific Post-Secondary Institution for Reasons Other Than Financial”, “Test Score Results For Aptitude or Other Academic Testing Applicable to a Specific Program”, or “Other”.

Three respondents identified the manner in which their counsellors were influential related to the “Cost of the Program”. Another three noted that their counsellors were influential by having a Preference for a Specific Post-Secondary Institution for Reasons Other Than Financial”. To what extent did the students perceive that the counsellors influenced their decisions based on the identified factors was unexplored. Regarding costs and preferences, it was also unknown as to whether these discussions had an impact on the students’ ultimate program choices and decisions. Five respondents selected the category “Other”. The listed item “Other” was included so that respondents could select a factor of their own choosing that was not present on the pre-identified list of factors. Further, if “Other” was selected, the participants were given space in the questionnaire to add descriptive comments. The following descriptive comments included:

"It depends what the student’s career goals are. Education Counsellor told me that I had the work experience all ready just had to write them down and go to university."

“The Education Counsellor is fully aware of my interpersonal skills, commitment, as well as has compassion for working with people. We communicate through email and in person during working hours.”

“I really wanted to go back to college to take an Environmental Studies program but I exhausted my college funding.”
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“My counsellor informed me that I had to either go to university or go through OSAP.”

"Support and encouragement, availability, excellent counselling skills."

From observation, three key themes emerged from the descriptive comments from the small group of subjects. The subjects perceived that the nature of their First Nation education counsellors influence to be directive, for example, to attend a specific level of post-secondary education (n = 2), as supportive, specific to counselling and encouragement (n = 2), and as an administrator, enforcing policies of the First Nation and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) (n = 1).

From a different perspective, First Nation education counsellors were asked to ascertain the degree of influence they perceived they had with their students’ program decisions. Seven out of the eight respondents said they were influential, three respondents felt that they were very influential; two perceived that they were somewhat influential, and two others believed that they were a little influential. They were then asked to list factors they considered when they exerted influence on their sponsored students as they deliberated about their options regarding programming. The listed factors were identical to those provided to the First Nation post-secondary students and included: “The Cost of the Program”, “Expense of Attending Post-Secondary Institution”, “Preference for a Specific Post-Secondary Institution for Reasons Other Than Financial”, “Test Score Results For Aptitude or Other Academic Testing Applicable to a Specific Program”, or “Other” (that included opportunity to add descriptive details).

The respondents selected preference for a specific post-secondary institution (no. = 3), and “other.” (no. = 3). For “Other”, the following descriptive comments were included:

“Question [student] personal wellness,”

“Community needs,”

“Students are [have] usually already selected their education choices but having an office or having a counsellor available to talk to assists [students] greatly,”

“I support the students’ choice and assist them in any way possible.”

The additional comments provided support that some counsellors felt their influence was demonstrated through encouragement and tangible offers of support. There
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in an indication that these counsellors may not have influenced the program selection process as much as they influenced the process of application and entry into the post-secondary program.

When comparing responses from both groups, it was noted that the students and education counsellors participating in the survey selected two factors more frequently than other factors: “Preference (of the First Nation education counsellors) for Specific Post-Secondary Institutions”, and “Other”. Since students are more likely to attend college or university given its proximity to the students’ family home (Statistics Canada, 2003), this may play a role in the stated preference for specific institutions of some counsellors. Besides being an obvious cost-saving factor when students commute to school from their home, limited information was available to further explain why this category was selected by more counsellors and student respondents.

The second category that scored a somewhat higher response from both subject groups was the category “Other”. As a brief explanation, “Other” was made available as an option in the questionnaire for the respondents when none of the prescribed items were applicable to them. In selecting this factor as their choice, the participants could describe factors more suited to their experiences. The students’ accompanying comments categorized counsellors as being directive as to what institution to attend, being supportive or encouraging in general to student choices, being gatekeepers, or ensuring that administrative processes were complied with. The counsellors explained that they were influential by offering encouragement and tangible offers of support. The responses were interpreted that the First Nation education counsellors did not feel that they were being directive as to what programs their sponsored students should enrol in, but influential through supporting the students’ decisions. As quoted earlier, “Students are [have] usually already selected their education choices but having an office or having a counsellor available to talk to assists [students] greatly.” So, while the small sample of counsellors believed they were influential, the descriptive results described a “supportive influence” in programs the students opted to take, and not a “directive influence” in the decisions of what programs the students ought to take. Some of the students surveyed supported this view based on descriptive comments they provided such as ”It depends what the student’s career goals are. Education Counsellor told me that I had the work
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experience all ready just had to write them down and go to university." These results substantiated that some of the student respondents perceived that their counsellors had become involved with them at the point after they had already made their program decisions.

As a further point, based on the descriptive responses within the category “Other”, a different picture emerges providing insight into the seemingly polarized perspective of the two subject groups relating to influence. The majority of the students who participated in the study believed that they were their greatest influence in determining what program they applied to attend, and that their counsellors were minimally or not influential. On the other hand, the counsellors believed that they were influential to varying degrees in their students’ decision making processes. What emerged from the descriptive comments from both groups was that some counsellors did not necessarily influence or direct students into specific college or university programs, but rather, encouraged and supported their students’ pre-established decisions. At a practical and interpersonal level, this type of help potentially contributed more to the students’ success in the “follow through” and successful enrolment in their preferred studies.

In summary, the results of the study found that the majority of the student respondents had self-selected their post-secondary program with minimal external influence. The results of the surveys also found that some First Nation education counsellors have little influence in the post-secondary program decisions of their sponsored students. While some counsellors provide support and encouragement to their sponsored students’ program decisions, and it was unknown as to why some were not considered more influential. It was possible that the students who participated in the survey were highly motivated and informed students who were part of the advancement in a movement toward intellectual decolonization.

3. What is the potential significance of the study regarding the influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation post-secondary school students’ program choice as it relates to decolonization pedagogy praxis?

The two surveys did not contain specific questions connecting the relationship of First Nation education counsellors and their potential influence on First Nation students’
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program choices to the concept of decolonization. I did not assume that the two subject groups were familiar with the premise of decolonization, nor did such questions lend themselves to the primary focus of the two questionnaires and follow up interviews. Instead, the responses acquired from the two subject groups were reviewed to determine whether the concept of decolonizing could be interpreted based on both subjects’ perceptions of the role of the First Nation education counsellors. The results were considered a snapshot of the current status of the role of First Nation counsellors, to be compared with the status of their role when it was first developed during the devolution of education to the community level.

To recap, decolonization is a process of moving from colonization and imposition by the dominant culture in every aspect of life, to becoming more cognizant of the overt and subtle maintenance of colonialism, and to effecting change from one’s own world view and for one’s own purposes. Dei (2002) noted that history and context play an integral role in moving academic anti-colonial endeavours forward. Earlier in the dissertation, elements of the concept of decolonizing were discussed as it related to the evolution of First Nation education – from the residential school experience and the unavailability of post-secondary education for First Nations, toward band control and jurisdiction over elementary and secondary schools, and toward an increasing population of post-secondary First Nation graduates, and the existence of First Nation based educational institutions. From this perspective, the role of the First Nation education counsellors were examined, from where the role originated, and to what extent, an anti-colonialism approach influenced changes in their role to more effectively assist First Nation post-secondary students. If an integral goal of any anti-colonial endeavour is to challenge Euro-Western domination, then upon examination of the current relationship between counsellors and the First students, it is possible to determine to what extent their role has changed from its original purpose as administrators of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program funding and gatekeepers for sponsorship.

In an earlier chapter, a review of literature found the position of First Nation education counsellor emerging during the expansion of First Nation control over education. When Indian and Northern Affairs Canada devolved fiscal responsibilities for education to the First Nation level, the department set specific policies and guidelines to
be administered by the First Nations. Specific to post-secondary education, the Post-
Secondary Support Program (PSSSP) has operated under the authority of the Department
of Indian and Northern Affairs Development Act (Maletest and Associates Ltd., 2002).
Since the 1980’s, funding for the PSSSP has been administered by each First Nation or
organizations working on behalf of First Nations. At this juncture, this is where the First
Nation education counsellor position emerged. From the beginning, key responsibilities
of the position related to applications for sponsorship, administration of tuition, living
allowances, books, travel, and reporting requirements to INAC, that include an annual
report outlining relevant information on the students sponsored and their academic
progress. These duties were financial and clerical in nature. According to Burns in
“Aboriginal Education in Canada: A Study in Decolonization”, First Nations have been
relegated to proxy roles as “mere deliverer, managers, and/or administrators of under-
funded federal programs” (2001).

From a review of relevant literature, and as an example of decolonization, I
observed that the position of First Nation education counsellors had evolved to become
more responsive to First Nations and their post-secondary students’ needs. Further, First
Nation education counsellors are able to address and meet students’ needs more ably,
having similar cultural backgrounds and perspectives in common. Currently, First
Nations education counsellors not only provide financial and administrative reporting
duties required by INAC, but offer academic and personal counselling supports to
students (Garden River Education Unit, 2008, Bazylak, 2002), as well as social supports
(Mattawa First Nation, 2008, Bird and McKinnon, 2004). The accredited ONECA Native
Counsellors’ Training Program aids in the enhancement and development of First Nation
counsellors’ skills through the delivery of curriculum that offers practical applications of
personal and education counselling (ONECA, 2008).

The responses of the counsellors and students were reviewed specifically for
descriptors relating to academic, personal and social counselling, as evidence of the
enhanced role of First Nation education counsellors in Ontario. The students from the
survey discussed their experiences with counsellors within a number of survey questions.
Students were asked about the amount of contact that they had with their education
counsellor during their post-secondary schooling. The following results are based on the
average response rate. Student/counsellor contact was on an average of one to five times in a given year, and the students indicated that they themselves were more likely to initiate contact than vice versa. On average, it was found that most of the students felt that the amount of contact or communication with their counsellors remained the same throughout the subjects’ years of post-secondary study. The most common methods of communication were by telephone or email. The counsellor participants confirmed that communication with sponsored students was, on average, a little higher than indicated by students – between four and six times per year. They also had more communication with the students by phone and email. The responses from both groups were fairly consistent regarding the amount of contact in any given year, and the methods of communication used.

While the results confirmed that communication did occur between the students and their counsellors, the student surveys indicated minimal or non-existent communication for academic, personal or social counselling with their First counsellors. In survey responses from the students, two common themes were derived from descriptive responses regarding the student/counsellor communication. I categorized the comments into two central themes of Funding and Documentation. Descriptive comments for “Funding” included: “for funding application,” “request for additional book money,” “workshops/allowance,” “funds not received,” “delay in funding,” funding for conference,” and questions [and] reimbursement of school supplies.” Descriptive comments specific to the category of Documentation included: “questions [and] updates,” “grades,” “ensure band received application [and] paid fees.” “considered dropping a class,” “receipts, grades, etc,” “sent unofficial mid-term marks [and] final marks,” and “to hand in forms.” The counsellors identified key communication as budget and student specific administration, but also indicated that they provided academic counselling, and interpersonal or social counselling and on average, as more than 50% of their duties. The results of both surveys confirmed that the primary communication between students and counsellors related to financial or administrative purposes. A key discrepancy between results from the students and counsellors’ surveys was that in the student surveys, the majority of the respondents did not communicate with their counsellors for personal or academic counselling purposes. Whereas, respondents of the First Nation education
The students surveyed provided detail as to why they felt their counsellors did not contribute to their academic success. Table 1.16, found in the previous chapter, was based on comments from sixteen out of the twenty-nine student respondents. The descriptors did not demonstrate that the respondents received support from their First Nation counsellors specific to personal, academic or social counselling. The results may be interpreted that the mature students did not require such support and the comments were an indication that, for most of this group of students, the provision of such supports was not available from their counsellors. For the purposes of the question, the results suggest that the counsellors working with these specific students had moved very little from their role as financial and program administration toward enhanced personal, academic, and social counselling services.

The results from the counsellors and students surveys were conflicting and incompatible. Further, the First Nation post-secondary student survey results did not support previous research and literature review findings that outlined the role of counsellors to include both social and academic counselling. The results may be interpreted that the students who voluntarily participated in the survey, as an older representation of the First Nation student population, had sufficient personal and other supports, and were highly autonomous and independent in nature. As well, given that a significant number of sponsored students live off-reserve, they may never have developed an investment or relationship with their community or community members, and this potentially has contributed to the limited communication with their counsellors. Potentially, and a result of such factors, the students did not avail themselves of the other supports provided by the First Nation education counsellors besides services specific to finance and administration. Students were also explicit that other types of services were not available to them. Conversely, the results of the study and specific to the experiences of twenty-nine First Nation post-secondary students sponsored by their First Nations in Ontario was that counsellors acted as financial and administrative personnel, with minimal provision of interpersonal and academic counselling support. From the perspective of decolonization, the survey results did not demonstrate that the First Nation counsellors’ surveys cited that, in addition to financial and administration services, they provided both counselling and personal services.
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Education counsellors’ positions had evolved from administration and financial responsibilities toward greater student interaction for interpersonal, social, and academic counselling. This suggests a stronger need to act on the recommendation from the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development was that “there is more of a need to…. have a statistical profile of our applicants [First Nation post-secondary students] with respect to gender, Aboriginal affiliation, province, residence, scholarships, educational level, barriers they’ve encountered, supports they need to be successful, how they feel about our service, employment prospects, who they’re working with, whether they’re working in their field of study, whether they’re working in the communities, record of volunteer work, and whether they’re working for the government” (Mayes, 2007). Study is recommended to further assess the roles and responsibilities of First Nation education counsellors. The research could be used by them and by their communities to substantiate the need for greater enhancement and support for their roles, further enabling them to provide greater assistance to PSE students.

4. Where does the influence of First Nation Education Counsellors compare when ranked with other potential influencers in First Nations students post-secondary program choices?

First Nation post-secondary students were asked to rank a total number of fifteen potential influencers who may have contributed to their final decision as to what post-secondary program to enrol in. First Nation education counsellors were included as a potential influencer. The results were difficult to interpret, given respondents’ non-standardized manner of response to the question. It was found that some respondents partially completed the question, only responding to ranking a few influencers, or gave more than one influencer the same numerical ranking. Despite subject confusion with the ranking process, or subject fatigue, the results were of note given that some factors scored higher responses than other factors.

Within the First Nation post-secondary students’ survey, the factor that ranked highest with most respondents was “Self Influential” (n = 21), and the second highest factor was “Personal Interest” (n = 10). These responses support that more of the students perceived their preferences and personal interests contributed to their program decisions.
more than any other factor. The next highest and tied score, for third place ranking, was “Parents and Personal Interest” (n = 7). “Friends” ranked fourth place (n = 6). The results support other general studies that found parents to play a significant role in influencing students (Wimberly and Noeth, 2004; Sandford, Frisbee, and Belcher, 2006; de Boucker, 2008) and in Aboriginal specific research (Danzinger, 1997). Friends were also identified as key influencers for students in determining their program choices (Bourque, Benimmas, and Aucoin, 2007). In these studies, friends ranked significantly high in influence. Since the majority of the First Nation student respondents were older than the traditional college or university student, the results were interesting since the influence of friends did not rank as high as the students’ perceptions of themselves as their primary influencer. This may be due to the more experienced nature of the older students, or at a minimum, their higher degree of autonomy. More research is required to determine the reasons the student respondents perceived themselves as being the most influential in their program selection process.

Determining where First Nation education counsellors stood in the ranking of potential influencers, they were found to have scored lower across the ranking from one to fifteen than a number of factors including Self Influential, Self-Interest, Parents, Friends, Principals/Teachers. This supports the previous question where students believed First Nation education counsellors had limited or no influence on their post-secondary program choices. First Nation education counsellors were asked the same question, to rank a list of fifteen potential influencers in decisions made by First Nation post-secondary students regarding their post-secondary program of choice. The scoring of the question was incomplete, and for the same reasons cited for the incompletion of the question in the students’ surveys. Despite the partial scoring, two factors ranked highest in the responses. Four counsellors identified that the students were “Self-Influential”, the most influential in their decision making process. Chief and Councils or Band Members ranked thirteen as a low influencer. The results supported the finding from the students’ surveys for the same question, but do not support findings from the previous question of the First Nation education counsellor survey where the counsellors perceived themselves as influential in their students’ decision making process for program selection. As to where First Nation counsellors ranked themselves within the fifteen factors, one
respondent per ranking scored themselves as second, fifth, and sixth, and three respondents ranked themselves as seventh as an influence in their students program decisions. The results determined that the counsellors perceived themselves to be somewhat influential, but not a high influencer when their students decided what program to take. Due to the low participation rate in the survey, the results are not generalizable to the overall First Nation post-secondary education counsellors’ population in Ontario and their perceptions of what influencers are most critical for First Nation post-secondary students’ choice of post-secondary program.

The results of ranking influencers further demonstrated the difference in perceptions between First Nation students and First Nation education counsellor respondents. The students believed that the counsellors were less of an influence than what the counsellors believed they were. An interpretation of these findings, as discussed earlier, found that First Nation education counsellors perceived their influence occurred once students had decided on their post-secondary program. Further study is recommended to determine whether the results would be consistent with a larger study sample.

Benefits of post-secondary education include higher employment rates, higher incomes, better access to more training, better health, less involvement in criminal activities (Broucker, 2005). For society, the benefits of post-secondary education lead to greater prosperity and economic success, reduction in economic disparities, and greater social cohesion.

It is generally accepted that parents who are involved in their children’s post-secondary education contribute positively toward the students’ academic successes (Wimberly and Noeth, 2004). Parents who did not attend post-secondary school themselves are disadvantaged given that they do not necessarily have the vital tools and information to assist their children in planning. By inference, First Nation education counsellors may also contribute more positively toward sponsored students’ academic success given the counsellors themselves have greater personal experience within the academic setting. From this perspective, First Nation education counsellors are recommended to become more engaged participants in their students’ education, for example, by having a good familiarity with available college and university programs, by
learning to interpret academic or other testing scores, through more contact and communication with their students, in addition to their financial and administration responsibilities.

All First Nation education counsellors are recommended to complete the Native Counsellors Training Program provided by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, and as a mandatory requirement, and as directed by each First Nation. The NCTP is recommended to offer curriculum specific to knowledge of all post-secondary programs offered, and to participate in curriculum specific to current education concerns and needs of each First Nation, including lack of students in areas of study such as medicine, health, aviation, and other highly technical programs, or courses in community and economic development and its relevance to education. The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association is recommended to be used as a key and pivotal partner and medium from which further research is completed by educational institutions, government agencies, and other organizations specific to post-secondary, especially when PSE education pertaining to First Nation populations is explored. As rationale, the organization works closely with First Nations, First Nation education counsellors, Aboriginal services within mainstream and First Nation post-secondary institutions, working as a mediator and advocate on behalf of First Nation education counsellors.

5. Does fixed sponsorship funding impact on the First Nation high school graduate or First Nation older students’ choice of post-secondary program selection?

While the study did not directly query participants about the impact of fixed sponsorship, a number of questions centered around sponsorship. The term itself - sponsorship – is a reference to the financial relationship between the counsellors and the students. Undoubtedly, funding plays an integral role in the relationship between the counsellors and the students. In responses from both subjects, reference was made to costs and financial administration as part of the role of First Nation education counsellors. From a financial perspective, the programs taken by the First Nation post-secondary students who participated in the study were reviewed. Sixteen of the twenty-nine students were enrolled in a four year university degree program, two subjects were
located within a three year university degree program, and two participants were enrolled in post-graduate programs. Based on a percentage, sixty-nine percent of the respondents were attending university level of education. For the purposes of the question, tuition costs were reviewed from information taken from the Star.com – a web-site affiliated with the Toronto Star. In 2008, costs for university tuition in Northern Ontario were approximately between $5,000. and $6,000, with some programs costing higher than average. In southern Ontario, tuition rates were between $5,500. to $10,000., with some programs costing higher than average. In the same year, taking a random sampling of colleges, and with no direct reference to a specific institution, college tuition was found to be approximately $2,000 up to $10,000. Discrepancy in tuition rates was due to inclusion of more costly and highly technical diploma programs, as well as the result of agreements between colleges and universities for combined diploma/degree programs, or colleges with degree programs (The Star.Com, 2008). Given that the costs of attending university were generally higher than attending college, fixed sponsorship funding did not appear to impact the students’ choice of post-secondary institution, since the majority of the survey respondents were attending university at the time they participated in the survey.

In further assessing whether fixed sponsorship impacted on the post-secondary program chosen by First Nation students, the programs of study of the subjects from the First Nation post-secondary students’ survey were reviewed. The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), the broad post-secondary program categories used by Statistics Canada was used to identify programs the students were enrolled in at the time the survey was conducted (see Table 1.10 in Chapter Four). The largest populated CIP category in the research was Social and Behavioural Science with thirteen of a combined total of university and college students. Five respondents were enrolled in Business, Management, and Public Administration programs. Three respondents were in Physical and Life Sciences and Technology university programs. Two survey participants were enrolled in Education programs at university level, two respondents were taking Humanities programming at university level, and two survey takers were found in Architecture and Related Technologies at the college level. One respondent was enrolled in Visual and Performing Arts, and Communication Technologies at the college level,
and one respondent was in the Law category at the university level. One respondent did not identify program of study. The CIP categories that did were not populated with student subjects were Mathematics, Computer and Information Science; Architecture and Related Technologies; Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation; Medicine; Parks; Recreation, Health (other than Medicine) and Fitness. Given the diversity of programs the students were enrolled in, it would appear that fixed funding did not impact on their program choices. However, there were CIP categories that the responding students were not represented in. Since the programs varied in costs, it is unknown whether the subjects did not enrol in these program categories due to the higher costs, or due to the students’ lack of academic prerequisites for these programs. Hardes (2006) cited that a lack of academic knowledge in the areas of math and science prevent Aboriginal students from entering post-secondary studies. This could be why survey respondents were not represented in specific CIP categories. Furthermore, the CIP categories absent of any of the First Nation post-secondary student subjects support other research that found First Nation students to be significantly underrepresented in major areas of study such as medicine (Ayeni, 2004), and other health related fields and sciences (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2005).

The results from the review of programs in which the participating students were enrolled in at time of the study were compared to the Statistics Canada release of findings in 2008 from the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census. The Statistics Canada research found that on-reserve (First Nation) students graduated with a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, in the following major fields of study, and as outlined in following CIP categories: Education (n = 920); Visual and Performing Arts and Communications Technologies (n =175); Humanities (n =395); Social and Behavioural Sciences and Law (n = 1135); Business, Management and Public Administration (n = 1,905); Physical and Life Sciences and Technologies (n = 70); Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences (n =185); Architecture, Engineering, and Related Technologies (n = 2325); Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation (n =325); Health, Parks, Recreation and Fitness (n = 1395). The diversity in program selection identified in the study suggest that fixed sponsorship may not impact students’ choices in determining their post-secondary options. However, the results would indicate
that some programs are more well subscribed compared to others. The CIP categories with over 1000 First Nation graduates in 2006 were Social and Behavioural Sciences and Law, Business Management and Public Administration, Architecture, Engineering, and Related Technologies, and Health, Parks, Recreation and Fitness. Moreover, the current research found the program choices of the post-secondary First Nation subjects represented only seven out of the thirteen CIP categories of available post-secondary programming. Despite the lower response rate, other research noted similar results relating to the under-representation of First Nation students in technical, mathematical, and medical specific programming.

The results may mean that as a result of fixed sponsorship students were not able to access their programs of choice, which may be a reason why more expensive programs are not populated with First Nation students. Other research supported that funding is a barrier to post-secondary studies for Aboriginal students (Maletest and Associates Ltd., 2004; Hermann, 2001). Other factors that create barriers for First Nation access and success at the post-secondary level are social, economic, and academic in nature (Alcorn and Campbell, 1997). Conversely, the current study identified that most of the student respondents had already selected their program or programs of choice prior to applying for sponsorship. The implications are that funding limitations did not influence their program choices. However, further study is recommended to determine whether the absence of students in specific CIP categories is a result of fixed sponsorship.

6. Does the level of educational attainment of First Nation education counsellors play a role in the selection of post-secondary program selected by the First Nation students?

Only a small sample of First Nation education counsellors from Ontario participated in the survey – eight out of potential sample of thirty-two counsellors specific to PSE, and members of ONECA as identified from the ONECA Directory in 2007. The sample found that all of the counsellors who participated in the survey had post-secondary education experience: one participant had partially completed a university program; one had successfully completed a pre-college entry program; two had successful completed a college program; three had successfully completed a university
program; and one had completed both a college and a university program. Based on the small sample size, and with limited previous research available, it was not known as to whether counsellors sampled in the survey were representative of the total First Nation education counsellor population who work with post-secondary students. As a result, the percentage of First Nation education counsellors who successfully completed post-secondary education was unknown for the study purposes. What was extrapolated from the results was that the participating subjects were high achievers as a group, and were highly motivated to participate in the study. Having personally experienced the role of post-secondary students, the counsellors in the study had a greater ability to impart personal knowledge and experience to assist students in transitioning into their programs. Given the low response rate from First Nation education counsellors, however, limited interpretation was possible in determining whether there was a relationship between the educational attainment of First Nation education counsellors and their role as an influence into sponsored students’ selection of a post-secondary program.

As a final observation, the CIP categories for college diplomas and university degrees were used to identify programs taken by First Nation education counsellors and programs taken by First Nation post-secondary students. Despite the differences in the sample sizes of the subject groups, more First Nation education counsellors were found in the CIP program category *Humanities*, and more First Nation post-secondary students were found in the CIP program category *Social and Behavioural Science*. The survey results did not provide a sufficient response rate for further and more detailed interpretation.

**Implications of the Research Problem**

The overarching premise of the study was given that First Nation education counsellors have significant authority over funding for tuition, living allowances, and purchase of texts and other program requirements of First Nation high school graduates or First Nation older students, that they have significant influence in the First Nation post-secondary students’ selection of post-secondary programming. The study further set out to examine the role of the First Nation education counsellor and how it evolved since its inception from a de-colonistic perspective. In the end, the data generated by the two subject groups did not support my original hypothesis finding but found that the FN
education counsellors in the study had limited influence over FN students’ program choices. Interestingly, while the results relating to the influence over students’ program decisions differed between the two study groups, their perceptions of influence were found to inter-connect. The overriding responses from most of the students was that their First Nation education counsellors were not influential at all in their post-secondary program selection, but that they were their own primary influence. On the other hand, First Nation education counsellors involved in the survey identified themselves as influential with First Nation students, but mostly when program decisions were done. They felt they provided subsequent support and encouragement to facilitate program accessibility and program participation.

The surveys yielded relevant results regarding descriptions from both First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students regarding the roles and duties currently performed by First Nation education counsellors on behalf of students. Descriptions gathered from both surveys and one-on-one interviews provided clarity in determining whether the role of the First Nation education counsellor had evolved from a financial and reporting administrative role as set down by the needs of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (as demonstrated to be a colonizing approach), toward a more enhanced and responsive role involving personal, social, and academic counselling (identified as de-colonizing in nature). The First Nation education counsellors who participated in the survey felt they provide all of these services. From the perspective of over seventy percent of the First Nation post-secondary students who responded to the survey, counsellors dispensed funding and requested student progress and grade reports, as well as other paperwork, with very limited or no contact for other supports. The responses polarized the two groups of subjects. As an implication, further study and possible program assessment is recommended to determine best ways to fully and meaningfully engage First Nations’ PSE counsellors in the academic success of First Nation students.

For the purpose of balance, the findings re-affirmed the positive experiences of some students with their First Nation education counsellors, and that they received additional interpersonal and other supports throughout their years of study. Since First Nation education counsellors are pivotal key players and contact is inevitable between
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them and students, their opportunities to be influential in a meaningful manner already exists. Given adequate resources and equitable funding, First Nation counsellors can be play a greater supportive role for Aboriginal students, acting as the front-line and common link between the students and PSE institutions, family and community. Research is recommended to identify models of best practice currently implemented, and the tangible impact the services have had on the post-secondary students served. These models should be recognized and expanded as exemplary models of service provision.

The implication of the study as it focused specifically on the role of First Nation education counsellors is relevant to the current challenges and issues facing First Nation post-secondary students. Research has shown that the Aboriginal students continue to experience retention and academic completion rates far lower than mainstream students. The study highlights this concern since the results found that some FN students receive limited social, personal, or academic counselling support from their sponsors. While limiting and restrictive factors may impede the ability of some counsellors to provide these supports, without doubt, First Nation students require more support than they are currently receiving in order to succeed. That a number of First Nation education counsellors have the expertise and education to provide more of these services was not reflected in the experiences of many of the students participating in the study. This statement was based on the fact that all of the First Nation counsellors surveyed had post-secondary education, primarily in the counselling field. Further, all FN counsellors have the opportunity to enrol in the Native Counsellor Training Program provided by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, yet the results of the study indicated that not all of the counsellors had taken the program. Since more of the students in the survey did not receive any or limited supports from their First Nation education counsellors with the exception of financial and administrative support, it would have been interesting to know how they fared academically. This question has remained unanswered. While it is hoped that they were successful, the outcome of their academic journey was outside of the time of the study, and remained unknown upon the completion of the research.

Challenges are issued to influencers of First Nation post-secondary education: First Nation education counsellors, First Nation post-secondary students, First Nations
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Chiefs and Councils (at the community, regional, provincial and national level), and the provincial and federal levels of government with jurisdiction over post-secondary education and First Nation post-secondary education.

First Nation education counsellors are challenged to be proactive and seek innovative means by which to communicate and support their sponsored students more consistently, and beyond reasons financial or administrative in nature. First Nation education counsellors are challenged to seek training and education specific to social, personal and academic counselling to enhance their ability to be a viable support to their sponsored students. Interpersonal and academic counselling supports should take greater precedence in their relationships with the students. In an early report on the National Review of First Nations Education completed by the Assembly of First Nations, and in support of the challenge, Cuthand (1988) affirmed that counselling services to First Nations students must include academic, career, financial, social and peer counselling, with funding available to hire additional counsellors. He further identified that relief staff should be available to relieve counsellors of clerical duties. McCue (1999) also recommended training for “all educational personnel [who work with First Nations students] is essential.” A strength of First Nation post-secondary counsellors is their ability to be a culturally relevant and culturally sensitive support. In a working paper by Theissen (2009), in a comparison of First Nations, African, Asian and European Canadian youth, he found that among other factors, cultural barriers appeared to account for the low academic performance experienced by many First Nation post-secondary students. The ability for students to self-identify with someone from their own culture is part of the success that counsellors need to capitalize on. Further, counsellors are encouraged to take a greater role in the provision of cultural supports for their students. Possible supports that they may refer students to are elders, traditional healers and teachers both from their home territory and those near the educational institution. The counsellors are also recommended to become more aware of when students are more likely to drop out, and to be part of a greater strategy (with teachers, parents, other resources, and/or the institutions) to enhance student retention. The struggles of First Nations people to attain a post-secondary level of education have been sufficiently documented. Without adequate supports, the struggle and the ability to be successful will
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remain a pressing issue. As front line workers, First Nation education counsellors must seek ways in which to play a more significant role toward addressing these issues.

First Nation post-secondary students and First Nation education counsellors are recommended to seek opportunities in which to build rapport and relationships that are required for interpersonal and academic counselling to become more accessible and effective. As an enhanced role, First Nation education counsellors are in a strategic position to further develop their role of advocacy for their students. While lobbying remains, and should remain a governance responsibility, more students would benefit from greater support and appeals carried out on their behalf. For example, counsellors are recommended to work in closer collaboration with post-secondary program supports and departments at the beginning of a school year, and in response to early signs of a student in distress or difficulty. Counsellors are recommended to become more involved in seeking, locating, and/or funding appropriate and practical supports for students with learning disabilities, family issues, mental health issues, and other documented concerns faced by students that impede their academic success. At the same time, it is understood that a call for additional support entails a greater divestment of counsellors’ time in relationship building and communication with individual students that overextend and already over-worked First Nation service, given the breadth of their current responsibilities. If, as First Nations people, we believe that education is critical for the growth of our communities and community members, and from an economic, social, political, spiritual perspective, then a greater commitment to education by each First Nation is urgent. Supporting and enhancing the roles of the First Nation education counsellors, the front line warriors for First Nation education, should also assume greater priority. In a report for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2008, pp. 4), Preston emphasized the importance of community driven advocating and that “advocating increased post-secondary education for First Nations and Inuit peoples is advocating an invigorating, fortifying future for Aboriginal People, their families, and their communities.”

In the examination of First Nation cultural safety in post-secondary education, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN web-site: http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=3962) recommended the development of a strategy between the First Nations and the post-
secondary institutions to recruit and graduate First Nation students. First Nations are encouraged to seek these arrangements. As front line staff, First Nation education counsellors are recommended, possibly working in collaboration with ONECA, to take this initiative forward, working with the post-secondary institutions to develop more relevant cultural supports and greater cultural competence of the PSE administration, faculty and staff that come in contact with Aboriginal and First Nation students.

The study had implications to take forward from a political perspective. First Nations are recommended to support and promote greater student/counsellor contact, and to continue the fight for greater supports to enhance First Nation student success. As a front line education worker, First Nation education counsellors should be given top priority for: adequate funding and time (if required) to receive appropriate education and training including the ONECA Native Counsellor Training Program; an increase in the number of positions to serve a lower ratio of students; and appropriate compensatory levels of salary. At a minimum, the position of counsellor should be directly focused on as a student support, and less on financial and other administrative reporting. Cuthland (1998) advocated “Federal and First Nation governments to reduce high turnover rates of education staff by such actions as lowering…… student counsellor ratios, reducing the clerical workload of ……. counsellors, and offering staff salaries, benefits, and job security comparable to those of neighbouring education systems” (pp. 25). Given that the NCTP provides curriculum specific to both academic and personal counselling, it would be to the benefit of First Nation students that all current and new First Nation counsellors be mandated by their First Nation to complete the program. At a minimum, a standard of education and duties is recommended to be developed and maintained for the position of First Nation post-secondary education counsellor, formally recognized by all First Nations or Provincial Territory Organizations, and in acknowledgement of the importance of the position in supporting the PSE success of community members.

Both the federal and provincial levels of government must work together toward enhancing research and funding opportunities that will contribute meaningfully toward increased First Nation participation and academic success in PSE. First Nation education counsellors should be recognized as key participants in both research and student success strategies. The development of such a joint federal-provincial strategy must be completed
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors with input and support of First Nations, with respect to their cultural diversity, and with adherence to OCAP. These actions would demonstrate the governments’ recognition that the education of aboriginal people is a critical issue and that such address would contribute immeasurably toward the holistic health of First Nations and their participation as partners in the economic growth of Canada.

Further, the research is potentially important to First Nations institutions, general population post-secondary institutions, and to other professionals working with First Nation post-secondary students. Each group is encouraged to seek opportunities to work in a collaborative spirit with First Nation education counsellors so that the support of each PSE First Nation student becomes part of a widening circle of care. I believe it is safe to say that more support is better than less support.

In summation, as a greater cache of research and data is developed to assess, promote and enhance First Nation students’ academic successes, the greater the holistic benefits – socially, culturally, and economically – for the individual graduates, their families, and their First Nations.

Limitations

Post-Survey Review

As a post-survey review, there were a number of limitations identified in the research – specific to the compilation of results derived from survey tools and survey implementation.

As a result of developing original survey instruments, item bias or item difficulty possibly occurred given that the ranking questions present in both surveys – questions fourteen and fifteen in the First Nation post-secondary students survey and question twenty-nine in the First Nation education counsellors survey – were responded to differently by subjects within both sets of respondents. For example, when the respondents were asked to prioritize who had the most influence on their post-secondary program choices from a list of fifteen items, some did not rank all of the items, and others gave the same ranking to a number of items. The respondents may have misunderstood the question and, for a number of respondents, it was possible that the concept of ranking was unknown to them. The results also suggested that the questions were too long, or too
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complex. It is known that forced ranking questions, such as the one outlined above, are prone to respondent error. There was no formal pre-test completed on the survey which was also a potential reason for errors in responses to these questions. The fact that the two ranking questions discussed received the most errors in response would suggest that the questions were over-complex and had too many factors to rank.

Questions thirty to thirty-two had low rates of response in the First Nation education counsellors’ survey. The respondents were asked to identify total amount of funding spent on tuition, living allowance and books and supplies for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, and specific to college or university. The response requirement to the question was potentially too detailed and may have discouraged respondents from completing the question. Otherwise, it is unknown as to why the response rate was low. The outcome would point towards revisions of the questions.

Item bias also may have occurred since some of the respondents of the First Nation post-secondary students’ survey were not familiar with the term provincial territory organization (PTO) which refers to the regional First Nation territorial organization to which a number of First Nations belong to. Some of the respondents did not respond to the query, but I was still able to capture their information when they identified the First Nation they were from.

The profile compiled on the respondents posed limitations due to lack of diversity within the subjects in a number of areas. From a general standpoint, the results were intentionally specific to First Nations within Ontario, and it is expected that the results would not necessarily be similar to First Nation students and counsellors from other provinces and territories. It was found that the student subjects who participated in the survey were not representative of all post-secondary institutions, post-secondary programs, or Provincial Territory Organizations within the province of Ontario. Further, the number of student respondents was lower than anticipated, the location of institutions they were enrolled in were primarily from Northern Ontario, and many of the students were older and female. It was unknown as to whether the lack of diversity was also in keeping with other research that found a strong representation of First Nation students in specific post-secondary program areas.
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A number of similar limitations were noted with the results from the First Nation education counsellors’ survey. Similar to the student results, the counsellor respondents were primarily located in Northern Ontario, and represented primarily northern Provincial Territory Organizations. The reason for the limited participation of Southern Ontario counsellor was unknown. Further, the counsellors were primarily older in age, and female in gender, corresponding to results of the First Nation post-secondary student survey. While it is difficult to determine what factors led to the lack of a distributed response across both subject groups, there are a number of possible reasons that I will explored briefly specific to each group.

In terms of the low response rates in both the First Nation education counsellors’ and First Nations post-secondary students’ surveys, there were some noted reasons for the absence of some of their participation. When the invitation to participate in the survey was originally sent out, I received word from one counsellor that her band did not give her approval to participate for reasons unexplained. While I did not receive similar feedback from other counsellors, it was possible that some bands issued similar direction to their workers. As another potential reason for low response rate from Southern Ontario, it was possible that the involvement of northern counsellors was due to their familiarity with me personally. It must be kept in mind that the Aboriginal education community is small and the Aboriginal post-secondary community is even smaller. This may also explain the larger representation of students who participated from the PTO of the Union of Ontario Indians. They may have had an affinity to me based on the fact that we were from the same PTO. As another possibility, northern counsellors and students may have volunteered to participate given they had a greater interest in supporting a northern First Nation student.

As further rationale for lower subject participation rates (than original projected), one First Nation sent me an ethics review application to apply for prior to approving of the participation of their counsellor in the survey. Given the lengthy process and the fact that I received the application just prior to the deadline for returned surveys, I was unable to complete the application within the requested deadline, resulting in the absence of their counsellor’s participation. One PSE institution also requested that I complete their ethics review process. Despite the fact that I completed the forms and submitted them, when
approval was finally granted, there remained only a small window of time for the First Nation students from that institution to submit completed questionnaires prior to the cut-off date. Further, given that the study was specific to their employment, some First Nation education counsellors may not have participated due to a level of discomfort, deeming the survey to be intrusive, or potentially critical of their role. Further, despite the fact that a number of routes were used to engage as many respondents as possible, potential subjects may not have heard about the survey invitation, nor received the materials I sent out. Finally, other possible factors included the fact that there was a lack of interest or support for my topic, that students or counsellors were too busy with other commitments, that they were experiencing survey fatigue, or that the size of the surveys discouraged their participation. These and other unexplored factors likely contributed to the low response rate from both groups. While there may be other and more obvious explanations for the lower than anticipated participation rates, the reasons remained unknown to me.

In terms of First Nation post-secondary students, I was concerned about the lack of student representation across the PTO’s. When determining the best way to divest information about the research and questionnaires, I identified one limitation. Information regarding the study was not made available to specific colleges and universities, especially in Southern Ontario, since not all higher education institutions offered Aboriginal culturally specific services at the time the research was undertaken. Since it is commonly acknowledged that students are more likely to attend institutions closest to home, by extrapolation, First Nation students attending schools with no Aboriginal student support services had less chance of hearing and participating in my research. Colleges and universities were approached specifically through their Aboriginal student service units for several reasons. These services are specifically aimed at Aboriginal services and have the greatest potential of reaching these populations to divest information. The Aboriginal support staff could ensure that appropriate administration approval was obtained, they also agreed to post information regarding the research, and to make copies of the survey available in areas First Nation students congregated. Since most post-secondary Aboriginal staff were found to be members of ONECA and/or the ABCOM listserv, they were contacted by phone, facsimile, or email, with requests to
ensure that the surveys were made available. Many contacted agreed to send information regarding my research and the appeal to assist in making information available to the First Nation students in their institutions. Since Aboriginal students attending the post-secondary institutions come from all over Ontario, it was perplexing that the sample of twenty-eight students was not more of representative of all five PTO’s, and that the majority of the students were from the Union of Ontario Indians.

There were potentially other reasons as to why not all Provincial Territory Organization’s were represented in the student sample. Some of the First Nations may not have endorsed the participation of their students in the research, however, it would be uncommon for a FN to issue this type of edict to their students. I received no information to indicate this possibility. It is possible that some Post-Secondary Aboriginal student support services or First Nation education counsellors did not have made the questionnaire, letter of invitation, and poster information available to potential respondents as requested or as agreed. However, none of these reasons explain why there was an absence of respondents from some PTO’s in both survey groups. Explanations for their lack of participation were otherwise unknown or forthcoming.

There were a number of reasons as to why more students did not participate in the survey. Given the academic demands placed on students, they may have felt that they did not have the time to participate, or they were uninterested. Others may have felt that the study was too long given the number of questions asked within the survey. It was possible that they simply resisted what they perceived to be an intrusion of social science, both the methodology and the agenda. First Nation students may have not accessed the areas where the survey materials were left (aboriginal specific departments or First Nation counselling offices), and therefore, may not have known about the survey. Finally, despite the incentive of a draw for $100, fewer students and counsellors participated in the study than anticipated.

Upon reflection, there were a number of things that I could have done to achieve more buy-in and participation in the study. In the case of both subject groups, I know that I would have had more interest had I been able to meet with counsellors or students face to face, and within their settings. Given the extensive distances between First Nations and Ontario colleges and universities, however, this option was unrealistic and unavailable to
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me at the time I started the investigation. As a student, I was limited by funds and the parameters set out for the survey completion.

Regarding the process of completing the surveys, there were a number of limitations. An obvious constraint was that the inability to complete site visits to each Ontario college and university, and each First Nation post-secondary education office to promote the research. The sheer distance between existing between each post-secondary institutions and the First Nations post-secondary counselling services across the province of Ontario was not conducive to face to face visits. There was only opportunity for a face to face visit that occurred with permission from ONECE during their annual conference held in 2007. In the completion of the thesis, I relied heavily on technology to communicate (e.g. email, phone, and fax) as a means to relay invitations, copies of the surveys, letters of invitation, and other communication. Survey information was sent through the ACOMM listserv (for post-secondary Aboriginal education counsellers situated with post-secondary institutions), and through the ONECA listserv (for post-secondary education counsellors, and post-secondary Aboriginal education counsellors and services who are part of the membership). Further, FN counsellors and PSE Aboriginal service staff were communicated with through phone calls and faxed communication. The limitations of these methods included undelivered email and faxes due to staff change-over. While further contact was made to seek appropriate contact information and information and to re-send information, some materials still came back as undelivered. A further limitation of electronic communication was my reliance on the willingness and availability of specific contacts to forward the survey and invitations to interested and appropriate subjects at the time the requests were issued. Another limitation was that some of the First Nations did not approve of the participation of the First Nation education counsellors in the research. It is believed that the lack of face to face or site visits greatly reduced the number of potential subjects and their participation in the research.

In summary, limitations were identified within the two survey tools and with specific questions that were either recommended to be eliminated, or revised. An assessment of the delivery and promotion that I used to promote my research was also outlined to assist in future research.
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**Recommendations**

The results and interpretations of the research highlight several areas for future research. The recommendations provided post-facto were divided between two categories: on how the methodology may be improved in future research studies (gaps to be covered in future); and, based on the research, recommendations to further research within the specific topic area of First Nation education counsellors, and as they relate to the academic success of First Nation post-secondary students. More concisely, the recommendations were structured under the following categories: survey tools; and survey results.

**Research Methodology Recommendations**

A number of recommendations were developed upon review of the two original survey tools as a means to support future research in the area of study.

In the First Nation post-secondary students’ survey, specific questions were recommended to be revised or eliminated. Question eight was recommended to be broken down into three parts in order to capture students who had completed elementary, secondary, college and university levels of education rather than collecting all responses in a single query. It was noted that some of the students only responded to the highest level of education attained while others noted all levels of education attained. For interpretation purposes, for example, I was unable to determine which students had entered post-secondary without a high school diploma. Question thirty and thirty one were ranking questions. Given that the subjects were asked to rank between thirteen and fifteen potential influencing factors, it was found that many of the subjects did not complete the entire ranking question, or completed in error by giving more than one factor the same numerical ranking.

Of the questions within the First Nation counsellor survey, it was recommended to eliminate some of the demographic questions. While the questions provided a more detailed profile of the First Nation education counsellors who participated, the questions did not necessarily provide relevant information from which meaningful results could be extrapolated for the research purposes. Question five and six related to identification marital status and number of children. These questions were not as relevant for the purposes of the study regarding the influence of the First Nation education counsellors on
First Nation post-secondary students’ program choices. Question seven related to identification of salary income and was also recommended to be eliminated in future studies. While salary amounts received by each counsellor did support that First Nation education counsellors receive less salary remuneration than other non-Aboriginal education counsellors, the information could have been obtained from other research. In defence of the questions, the information did provide an opportunity to highlight the factors held in common between the students and the counsellors, and the inequities between FN counsellors and general population counsellors.

**Further Research Recommendations**

To determine whether counsellors influence the students they sponsor and the choices these students make regarding program selection, recommendations were provided for areas of future research. The suggested topics are intended to improve the academic success of First Nation post-secondary students, and to further research regarding First Nation education counsellors and their role with the students they sponsor.

Since the study was exploratory in nature, further research is recommended to expand our understanding of the relationship between the roles and responsibilities of the First Nation education counsellors and the programs taken and the academic success of First Nation PSE students. Research is recommended to be further replicated or expanded to include other provinces. Further investigation is necessary to determine potential factors that may be limiting some students’ access to services provided by First Nation education counsellors other than financial or administrative in nature. For example, as a limited factor, it is known that First Nations struggle to fund a growing population of eligible students within current funding caps.

Further research is recommended to focus on the challenges and needs of First Nation education counsellors given that existing and available research was found to be limited during research review for the current study.

As another area of potential investigation, further research is recommended to determine whether there is any significance to the fact that a large representation of First Nation education counsellors in Ontario are female, and similarly, First Nation post-secondary student populations are largely female in gender.
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Future research may wish to examine best practices currently implemented by First Nation education counsellors and education programming, and to determine whether the innovative approaches contribute to the academic success and accreditation attainment of First Nation post-secondary students. As a caution to undertaking similar research in the area of new delivery models for the PSE Program, Battiste and McLean (2005) noted that in review of options that researchers should hesitate to single out and impose any specific model. Recommendations from any research should ensure attention is given to the unique circumstances and cultural differences of individual First Nations.

I also included advice to accompany the recommendations for future research based on my personal experience while completing the research. I found that recruiting First Nation education counsellors and First Nations post-secondary was challenging given the extensive distance between each PSE institution and each First Nation territory within Ontario. Future studies will need to address innovative ways in which to recruit the survey participants. Further, close attention must be given to addressing cultural protocols, community based research practices, and to the principle of OCAP. Many First Nations and post-secondary institutions also have their own research protocols which will need to be included realistically in the development of the research timeline.

Conclusion

The current investigation was a unique contribution to research relating to First Nation education counsellors and their interactions with students they sponsor, particularly in light of limited research and information specific to the subject area. The lack of research was of particular interest since First Nation education counsellors play a recurring role throughout First Nation post-secondary students’ years of study. Exploration of the influence of First Nation education counsellors on First Nation students offered an opportunity to gain important insight on how sponsored First Nation students’ decide what post-secondary programs they will take, since their decisions directly impacting on their career preferences and/or options. Contrary to the prediction, however, First Nation education counsellors were not considered influential, by more of the First Nation post-secondary subjects, in decisions they made regarding their post-secondary program choices. As a decolonizing perspective, the students who chose their programs and perceived themselves to be their top influencer were potentially on a
positive path toward intellectual self-determination. On the other hand, most of the First Nation education counsellors considered themselves to be influential in supporting their sponsored students’ program choices once the decisions were made. The results opened an interesting level of influence that had not been considered in the development of the study – that the influence of the counsellors was not necessarily relegated to the act of “directing”, as much as it was the “product” of supporting students’ choices.

The results offer a mixed message and challenge further investigation. Given that PSE access and success for most First Nations members remains critically low, the study is support for change. Everyone must step up to the plate and are challenged to do more. First Nation education counsellors must change the way in which they work with students. Students must change the way in which they interact with counsellors. First Nations are challenged to give more support and relevance to the role played by their counsellors. Post-secondary institutions must seek more opportunities to interact and communicate with FN counsellors for the benefit of each FN student. ONECA must provide more advocacy and more training opportunities to their members, and participate in more counsellor specific research. The two levels of government – provincial and federal – are encouraged to work with First Nations through enhanced communication and commitment relating to post-secondary education, including the provision of funding to support the training and services of First Nation education counsellors. Given the implications of a rapidly growing First Nation population, combined with low post-secondary attainment of the same population, First Nations education counsellors have the potential to play a central and critical role in the coming years.

As an appropriate and ending quote, “Just as leaves provide nourishment to the roots and support the tree’s foundation, the community’s collective well-being rejuvenates the individual’s learning cycle. Learning guides – mentors, counsellors, parents, teachers, and Elders - provide additional support and opportunities for individuals to learn throughout their lifespan” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008)
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ACRONYMS
ABCOMM – Aboriginal Communications (Listserv used by Post-Secondary Aboriginal Support Services)
ACCC – Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
AETS – Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy
CSGA – Catholic School Guidance Association
DIAND – Department of Indian and Northern Development
FNEI – First Nation Educational Institute
HRSDC – Human Resources and Social Development Canada
IAEVG – International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance
IEC – The Indigenous Education Coalition
ISSP – Indian Studies Support Program
INAC – Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
NCTP – Native Counsellors Training Program
OACDP – Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners
ONECA – Ontario Native Education Counsellors Association
OISE/UT – Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
OSCA – Ontario School Counsellors' Association
PSE – Post-Secondary Education
PSEAP – Post-Secondary Educational Assistance Program
PSSSP – Post Secondary Student Support Program
UCEP – University and College Entrance Program
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APPENDIX A

Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO’s) and Member First Nations

I. Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
   (Retrieved from web-site: http://www.aiai.on.ca/MemberNations.html)
   Batchewana First Nation of Ojibways
   Caldwell First Nation
   Delaware Nation Council (Moravian of the Thames)
   Hiawatha First Nation
   Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation
   Mohawks of the Bay of Quinta (Tyendinaga)
   Oneida Nation of the Thames
   Wahta Mohawks

II. The Grand Council of Treaty #3
   (Retrieved from web-site: http://www.gct3.net/grand-chiefs-office/communities)
   Big Grassy First Nation
   Big Island First Nation
   Buffalo Point First Nation
   Couchiching First Nation
   Eagle Lake First Nation
   Grassy Narrows First Nation
   Iskatewizaagegan No.39 First Nation
   Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation
   Lac La Croix First Nation
   Lac Seul First Nation
   Naicatchewenin First Nation
   Naotkamegwanning First Nation
   Nicickousemenecaning First Nation
   Northwest Angle #33 First Nation
   Northwest Angle #37 First Nation

Names of Provincial Territorial Organizations and the First Nations of the Province of Ontario
(retrieved on February 14, 2008 from specified web sites)
Obashkaandagaang Bay First Nation
Ochiichagwe’Babigo’Ining First Nation
Onigaming First Nation
Rainy River First Nation
Saugeen First Nation
Seine River First Nation
Stanjikoming First Nation
Sagkeeng First Nation
Shoal Lake #40 First Nation
Wabauskang First Nation
Wabigoon Lake First Nation
Wauzhusk Onigum First Nation
Wabaseemoong First Nation

III. **Independent First Nations**

(Retrieved from web-site: [http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org](http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org))

Chippewas of Nawash – (Cape Croker)
Chippewas of Saugeen
Animbiigoo Zaagi’igan Anishinaabek First Nation – (Lake Nipigon Ojibway)
Mohawks of Akwesasne
Bkejwanong Territory – (Walpole Island)
Shawanaga First Nation
Six Nations of the Grand River Territory
Temagami First Nation
Whitesand First Nation
Iskatewizaagega – No. 39
Wabaseemoong Independent Nation
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug – (Big Trout Lake)

IV. **Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN)**

(Retrieved from web-site: [http://www.nan.on.ca/article/nan-first-nations-164.asp](http://www.nan.on.ca/article/nan-first-nations-164.asp))
a. **Independent Bands**
   - Mishkeegogamang First Nation
   - Mocreebec Council of the Cree Nation
   - Sandy Lake First Nation
   - Weenusk First Nation

b. **Independent First Nations Alliance**
   - Muskrat Dam First Nation
   - Pikangikum First Nation
   - Lac Seul First Nation

c. **Keewaytinook Okimakanak**
   - Deer Lake First Nation
   - Fort Severn First Nation
   - Keewaywin First Nation
   - MacDowell Lake First Nation
   - North Spirit Lake First Nation
   - Poplar Hill First Nation

d. **Matawa First Nations**
   - Aroland First Nation
   - Constance Lake First Nation
   - Eabametoong First Nation
   - Ginoogaming First Nation
   - Hornepayne First Nation
   - Long Lake #58 First Nation
   - Marten Falls First Nation
   - Neskantaga First Nation
   - Nibinamik First Nation
   - Webequie First Nation

e. **Mushkegowuk Council**
   - Attawapiskat First Nation

*Names of Provincial Territorial Organizations and the First Nations of the Province of Ontario (retrieved on February 14, 2008 from specified web sites)*
Chapleau Cree First Nation
Fort Albany First Nation
Kashechewan First Nation
Missanabie Cree First Nation
Moose Cree First Nation
Taykwa Tagamou Nation (New Post)
f. Shibogama First Nations Council
   Kasabonika Lake First Nation
   Kingfisher Lake First Nation
   Wapekeka First Nation
   Wawakapewin First Nation
   Wunnumin Lake First Nation
g. Wabun Tribal Council
   Flying Post First Nation
   Beaverhouse First Nation
   Brunswick House First Nation
   Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation
   Matachewan First Nation
   Mattagami First Nation
   Wahgoshig First Nation
h. Windigo First Nations Council
   Bearskin Lake First Nation
   Cat Lake First Nation
   Koocheching First Nation
   North Caribou Lake First Nation
   Sachigo Lake First Nation
   Slate Falls First Nation
   Whitewater First Nation

V. Anishinabek Nation – Union of Ontario Indians
Names of Provincial Territorial Organizations and the First Nations of the Province of Ontario
(retrieved on February 14, 2008 from specified web sites)
(Retrieved from web-site: http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org)

Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation
Aundeck-Omni-Kaning First Nation (Ojibways of Sucker Creek)
Beausoleil First Nation
Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek First Nation (Rocky Bay)
Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point) First Nation 684
Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
Curve Lake First Nation First Nation
Dokis First Nation
Fort William First Nation
Henvey Inlet First Nation
Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek First Nation (Gull Bay)
Long Lake #58 First Nation
Magnetawan First Nation
M'Chigeeng First Nation, (West Bay)
Michipicoten First Nation
Mississauga #8 First Nation
Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
Moose Deer Point First Nation
Munsee-Delaware First Nation
Namaygoosisagagun First Nation
Nipissing First Nation
Ojibways of Garden River First Nation
Ojibways of Pic River First Nation
Pays Plat First Nation
Pic Mobert First Nation
Red Rock Band, Lake Helen Reserve
Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation

Names of Provincial Territorial Organizations and the First Nations of the Province of Ontario
(retrieved on February 14, 2008 from specified web sites)
Serpent River First Nation, (Wiidawtegowinini)
Sheguiandah First Nation
Sheshegwaning First Nation
Thessalon First Nation
Wahnapitae First Nation
Wasauksing First Nation (Parry Island)
Whitefish Lake First Nation
Whitefish River First Nation
Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation
Zhiibaahaasing First Nation (Cockburn)

VI. **Unknown**

Chippewas of Mnjikaning (Rama)
Poplar Point First Nation
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX B

Poster for Recruitment of Post-Secondary Students – 2007

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Post-Secondary Students!

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation.

Criteria for Students Participating in Study: First Nation post-secondary students who are currently sponsored by their First Nation to attend school for tuition, living allowance and/or books and supplies.

Location of the Survey: The questionnaire will be available at your post-secondary institution’s aboriginal support services office to be returned in a self-addressed and pre-stamped envelope.

Purpose of the Study: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they ultimately enrol and enter.

All information is gathered anonymously and, therefore confidential. Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm.

If you have any questions, please write your comments on the questionnaire, or contact me directly using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation. It is anticipated that all questionnaires will be returned by November 30, 2007, and no later than December 30, 2007.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies In Education OISE/University of Toronto Tel: (705)-368-2664 • Fax: (705)-368-2229 Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

Dr. J.L. Magnusson Professor, Theory & Policy Studies in Education Tel: 416-923-6641 Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca

252 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA M5S 1V6 TEL: 416.923.6641

www.oise.utoronto.ca
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX C

Poster for Recruitment of FN Post-Secondary Education Counsellors

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Education Counsellors!

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation.

Criteria for Participating in Study: First Nation Education Counsellors who currently sponsor post-secondary students to attend college, university, or an aboriginal education institute for tuition, living allowance and/or books and supply purposes.

Purpose of the Study: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors’; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary students to select the programs they ultimately enrol and enter.

Location of the Survey: The questionnaire will be available at a booth set up at the ONECA conference. The opportunity for a follow up interview to provide respondents with the opportunity to further elaborate on interview questions can also be arranged.

All information is gathered anonymously and, therefore confidential. Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm.

If you have any questions, I invite you to approach me at my booth or to write your comments on the completed questionnaire, or contact me using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation. All returned questionnaires with attached ballot will be entered into a draw for $100. to be drawn by August 31, 2007.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate, Dr. J.L. Magnusson
Theory and Policy Studies In Education Professor, Theory & Policy
OISE/University of Toronto Studies in Education
Tel: (705)-368-2664 Tel: 416-923-6641
● Fx: (705)-368-2649 Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

252 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA M5S 1V6 TEL: 416.923.6641
www.oise.utoronto.ca
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX D

Info-Consent Letter for FN Post-Secondary Students

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Post-Secondary Student:

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled *Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs* under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation. I respectfully request your participation in the completion of a confidential questionnaire from the perspective of a First Nation post-secondary student who is currently sponsored by his/her First Nation and who applied for funding through the First Nation education office. First Nation education counsellors are also being asked to complete a similar survey in an effort to ensure that the perspectives of both stakeholders are included in the study. The questionnaire is an essential part of my dissertation, and I would appreciate your time and effort to complete it.

The study’s purpose is two-fold: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors’; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they ultimately enrol and enter.

The questionnaire will be available at post-secondary institutions’ with aboriginal support services, and will be distributed during the Ontario Native Education Counsellors’ Association annual conference to a potential First Nation post-secondary student attending. In addition, copies of the questionnaire will be given to education counsellors attending the conference to be distributed to any First Nation student who may voluntarily wish to complete the questionnaire and return either by email, fax, or in a requested self-addressed and self-stamped return envelope. The various options of obtaining the questionnaire will be available in an effort to acquire as many responses as possible. A total of 200 questionnaires will be distributed.

The information from the questionnaires and any subsequent interviews will be kept in strict confidence, stored in a secure place, and will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Magnusson, and myself. The data will be destroyed upon completion and approval of the thesis dissertation.

Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm. All information will remain confidential, and no specific First Nation or post-secondary institute will be highlighted – any reference to location will be made to a general area such as Northern Ontario, Central Ontario, etc. You are not required to provide your name. Any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, you are free to skip. The questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire, if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview or discussion, please provide your contact information. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to talk to.
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

someone aware of but not directly involved in the study, please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Respondents are also invited to voluntarily participate in an additional phone or one-on-one interview to add more descriptive information to specific questions. Given the interest in participating in an additional phone or one-on-one interview, the respondent may be called for an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Selection criteria will be based on the first fifty (50) requests to be contacted for a further in-depth interview. The interview will be taped if the participant provides approval and contact information. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review within two weeks of completion of interview and respondents will be requested to submit any follow up responses within three weeks upon provision of written copy of interview transcript.

If you have any questions, concerns or recommendations, please write your comments on the questionnaire, or contact me directly using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

A copy of the research will be presented to the university thesis committee to be approved as completion of my doctoral degree, and a presentation will be made on the findings to the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association or other aboriginal organizations as requested. The findings may potentially be submitted for publication in aboriginal specific research journals.

By completing and returning the survey, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please return the survey to me during the conference, or by mail (using an available self-addressed envelope). Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate, Dr. J.L. Magnusson
Theory and Policy Studies In Education Professor, Theory & Policy
OISE/University of Toronto Studies in Education
Tel: (705)-368-2664 ● Fx: (705)-368-2229 Tel: 416-923-6641
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca

I agree to voluntarily complete the survey.
☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to voluntarily arrange for a one-on-one follow up interview in person or via telephone.
☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to voluntarily have my follow up interview taped and/or written down for transcript purposes.
☐ Yes ☐ No

Initials: __________________________

Date: __________________________

I wish to be contacted for: My contact information is:
1. ☐ Follow-up interview
2. ☐ Request for summary of research.

Email: __________________________ And/Or
Telephone No.: __________________________
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX E

Info-Consent Letter for F.N. Education Counsellors

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Education Counsellor:

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation. I respectfully request your participation in the completion of a confidential questionnaire from the perspective of a First Nation education counsellor who provides sponsorship to First Nation post-secondary students. First Nation post-secondary students are also being asked to complete a similar survey in an effort to ensure that the perspectives of both stakeholders are included in the study. The questionnaire is an essential part of my dissertation, and I would appreciate your time and effort to complete it.

The study’s purpose is two-fold: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they enrol and enter.

The questionnaire was distributed during the Ontario Native Education Counsellors’ Association annual conference to a potential of over seventy-five First Nation Education Counsellors attending the conference. In addition, copies of the questionnaire will be mailed with a self-addressed and self-stamped return envelop or faxed to the workplace of First Nations education counsellors who did not attend the conference, in an effort to acquire as many responses as possible, potentially acquiring responses from approximately 200 First Nation education counsellors. The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association Board of Directors has endorsed the research as it relates directly to its objective “to provide a culturally relevant and informative conference program which will increase the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of First Nations Education Counsellors.”

The information from the questionnaires will be kept in strict confidence, stored in a secure place, and will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Magnusson, and myself. The data will be destroyed upon completion and approval of the thesis dissertation.

Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm. All information will remain confidential, and no specific First Nation will be highlighted – any reference to location will be made to a general area such as Northern Ontario, Central Ontario, etc. You are not required to provide your name. Any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, you are free to skip. The questionnaire will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire, if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview or discussion, please provide your contact information. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to talk to someone aware of but not directly involved in the study, please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.
Respondents are also invited to voluntarily participate in an additional phone or one-on-one interview to add more descriptive information to specific questions. Given the interest in participating in an additional phone or one-on-one interview, the respondent may be called for an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Selection criteria will be based on the first fifty (50) requests to be contacted for a further in-depth interview. The interview will be taped if the participant provides approval and contact information. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review within two weeks of completion of interview and respondents will be requested to submit any follow up responses within three weeks upon provision of written copy of interview transcript.

If you have any questions, concerns or recommendations, please write your comments on the questionnaire, or contact me directly using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

A copy of the research will be presented to the university thesis committee to be approved as completion of my doctoral degree, and a presentation will be made on the findings to the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association or other aboriginal organizations as requested. The findings may potentially be submitted for publication in aboriginal specific research journals.

By completing and returning the survey, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please return the survey to me during the conference, by fax, or by mail (using a requested self-addressed envelope). Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate,
Theory and Policy Studies In Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel: (705)-368-2664 ● Fx: (705)-368-2649
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

Dr. J.L. Magnusson
Professor, Theory & Policy
Studies in Education
Tel: 416-923-6641
Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca

I agree to voluntarily complete the survey.
□ Yes   □ No

I agree to voluntarily arrange for a one-on-one follow up interview in person or via telephone.
□ Yes   □ No

Initials: ________________________________
Date: ________________________________

I wish to be contacted for:
1. □ Follow-up interview
2. □ Request for summary of research.

My contact information is:
Email: ________________________________
And/Or,
Telephone No.: ________________________________
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX F

Info-Consent for Follow up Interview with FN PS Students

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Post-Secondary Student:

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in a follow up interview to the survey you completed for my research recently. As a recap, my name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled *Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs* under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies.

The study’s purpose is two-fold: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors’; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they ultimately enrol and enter.

The questionnaire was made available at post-secondary institutions’ with aboriginal support services, and was distributed during the Ontario Native Education Counsellors’ Association annual conference to a potential First Nation post-secondary student attending. In addition, copies of the questionnaire were given to First Nation education counsellors attending the conference to be distributed to any First Nation student they sponsored who may voluntarily wish to complete the question and return in an attached self-addressed and self-stamped return envelope. The various options of obtaining the questionnaire were made available in an effort to acquire as many responses as possible. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed.

The information from the questionnaires and the follow up interviews will be kept in strict confidence, stored in a secure place, and will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Magnusson, and myself. The data will be destroyed upon completion and approval of the thesis dissertation.

Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm. All information will remain confidential, and no specific First Nation or post-secondary institute will be highlighted – any reference to location will be made to a general area such as Northern Ontario, Central Ontario, etc. You are not required to provide your name. Any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, you are free to skip. The follow up interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire, if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview or discussion, please provide your contact information. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to talk to someone aware of but not directly involved in the study, please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Respondents may be invited to voluntarily participate in an additional phone or one-on-one interview to add more descriptive information to specific questions and will be selected on a “first
come, first serve” basis. Selection criteria will be based on the first fifty (50) requests to be contacted for a further in-depth interview. The interview will be taped if the participate provides approval and contact information. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review within two weeks of completion of interview and respondents will be requested to submit any follow up responses within three weeks upon provision of written copy of interview transcript.

If you have any questions, concerns or recommendations, please write your comments when you send in this letter with consent for the follow up interview, or contact me directly using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

A copy of the research will be presented to the university thesis committee to be approved as completion of my doctoral degree, and a presentation will be made on the findings to the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association or other aboriginal organizations as requested. The findings may potentially be submitted for publication in aboriginal specific research journals.

By signing and returning a copy of this letter (keep a copy for yourself!), you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the follow up interview, that you have received this letter, and that you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please return the signed letter to me by fax: 705-368-2649, or by mail (let me know that you will be mailing and I will send a self-addressed and stamped envelope). Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies In Education OISE/University of Toronto
Tel: (705)-368-2664 ● Fx: (705)-368-2649
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

Dr. J.L. Magnusson
Professor, Theory & Policy Studies in Education
Tel: 416-923-6641
Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca

I agree to voluntarily arrange for a one-on-one follow up interview in person or via telephone. □ Yes □ No

I agree to voluntarily have my follow up interview taped and/or written down for transcript purposes. □ Yes □ No

Initials: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

I wish to be contacted for request for summary of research. □ Yes □ No

My contact information is:
Email: ________________________________
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX G

Info-Consent for Follow up Interview with FN Education Counsellors

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Aanii, Sego, Wache, Greetings, First Nation Education Counsellor:

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in a follow up interview to the survey you completed for my research. As a recap, my name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies.

The study’s purpose is two-fold: to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors’; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they enrol and enter.

The questionnaire you completed was distributed during the Ontario Native Education Counsellors’ Association annual conference to a potential of over seventy-five First Nation Education Counsellors attending the conference. In addition, copies of the questionnaire were mailed with a self-addressed and self-stamped return envelope to the workplace of First Nations education counsellors who did not attend the conference, in an effort to acquire as many responses as possible, potentially acquiring responses from approximately 200 First Nation education counsellors. The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association Board of Directors endorsed the research as it relates directly to its objective “to provide a culturally relevant and informative conference program which will increase the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of First Nations Education Counsellors.”

The information from the questionnaires and follow up interviews will be kept in strict confidence, stored in a secure place, and will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Magnusson, and myself. The data will be destroyed upon completion and approval of the thesis dissertation.

Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm. All information will remain confidential, and no specific First Nation will be highlighted – any reference to location will be made to a general area such as Northern Ontario, Central Ontario, etc. You are not required to provide your name. Any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, you are free to skip. The follow up interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. At the end of the interview, if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview or discussion, please provide your contact information. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or would like to talk to someone aware of but not directly involved in the study, please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Respondents may be invited to voluntarily participate in an additional phone or one-on-one interview to add more descriptive information to specific questions and will be selected on a “first
come, first serve” basis. Selection criteria will be based on the first fifty (50) requests to be contacted for a further in-depth interview. The interview will be taped if the participate provides approval and contact information. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review. Written transcripts of interviews will be sent to the respondents for review within two weeks of completion of interview and respondents will be requested to submit any follow up responses within three weeks upon provision of written copy of interview transcript.

If you have any questions, concerns or recommendations, please provide your comments on the bottom of this form, or contact me directly using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

A copy of the research will be presented to the university thesis committee to be approved as completion of my doctoral degree, and a presentation will be made on the findings to the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association or other aboriginal organizations as requested. The findings may potentially be submitted for publication in aboriginal specific research journals.

By signing and returning this form, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the follow up interview, that you have received this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above. Please fax the letter to me at 705-368-2649. Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate,
Theory and Policy Studies In Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel: (705)-368-2664  •  Fx: (705)-368-2649
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

I agree to voluntarily arrange for a one-on-one follow up interview in person or via telephone.
□ Yes    □ No

I agree to voluntarily have my follow up interview taped and/or written down for transcript purposes.
□ Yes    □ No

Initials: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

I wish to be contacted to request a summary of research
□ Yes    □ No

My contact information is:
Email: ____________________________________________

And/Or
Telephone Number: ____________________________________________
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX H

Appeal for FN Education Counsellors to Distribute Questionnaire to their Students

Dear First Nation Education Counsellor:

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation.

I am requesting your participation in my research by distributing a survey to First Nation post-secondary students whom you currently sponsor who may be attending college, university, or an aboriginal education institute who may wish the voluntarily complete the survey and return to me with a self-addressed and self-stamped manila envelope. Some of you may already be familiar with my research through participation in the completion of the survey directed at First Nation education counsellors.

The research is intended to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they ultimately enrol and enter.

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) has endorsed my research and invited me to set up a booth to discuss my research and to invite First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students to participate. Further, I was requested to provide a presentation as a lunch keynote speaker at the conference.

Please note that all information is gathered anonymously and, therefore is confidential. Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm. The deadline for the submission of any questionnaires from students is October 31, 2007.

If you have any questions, I invite you to communicate with me using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation in advance. In the interest of efficiency, if approved, I am requesting a letter of consent or approval via electronic communication (ie. phone or email). Copies of questionnaire will be sent to you upon receipt of consent. Please let me know if you are interested in receiving a copy of the completed research, and it will be mailed once the thesis has been completed and approved by OISE/UT.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate
OISE/University of Toronto
Tel: (705)-368-2664 ● Fx: (705)-368-2649
Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

Dr. J.L. Magnusson
Professor, Theory & Policy Studies in Education
Tel: 416-923-6641
Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX I

Appeal to Post-Secondary Aboriginal Education Student Services to Distribute Questionnaire to First Nation Students

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

My name is Pam Williamson and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working on my thesis entitled Assessing the Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors on First Nation Post-Secondary Students and their Choices of Post-Secondary Programs under the supervision of Dr. J.L. Magnusson, from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies. I am a status Indian from Moose Deer Point First Nation.

I am requesting two things from you to move my research forward: to seek approval from the appropriate administrative office of your post-secondary institution to post invitation for First Nation students to participate in my research and to keep copies of the questionnaire available within your office to voluntarily complete the questionnaire and return in the self-addressed and self-stamped envelop.

The research is intended to develop insights into the nature of the role of First Nation education counsellors’; and to acquire insights and further research on the extent to which First Nation education counsellors contribute to the decision making factors that lead First Nation post-secondary bound students to select the programs they ultimately enroll and enter.

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) has board approved my research and invited me to set up a booth to discuss my research and to invite First Nation education counsellors and First Nation post-secondary students to participate. Further, I was requested to provide a presentation as a lunch keynote speaker.

Please note that all information is gathered anonymously and, therefore is confidential. Participants will not be judged or evaluated, nor will, at any time, be at risk of harm.

If you have any questions or require further information, I invite you to communicate with me using the contact information listed below. You may also contact my thesis supervisor using the contact information that is also listed below.

Miigwetch, and thank you for your interest and cooperation in advance. In the interest of efficiency, if approved, please email me your post-secondary endorsement to provide you with copies of the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be available to you between September and October, 2007. Please let me know if you are interested in receiving a copy of the completed research, and it will be e-mailed to you once my thesis has been approved.

Respectfully,

Pam Williamson, Doctoral Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies In Education OISE/University of Toronto Tel: (705)-368-2664 ● Fax: (705)-368-2649 Email: pmewilliamson@hotmail.com

Dr. J.L. Magnusson Professor, Theory & Policy Studies in Education OISE/University of Toronto Tel: 416-923-6641 Email: jmagnusson@oise.utoronto.ca

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Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX J

ONECA

ONTARIO NATIVE EDUCATION COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION
38 Reserve Road, Box 220, Naughton, ON P0M 2M0
tel: (705) 692-2999 | fax: (705) 692-9988
email: oneca@sympatico.ca | www.oneca.com

March 2, 2007

Ms. Pamela Williamson
Noojmwini Teg Health Centre
Highway 540,
48 Hillside Road, Bag 2002
Little Current, Ontario P0P K0J

Dear Pamela:

I would like to inform you that your request to have ONECA support your thesis was discussed at the Executive Meeting on February 16th.

The Executive Board of ONECA are willing to support part of your request by providing the following assistance to you.

1. Provide you with a vendors’ booth at no cost at our Annual Conference May 28, 29, 30th at the Water Tower Inn, in Sault Ste. Marie, where you can distribute your surveys.
2. Provide you with a copy of the ONECA Counsellor Directory on CD.
3. Provide you with a timeslot at the conference during lunch where you can make a presentation to the ONECA members and distribute packages.
4. Allow access to the ONECA list serve for the distribution of a survey. Any materials that are to be posted to the ONECA list serve must be reviewed by the Executive Committee prior to posting to ensure that no ethical and liability issues will arise from the content.

We wish you well in your research and look forward to seeing you at the conference in May.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Roxane Manitowabi,
Executive Director.
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX K

F.N. Post-Secondary Student’s Questionnaire

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

FIRST NATION POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE
(DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH – ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF STUDIES IN
EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO – OISE/UofT)

The questionnaire is intended to determine whether First Nation education counsellors influence First Nation students’ selection of post-secondary programming.
The questionnaire is intended to be answered by a First Nation post-secondary student who is:
- A member of a First Nation in the province of Ontario
- Sponsored by a First Nation to attend a post-secondary school
- Currently attending a post-secondary program

Your answers are voluntary and confidential.
There is an attached draw form which each individual may wish to fill in for the chance to win one hundred dollars ($100.) This is intended to be an incentive for people to complete the questionnaire.
Please note that the attached draw form will be removed prior to compilation of questionnaire responses, ensuring that the results remain confidential.

General Information
1. What Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) is your First Nation affiliated with?
   - [ ] Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
   - [ ] Grand Council Treaty #3
   - [ ] Independents
   - [ ] Nishnawbe Aski Nation
   - [ ] Union of Ontario Indians
   - [ ] Does not know/unsure

2. What First Nation does your Indian Status originate from?
   ________________________________________________________ First Nation

3. Where do you live when you are not attending school (check one answer).
   a. [ ] On-reserve
   b. [ ] Off-reserve

Student Generic
4. Check age range that is most appropriate to you:
   a. [ ] 18-24 years of age
   b. [ ] 25-30 years of age
   c. [ ] 30-40 years of age
   d. [ ] 40-59 years of age
   e. [ ] over 60 years of age
5. What is your gender?
   a. ☐ Female  
   b. ☐ Male

6. Describe your marital status.
   a. ☐ Married or common-law  
   b. ☐ Single  
   c. ☐ Divorced  
   d. ☐ Widowed

7. List number of dependents and their relationship to you.
   a. ☐ No children  
   b. ☐ Biological Children; Number: ________  
   c. ☐ Non-Biological Children; Number: ________  
   d. ☐ Related by Blood Children; Number: ________

**Education Specific**

8. Check the most appropriate box(es) for the levels of education that you personally have achieved to date.
   a. ☐ Partial Elementary or Grade School
   b. ☐ Successful completion of Elementary or Grade School
   c. ☐ Partial Secondary or High School
   d. ☐ Successful completion of Secondary or High School
   e. ☐ Pre-Entrance College or University Programming
   f. ☐ Partial Community College diploma program
   g. ☐ Successful completion of Community College diploma program
   h. ☐ Partial University degree program
   i. ☐ Successful completion of University degree
   j. ☐ Partial completion of ONECA Native Counsellor Training Program
   k. ☐ Successful completion of ONECA Native Counsellor Training Program
   l. ☐ Partial Other Post-secondary Institutions

   No of Degrees, if more than one: ________  
   Describe type of programming: ____________________________________________________
   m. ☐ Successful completion of Other Post-secondary Institution’s accreditation

   Describe type of programming: ____________________________________________________

9. What type of post-secondary institution are you attending?
   a. ☐ Community college
   b. ☐ University
   c. ☐ Aboriginal Educational Institution (ie. Anishnabek Education Institute, Seven Generations Educational Institute, etc)

10. What kind of program are you enrolled in?
    a. ☐ Two year college diploma program
    b. ☐ Three year college diploma program
    c. ☐ Three year degree university program
    d. ☐ Four year degree university program
    e. ☐ Post-Graduate program – Master’s Level
    f. ☐ Post-Graduate program – Phd. Level
    g. ☐ One year post-degree certificate university program
11. List program you are currently enrolled in and what institution you are attending:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Name of Institution (college, university or aboriginal education institute)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sponsorship/Program Specific

12. How many years have you been sponsored for post-secondary education?
   a. ☐ First year
   b. ☐ Second year
   c. ☐ Third year
   d. ☐ Fourth year
   f. ☐ Other (identify no. of years): __________

13. If listed Other more than four years), check reason for extended sponsorship for post-secondary educations (check as many as applicable):

   NOTE: College or University program refers to program taken on-site at an university or a college, or an aboriginal education institute (ie. First Nation Polytechnical Institute)

   a. ☐ Incomplete college program and changed to another college program with no interruption
   b. ☐ Incomplete college program and changed to an university program with no interruption
   c. ☐ Incomplete university program and changed to another university program with no interruption
   d. ☐ Incomplete university program and changed to a college program with no interruption
   e. ☐ Incomplete college program and after an interruption enrolled in a college program
   f. ☐ Incomplete college program and after an interruption, enrolled in an university program
   g. ☐ Incomplete university program and after an interruption, enrolled in a university program
   h. ☐ Incomplete university program and after an interruption, enrolled in a college program
   i. ☐ Successfully completed college program and entered another college program
   j. ☐ Successfully completed college program and entered a university program
   k. ☐ Successfully completed university program and entered another university program
   l. ☐ Successfully completed a university program and entered a college program

14. How many times did you apply for for sponsorship to attend post-secondary education before you were successful?
   a. ☐ First time
   b. ☐ Second time
   c. ☐ Third time or higher
15. If three or more attempts were made prior to being approved for sponsorship, identify the reason:
   a. □ Applied after deadline for sponsorship application
   b. □ Did not successfully complete previous year(s) in post-secondary program(s)
   c. □ List of students’ applying for funding was greater than sponsorship available from First Nation
   d. □ Do not know
   e. □ Other-
      Please explain: ____________________________________________________________________
      ______________________________________________________________________________}_

16. Check all descriptions below as to why you were approved for sponsorship that are appropriate to you:
   a. □ Band member living on-reserve
   b. □ Band member(s) living off-reserve
   c. □ High school graduate(s)
   d. □ Mature student(s) (19 yrs. +) with no children
   e. □ Mature student(s) (19 yrs. +) with children
   f. □ Retired band members (60+)
   g. □ Student who failed once previously
   h. □ Students who failed more than once previously
   i. □ Students who already have a Degree or Diploma
   j. □ Non-status
   k. □ Do not know

17. Were you sponsored as a part-time student to attend a post-secondary institution part-time in 2006-2007?
   a. □ Yes         b. □ No
   Is so, what type of courses/program and length of program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Courses/Program</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Have you ever attended a post-secondary institutions internationally?
   a. □ Yes         b. □ No
   If yes, please list program, institution and country where you were sponsored to attend school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Program</th>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Name of Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Living Allowance/Month</th>
<th>Books/Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

20. What other sources of income did you have while attending a post-secondary program during this past year?
   a. ☐ No other income
   b. ☐ Income generated by student him/herself
   c. ☐ Income generated by working spouse/partner
   d. ☐ Income generated from another government source of funding (ie. OSAP, WSIB, pension, etc)
   e. ☐ Financial support from other family members (ie. parents, etc)
   f. ☐ Financial support from other than family (ie. church, friends, etc)
   g. ☐ Loans from financial institutions
   h. ☐ Scholarships/Bursaries
   i. ☐ Other: ____________________________________________________________

21. Did you know what program you wanted to take prior to applying for sponsorship?
   a. ☐ Yes       b. ☐ No

22. How did you choose the current program you are taking?
   a. ☐ Recommended by family or friends
   b. ☐ Recommended by First Nation education counselor
   c. ☐ Recommended by High School education counselor or teacher
   d. ☐ Attended a career fair
   e. ☐ Participated in a co-op work experience while in high school
   f. ☐ Personal interest and choice
   g. ☐ Other: ____________________________________________________________

23. How many times, on average, were you in contact with, and for whatever purpose, your First Nation education counsellor in your first year at a post-secondary institution?
   a. ☐ 1-5 times
   b. ☐ 6-10 times
   c. ☐ 11-19 times
   d. ☐ over 20 times

24. Who did the most contacting (check one):
   a. ☐ You contacted the First Nation education counsellor
   b. ☐ The First Nation education counsellor contacted you
   c. ☐ You both contacted each other equally
25. Complete descriptions of the types of contact you had during the school year with First Nation Education Counsellors. Fill in as completely as possible. If the type of communication did not occur, do not fill in rest of section after a ‘No’ response. Go to the next Description of Contact and complete:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Contact</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>No.of Times Per Year</th>
<th>Purpose of Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Called by Phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited On-Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emailed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent Facsimile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Counsellor at office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Counsellor and Family at office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor contacted Post-Secondary Institutional Staff such as Registrar Office, Accounting, Campus Counsellor, Native Services, etc, and information received from them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. If applicable, was there more, less, or same amount of contact with the First Nation education counsellor while in previous years within post-secondary studies?
   a. ☐ More
   b. ☐ Less
   c. ☐ Same

27. How often were you contacted by the First Nation education counsellor for the following purposes?
   a. Prior to and during the application process for tuition, books/supplies and/or living allowance? ____________.
   b. During school year? ______________
   c. Upon completion of school year? ____________
28. Describe how often you were provided with the following services from the First Nation education counsellor. If you were not provided a specific service, indicate “never”. Respond to all description of services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Service</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Counselling (ie. Career guidance, determination of programs and institutions to attend, track performance, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal or Social Counselling (ie. personal problems and issues, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude/Personality testing, analysis, or set up for testing (ie. personality tests, aptitude testing, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Assistance support – above and beyond living allowance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate (ie. Appeals to school or band on behalf of students, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Preparation Assistance – ie program applications, residence applications, and other post-secondary paperwork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Cultural supports – traditional ceremonies or socials, celebrations of holidays, etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (describe):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Rate the level of influence you feel that your First Nation education counsellors provided to you to assist in your selection of the post-secondary program(s) you applied for?
   a. □ Very influential
   b. □ Somewhat influential
   c. □ Little influential
   d. □ No influence at all
30. If you answered very influential, somewhat influential, or little influential, list some of the ways that he/she influenced your decision of what program to enrol in. The First Nation education counsellor provided recommendations as to what program to take based on:
   a. [ ] Cost of the program
   b. [ ] Expense of attending post-secondary institution
   c. [ ] Preference for a specific post-secondary institution for reasons other than financial (ie. other students attended, familiarity with specific institutions, etc)
   d. [ ] Test score results for aptitude or other academic testing for appropriateness in attending a specific program(s)
   e. [ ] Other (please describe): ______________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

31. From your perspective, please rank, from one (1) to thirteen (13) the levels of influence each potential influencer listed below has been on your decision of what post-secondary program you decided to apply for in relation to other potential influencers. If the potential influencer description has no relevance to you, record N/A (non-applicable) instead of ranking.

   Influencer (definition): Someone or something that has the power to sway or affect based on prestige, wealth, ability or position.
   Ranking (definition): numerical position on a scale in relation to others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Influencers Re: Program Selection</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decisions For Post-secondary Students</td>
<td>(#1 most influential to #15 is least influential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Student – self influential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Boyfriend or Girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. First Nation Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. High School Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Advertising and Other Information Sources Regarding Specific Programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Previous Participation in Cooperative Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School Teachers/Principals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Professionals Current in Specific Field of Program Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Post-secondary Recruitment Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Post-secondary Counsellor/Other Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Personal Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Chief and/or Council or Band Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Other(identify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32. Please rank, from one (1) to thirteen (13) the levels of influence each potential influencer listed below is when students are making decisions regarding what post-secondary institution to apply for in relation to other potential influencers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Influencers Re: Selection of Post-Secondary Institution by Post-secondary Students</th>
<th>Ranking (#1 is most influential to #12 is least influential)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Boyfriend or Girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. First Nation Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. High School Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Advertising and Other Information Sources Regarding Specific Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Distance or Proximity to Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School Teachers/Principals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reputation of the Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Post-secondary Recruitment Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Personal Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Chief and/or Council or Band Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Other(identify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33. Do you feel that you will successfully complete your post-secondary program?
   a. □ Yes    b. □ No

34. Do you believe that the First Nation education counsellor will have contributed toward your success in completing your post-secondary studies?
   a. □ Yes    b. □ No

35a. If yes, describe how you feel that the First Nation education counsellor contributed toward your success in completing your post-secondary studies.

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

35b. If no, describe how you feel in what manner that the First Nation education counsellor did not contribute to your success in completing your post-secondary studies.

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

36. Rate the level of service you feel that your First Nation post-secondary education counsellor provides to you. Check off the most appropriate level
   a. □ Very high level of service
   b. □ Somewhat high level of service
   c. □ Acceptable level of service
   d. □ Minimal level of service
   e. □ Very little or very limited service
   f. □ No service
37. Identify some reasons that support why you believe you receive the level of service that you do from your First Nation education counsellor?

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE RESEARCHER, PAM WILLIAMSON IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING PROVIDING MORE DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION IN ADDITION TO THIS SURVEY, PLEASE PROVIDE EMAIL ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER AND YOU WILL BE CALLED TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Miigwetch. Thank you for completing this survey questionnaire and for your interest.

I understand that the interview will be taped for transcript purposes and erased once the information has been transposed into writing.

□ Yes □ No (I do not wish to have the interview taped)

I am interested in - fill in appropriate box(es):

□ Completing phone interview □ Receiving summary results of study

Email Address: ___________________________________________________________

Phone Number: ___________________________________________________________

ALL INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX L

First Nation Education Counsellor’s Survey

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

FIRST NATION EDUCATION COUNSELLORS QUESTIONNAIRE
(DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH – ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF STUDIES IN EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO – OISE/UofT)

The questionnaire is intended to determine whether First Nation education counsellors influence First Nation students’ selection of post-secondary programming. The questionnaire is specific to First Nation education counsellors who:

- Work within a First Nation or tribal or regional office
- Sponsor and work with post-secondary level students.
- Are members of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA)

Your answers are voluntary and confidential.

General Information

1. What Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO) is your First Nation affiliated with?
   a. □ Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians
   b. □ Grand Council Treaty #3
   c. □ Independents
   d. □ Nishnawbe Aski Nation
   e. □ Union of Ontario Indians

2. What is the current population of the First Nation you work for as Education Counsellor?
   a. □ Total (on and off reserve) ___________
   b. □ On-reserve _______________________
   c. □ Off-reserve _______________________.

Education Counsellor Specific

3. Please self-identify from the following list:
   a. □ Status Indian
   b. □ Non-Status Indian
   c. □ Status Metis
   d. □ Non-Status Metis
   e. □ Non-Native
   f. □ Inuit
   g. □ Non-Canadian – Identify ______________

4. Please identify your age within the following age ranges.
   a. □ 20-30 years of age
   b. □ 31-40 years of age
   c. □ 41-50 years of age
   d. □ 51-60 years of age
   e. □ 61 + years of age
5. Please identify your current relationship status.
   a. ☐ Married  
   b. ☐ Common Law  
   c. ☐ Divorced  
   d. ☐ Separated  
   e. ☐ Single  
   f. ☐ Widow/Widower

6. List number of dependents and their relationship to you.
   a. ☐ No children  
   b. ☐ Biological Children; Number: ________  
   c. ☐ Non-Biological Children; Number: ________  
   d. ☐ Related by Blood Children; Number: ________

7. Identify your gender.
   a. ☐ Male  
   b. ☐ Female

8. Check the most appropriate box(es) for the levels of education that you personally have achieved.
   a. ☐ Partial Elementary or Grade School  
   b. ☐ Successful completion of Elementary or Grade School  
   c. ☐ Partial Secondary or High School  
   d. ☐ Successful completion of Secondary or High School  
   e. ☐ Pre-Entrance College or University Programming  
   f. ☐ Partial Community College diploma program  
   g. ☐ Successful completion of Community College diploma program  
   Number of Diplomas, if more than one: ________  
   h. ☐ Partial University  
   i. ☐ Successful completion of University degree  
   No of Degrees, if more than one: ________________________  
   j. ☐ Partial completion of ONECA Native Counsellor Training Program  
   k. ☐ Successful completion of ONECA Native Counsellor Training Program  
   l. ☐ Some Other Institutions  
   Describe type of programming: ________________________
   b. Successful completion of Other Institutions accreditation  
   Describe type of programming: ________________________  

9. If you successfully completed a post-secondary program(s), complete the following information regarding your educational attainment(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Description Of Program</th>
<th>No of Years of Study</th>
<th>Band sponsored Yes or No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. How long have you worked for the band as Education Counsellor?

11. Check one. Is your position as Education Counselor
a. □ Full time       b. □ Part time

12. If your position is part-time, do you complete other duties for the band?
   a. □ Yes   b. □ No
   If yes, identify your other duties. ______________________

13. As the First Nation Education Counsellor or a Tribal/Regional Education Counsellor, check each level of education you are responsible for.
   a. □ Elementary Students 
   b. □ Secondary Students 
   c. □ Post-Secondary Students 
   d. □ All levels of education 
   e. □ Other (describe): ________________________________

14. Are you a member of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA)?
   a. □ Yes       b. □ No

15. Do you believe the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association has been beneficial in enhancing your skills and knowledge as a First Nation Education Counsellor?
   a. □ Yes       b. □ No

16. Have you attended the Native Counsellor Training Program (NCTP) offered by the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association?
   a. □ Yes       b. □ No
   If yes, check the highest level of program sessions you completed:
     □ Part I
     □ Part II
     □ Part III
     □ Successfully graduated from the NCTP

17. Please identify your yearly salary within the following income ranges.
   b. less than $20,000.
   c. $21,000. – $25,000.
   d. $26,000. – $30,000.
   e. $31,000. – $35,000.
   f. $36,000. – $40,000.
   g. $41,000. – $45,000.
   h. $46,000. – $50,000.
   i. $50,000. – $55,000.
   j. $56,000+
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

**Student Specific**


19. How many potential students applied for funding? __________

20. What percentage of post-secondary students did you sponsor in 2006-2007 who were in:
   a. 1st year? ____________________________
   b. 2nd year? ____________________________
   c. 3rd year? ____________________________
   d. 4th year? ____________________________
   e. 5th year or higher? ________________

21. Did you sponsor a student to attend a post-secondary institution part-time in 2006-2007?
   a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No

   Is so, what type of courses/program and length of program?
   **Type of Courses/Program** | **Length of Time**
   --- | ---
   
   (For list of additional part-time students, please attach another sheet)

22. In the past, have you sponsored a student to attend the first year of a community college program more than once?
   a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No

   If yes, on average, how many times have you sponsored the same student to enrol for the first year of a community college program? (Identify number)______________ of times.

23. In the past, have you sponsored a student to attend the first year of a university program more than once?
   a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No

   If yes, on average, how many times have you sponsored the same student to enrol for the first year of a university program? (Identify number)______________ of times.

24. In the past, have you sponsored a student to attend the first year of a First Nations Educational Institute more than once?
   a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No

   If yes, on average, how many times have you sponsored the same student to enrol for the first year of a First Nations Educational Institute’s program? (Identify number)______________ of times.
25. How many students did you sponsor in 2006-2007 who are attending
   a. Community college? ________________
   b. University? ________________
   c. First Nation Education Institution? ________________
   d. Other Post-secondary training ________________

If “Other”, identify the name and type of institution(s).
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

26. How many students did you sponsor in 2006-2007 who live:
   a. On reserve? ________________
   b. Off-reserve? ________________

27. Do you sponsor students to attend post-secondary institutions internationally?
   a. □ Yes   b. □ No

If yes, please list the countries where students you sponsored went to school.
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
28. Post-secondary school band members who apply for funding are selected as the successful candidate for sponsorship based on what criteria? Check (✓) all boxes to the left of the following descriptions that fit the criteria for sponsorship eligibility used by your First Nation or Region. On the right hand side, list according to priority (ie. #1 is the highest, #2 is second, etc), the items that are most important to least important for your band in student sponsorship selection. Write N/A for any items that are not included in your First Nation’s policy.

a. ☐ According to a written band policy
b. ☐ Band member(s) living on-reserve
c. ☐ Band member(s) living off-reserve
d. ☐ High school graduate(s)
e. ☐ Mature student(s) (19 yrs. +) with no children
f. ☐ Mature student(s) (19 yrs. +) with children
g. ☐ Retired band members (60+)
h. ☐ Student who failed once previously
i. ☐ Students who failed more than once previously
j. ☐ Students who already have a Degree or Diploma
k. ☐ Non-status

29. What was the total budget spent on post-secondary education sponsorship in 2006-2007?

____________________

30. What was the total budget spent on post-secondary education sponsorship in 2007-2008?

____________________

31. On average, what did you budget for a student to attend college in 2006-2007 and what do you project to allocate 2007-2008 for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Living allowance (per month)</th>
<th>Books/Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

32. On average, what did you allocate for a student to attend university in 2006-2007 and what do you project to allocate for 2007-2008 for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Living allowance (per month)</th>
<th>Books/Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
33. Fill in the table below based on every student your First Nation sponsored in 2006-2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>College OR University</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Reserve (circle one)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Sir Sanford Fleming</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Off</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Off</td>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Attach additional pages for #12 question re: individual student information for 2006-2007 are attached to be filled in as needed.

34. On average, did you have more contact, for whatever purpose, with First Nation post-secondary students than second year and over (2+) First Nation post-secondary students?
   a. [ ] Yes         b. [ ] No
35. If you contacted first year students more, how many times did you contact them in any given year for the following purposes (please identify number of times for each question):

   a. Prior to and during the application process for tuition, books/supplies and/or living allowance? _____________.

   b. During school year for 2006-2007? ______________

   c. Upon completion of school year for 2006-2007? __________

36. How many of your first year post-secondary students:

   a. Successfully completed their year (100%)? __________

   b. Partially successfully completed their year?___________

   c. Did not successfully complete their year but were in school for the duration of the year? __________

   d. Did not successfully complete their first semester and were exited from the program and institution? ______________

Note: Partial success means that they passed sufficient courses as determined by the post-secondary institution attended, to continue in their program, or to enrol in another program within the institution.

37. On average, how many “chances” does your First Nation allow for each student get to successful reapply for sponsorship to attend post-secondary education when they fail the first time? ______________

Comments: ______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
38. Check off all items that you implement to track post-secondary students’ academic progress during the school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Tracking Measure</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>No.of Time Per Year Per Student</th>
<th>College or University or Other</th>
<th>Purpose of Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call Student Directly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Student On-Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send Facsimile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with Student and Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Post-Secondary Institutional Staff such as Registrar Office, Accounting, Campus Counsellor, Native Services, etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
39. Identify often you provide the following services to post-secondary students. If you do not provide service, indicate “never”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Service</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Counselling (ie. Career guidance, determination of programs and institutions to attend, track performance, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal or Social Counselling (ie. Student personal problems and issues, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Testing Administration (ie. personality tests, aptitude testing, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Testing Analysis (ie. Aptitude test scoring and interpretation, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocation (ie. Appeals to school or band on behalf of students, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Administration (ie. funding disbursement, budget management, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports Writing (ie. Proposal writing, and reports to funders’, Band administration, Chief and Council, statistics, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Student Specific Administration (ie. application forms processing, contact with post-secondary institutions, maintain statistics, files, forms, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (describe):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
40. Rate the following list of potential services you may provide based on a percentage (%) of the time you spend in any specific area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Service</th>
<th>Percentage of Time Spent/ Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Counselling (ie. Career guidance, determination of programs and institutions to attend, track performance, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal or Social Counselling (ie. Student personal problems and issues, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Testing Administration (ie. personality tests, aptitude testing, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Testing Analysis (ie. Aptitude test scoring and interpretation, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocation (ie. Appeals to school or band on behalf of students, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Administration (ie. funding dispersement, budget management, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports Writing (ie. Proposal writing, and reports to funders’, Band administration, Chief and Council, statistics, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Student Specific Administration (ie. application forms processing, contact with post-secondary institutions, maintain statistics, files, forms, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (describe):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41. Do you feel that you are influential in the decisions students make regarding what post-secondary program they will apply for?
   a. ☐ Yes                      b. ☐ No

42. Rate the level of influence you feel that you provide to First Nation post-secondary students to assist in their selection of a post-secondary program(s).
   a. ☐ Very influential
   b. ☐ Somewhat influential
   c. ☐ Little influential
   d. ☐ No influence at all
43. If you answered very influential, somewhat influential, or little influential, list some of the factors that you took into consideration when you influenced the students’ decisions as to what programs to enrol in.
   a. □ Cost of the program
   b. □ Expense of attending post-secondary institution
   c. □ Preference for a specific post-secondary institution for reasons other than financial (ie. other students attended, familiarity with specific institutions, etc)
   d. □ Test score results for aptitude or other academic testing for appropriateness in attending a specific program(s)
   e. □ Other (please describe): _____________________________________________

44. From your perspective, please rank, from one (1) to thirteen (13) the levels of influence each potential influencer listed below is when students are making decisions regarding what post-secondary program they are going to apply for in relation to other potential influencers.

   **Influencer (definition):** Someone or something that has the power to sway or affect based on prestige, wealth, ability or position.
   **Ranking (definition):** numerical position on a scale in relation to others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Influencers Re: Program Selection</th>
<th>Ranking (from most influential to least influential)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decisions For Post-secondary Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Student – self influential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Boyfriend or Girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. First Nation Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. High School Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Advertising and Other Information Sources Regarding Specific Programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Previous Participation in Cooperative Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. School Teachers/Principals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Professionals Current in Specific Field of Program Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Post-secondary Recruitment Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Post-secondary Counsellor/Other Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Personal Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Chief and/or Council or Band Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. Other(identify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
45. Please rank, from one (1) to thirteen (13) the levels of influence each potential influencer listed below is when students are making decisions regarding what post-secondary institution to apply for in relation to other potential influencers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Influencers Re: Selection of Post-Secondary Institution by Post-secondary Students</th>
<th>Ranking (from (1) is most influential to (12) is least influential)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Boyfriend or Girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. First Nation Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. High School Education Counsellor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Advertising and Other Information Sources Regarding Specific Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Distance or Proximity to Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. School Teachers/Principals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Reputation of the Institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Post-secondary Recruitment Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Personal Interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Chief and/or Council or Band Members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Other(identify):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46. Rate the level of service you provide to the different types of First Nation post-secondary students that you sponsor. Check off the most appropriate level for each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Student</th>
<th>More Service</th>
<th>Less Service</th>
<th>Same Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. On Reserve Post-Secondary High School Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Off Reserve Post-Secondary High School Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. On Reserve Mature Students – No Kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Off Reserve Mature Students – No Kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. On Reserve Mature Students – With Kids</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Off Reserve Mature Students – With Kids</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47. If there is less contact and less service to different students, please note reasons for differences in amount of service you provide to different students.

PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE RESEARCHER, PAM WILLIAMSON IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING PROVIDING MORE DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION IN ADDITION TO THIS SURVEY, PLEASE PROVIDE EMAIL ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER AND YOU WILL BE CALLED TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Miigwetch. Thank you for completing this survey questionnaire and for your interest.
I understand that the interview will be taped for transcript purposes and erased once the information has been transposed into writing. Also, I will be provided with a written copy of transcript to review.

☐ Yes  ☐ No (I do not wish to have the interview taped)

I am interested in (fill in appropriate box):

☐ Completing phone interview  ☐ Receiving summary results of study

Email Address: __________________________________________________________

Phone Number: __________________________________________________________

ALL INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL
Determining Influence of First Nation Education Counsellors

APPENDIX M

Follow Up Interview for F.N. Post-Secondary Students

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

FIRST NATION POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS' FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW
(.DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH – ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF STUDIES IN EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO – OISE/UT)

The follow-up questionnaire is intended to enhance answers given in the original survey to assist in determining whether First Nation post-secondary students feel that First Nation education counsellors influence their selection of post-secondary programming. The questionnaire is intended to be answered by a First Nation post-secondary student who is:
- Students eighteen years of age and older
- A member of a First Nation in the province of Ontario
- Sponsored by a First Nation to attend a post-secondary school
- Currently attending a post-secondary program – 2007-2008
- Completed the First Nations Post-Secondary Students’ Questionnaire and signed approval to make arrangements and to complete follow-up interview

Your answers are voluntary and confidential.

Email: _________________________________________________
Phone No.: ________________________________________________

1. You have signed the consent and provided information to contact you for the follow-up interview in the original questionnaire.
   □ Yes □ No

2. Please confirm your email as cited (see above)
   □ Yes □ No

3. Please confirm your phone number as cited (see above).
   □ Yes □ No

4. Do you agree that the results of the interview may be taped and written out for transcript purposes. The taped interviews will be maintained in a secure place and will be destroyed upon completion of the research. A written transcript of the interview will be provided to you for review up to one month after the interview.
   □ Yes □ No

3. Describe what your First Nation education counsellor did to assist you in the decision of what post-secondary program you were going to take.

4. Indicate how helpful or not-helpful in relation to a maximum of three (3) other factors or people who assisted you in making your final choice(s).

5. Describe what your First Nation education counsellor has done to assist you while you are enrolled in a post-secondary program.

6. Describe how helpful or non-helpful the First Nation education counsellor is in comparison to a maximum of three (3) other factors or people who are assisting you in the post-secondary program you are taking.
7. Describe in detail what services that you feel are most helpful that are provided by the First Nation education counsellor.

Thank you for your further participation in answering the interview questions. If you have any further questions or would like to add further information, please contact me at 705-368-2664 or email me at p.williamson@noojmowin-teg.ca.
The follow-up questionnaire is intended to enhance answers given in the original survey to assist in determining whether First Nation education counsellors influence First Nation students’ selection of post-secondary programming. The follow up questionnaire is specific to First Nation education counsellors who:

- Work within a First Nation or tribal or regional office
- Sponsor and work with post-secondary level students.
- Are members of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA)
- Completed the First Nations Counsellors’ Questionnaire and signed approval to make arrangements to complete follow-up interview

Your answers are voluntary and confidential.

Email: _________________________________________________

Phone No.: ________________________

8. You have signed the consent and provided information to contact you for the follow-up interview in the original questionnaire.
   □ Yes □ No

9. Please confirm your email as cited (see above)
   □ Yes □ No

3. Please confirm your phone number as cited (see above).
   □ Yes □ No

5. Do you agree that the results of the interview may be taped and written out for transcript purposes. The taped interviews will be maintained in a secure place and will be destroyed upon completion of the research. A written transcript of the interview will be provided to you for review up to one month after the interview.
   □ Yes □ No

6. Do you believe the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association has been beneficial in enhancing your skills and knowledge as a First Nation Education Counsellor?

7. How has ONECA been or not been helpful?

8. Are there any general comments you wish to add regarding the students you sponsor each year about some of your observations in dealing with them or on behalf of them?

9. What types of counselling do you provide to post-secondary students the most?

10. What have been the most effective types of counselling that you provide to post-secondary students?
11. Describe the following ways that you feel you are influential to post-secondary students:
   a. In contributing to their academic success?
   b. In contributing to their retention in a post-secondary program?
   c. In contributing to their overall post-secondary school experience?

12. Are there any changes or strategies that you feel could help you provide better service to the
    students you sponsor?

Thank you for your further participation in answering the interview questions. If you have any further
questions or would like to add further information, please contact me at 705-368-2664 or email me at
p.williamson@noojmowin-teg.ca.