

# Learning From and With Aboriginal Learners: Rethinking Aboriginal Education in Canada

NATALIA PANINA-BEARD

*The University of British Columbia*

*This chapter presents an overview of Aboriginal education in Canada that focuses on linking the transgenerational effects of colonialism with current issues. Educational models, partnerships, and programs already exist that make an enormous impact on outcomes for children and youth in and from Aboriginal communities. Examples of six successful programs that were developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities and range from elementary school through post-secondary school are highlighted.*

Aboriginal education in Canada continues to be one of the most important topics in the field of educational research. Children and youth living and attending schools on reserves are often more disadvantaged, and have lower rates of educational attainment, than children and youth living and attending schools off reserves (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). While a history of colonization and, more specifically, the use of schooling to force assimilation on children, youth, and families have contributed to this disparity (e.g., Boldt, 1993; Chandler, 2010; Helin, 2006), there are also Aboriginal communities where high school completion rates are comparable to those of the non-Aboriginal population (Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012). Research shows that Aboriginal learners do better in school and are likely to develop new skills and further interest in learning in Aboriginal communities with strong leadership and family values, where

traditional activities are embraced through the development of language and cultural programs, and where experiential, informal learning, and leadership opportunities are available (CCL, 2007, 2009; Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012). Early educational successes create a foundation for post-secondary engagement and further educational attainment.

In addition, when Aboriginal communities open their own post-secondary institutions founded on the basis of Indigenous worldviews—often in partnership with colleges and universities—more Aboriginal learners engage in post-secondary education (CCL 2007, 2009; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Chiefs Assembly on Education, 2012; Graham, 2005; McCue, 2006). Students are more likely to complete their high school education and transition to post-secondary learning if their communities act in partnership with colleges and universities to create and deliver accessible and community focused post-secondary programs (Ball, Pence, Pierre, & Kuehne, 2002; Bell & O'Reilly, 2008). The availability of and access to opportunities to pursue post-secondary education is a crucial factor in educational attainment for Aboriginal learners (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2009; Holmes, 2005; Hull, 2009). First Nations-University partnership programs, for example those offered in Child and Youth Care by the University of Victoria in British Columbia, have demonstrated the possibilities afforded by integrating Western and Indigenous knowledges into well-designed programs that meet the needs of a number of different communities and their members and provide a high level of post-secondary education (Ball, 2003, 2004, 2009).

Divided into three sections, this chapter argues that Aboriginal educational engagement and attainment is influenced by the past and present experiences of Aboriginal peoples with colonization. Fostering Aboriginal educational engagement and attainment, therefore, must address these experiences. The first section briefly describes the legacy of colonization on the current experiences of Aboriginal learners in Canada, including some of what has been learned from and with Aboriginal adult learners reflecting on their educational experiences. The second section offers several examples for rethinking Aboriginal education in the 21st century, including successful high school programs, career and vocational counseling programs, and institutes and partnerships for post-secondary education. A brief summary, in the third section, is followed by future directions for educational research.

### CONTINUING EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION

Historically, the schooling experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, as well as in other colonial countries, have had a devastating effect on all aspects of Indigenous ways of living. Schooling was used expressly for

the purpose of assimilating children into European-Canadian society; the last residential school was closed as recently as 1996 (see Green, 2012). Separating Aboriginal children from their families with the intention to “civilize” them by placing them in residential or Indian day schools destroyed the structure of Indigenous societies and held several generations of Aboriginal children hostage, stripping away their language, culture, knowledge, and ways of living (Chandler, 2010). To educate Aboriginal children and youth, a dominant society imposed rules, laws, and school practices without respect for and/or an understanding of Indigenous cultures (Assembly of First Nations, 2010; Fournier & Crey, 1997, 2000; Frierdes, 1988; Furniss, 1995; Glavin, 2002; The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2011). In substandard conditions, many children were malnourished and abused, and disease was rampant; in some schools the mortality rate for children was 30% to 60% (Milloy, 1999).

While schooling could have contributed to a positive integrative process of learning about and building healthy relationships between Aboriginal and European-Canadian cultures, instead it became an oppressive colonial tool used to marginalize and devalue Aboriginal culture and identity. Schools imposed “on Aboriginals a design for living which has literally devastated Aboriginal cultures and has created a continuing cultural crisis for Aboriginals for more than a century” (Peavy, 1993, n. p.). Forced assimilation, isolation, a loss of identity and ability to self-sustain, a ban on cultural practices, and a loss of the ability to function in accordance with traditional Aboriginal teachings resulted in the development of economic dependence, prevented Indigenous cultures from flourishing, and contributed to a complex legacy of conflict between Aboriginal and European-Canadian cultures (Boldt, 1993; Chandler, 2010; Helin, 2006). Three interrelated effects of this legacy—transgenerational trauma, poverty, and cultural alienation—are discussed briefly in relation to public schooling.

Kirmayer, Simpson, and Cargo (2003) argued that forced assimilation is the main reason for poor health, substance abuse, identity confusion, and the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal peoples on individual and community levels. The authors stated that the transgenerational effects of residential schools include:

the structural effect of disrupting families and communities; the transmission of explicit models and ideologies of parenting based on experiences in punitive institutional settings; patterns of emotional responding that reflect the lack of warmth and intimacy in childhood; repetition of physical and sexual abuse; loss of knowledge, language and tradition; systematic devaluing of Aboriginal identity; and paradoxically, essentialising Aboriginal identity by

treating it as something intrinsic to the person, static and incapable of change. These accounts point to a loss of individual and collective self-esteem, to individual and collective disempowerment and, in some instances, to destruction of communities. (Kirmayer et al., 2003, p. 18)

Poverty, discrimination and stigmatization, identity confusion, and past experiences with residential schools are some of the challenges addressed in the Education Action Plan created by the department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC, 2005). Their report indicated that these issues continue to play a significant role in the educational success or failure of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and negatively affect individual motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Current statistics also reflect these challenges. For example, approximately 42% of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada live below the poverty line in comparison to 17% of non-Aboriginal peoples; every fourth Aboriginal child lives in poverty and the poverty rate in British Columbia (BC) is one of the highest in Canada (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011). Aboriginal children are largely overrepresented in the care of the BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development at 54% (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2009), although they represent only 8% of the total population of children in the province (Statistics Canada, 2006). In a discussion on Aboriginal socio-economic issues, Fournier and Crey (2000) stated that “[p]overty is a scourge that stalks Aboriginal children as they grow up. It is a well-documented fact that poor children suffer more health problems of every kind, and Aboriginal children in Canada are among the poorest of the poor” (p. 306).

There is also a large difference in the earning potential between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that can be seen as contributing to poor living conditions and low socio-economic status of Aboriginal families. The median income gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada is about 30%; however, in some locations, such as remote reserve communities, the income gap can approach 88% in favor of non-Aboriginal people (D. Wilson & Macdonald, 2010). Only Aboriginal peoples who hold university degrees have managed to reduce this gap; those who have lower levels of education are still lagging far behind non-Aboriginal Canadians in their income. It is interesting to note that on the one hand, many Aboriginal women are among the poorest in Canada, and on the other hand, Aboriginal women with post-secondary degrees, “particularly at the Master’s level, may earn more than non-Aboriginal women, but there are fewer of them doing so” (D. Wilson & Macdonald, 2010, p. 22). Apparent in the 2006 Census, this might indicate a developing trend in Aboriginal women’s

education, employment, and earning potential (D. Wilson & Macdonald, 2010). As a group, they are also more successful in pursuing and completing higher levels of post-secondary education in comparison to Aboriginal men. Although educational attainment among Aboriginal learners between 24 and 34 years old is slowly rising, and those with university degrees earn more than they have in the past, Aboriginal men, even with a bachelor's degree, still earn less than their non-Aboriginal cohort.

Forced assimilation also destroyed Aboriginal epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of knowing that are culturally significant for the identity and well-being of individuals and communities. Chandler and Lalonde (2008) addressed issues of Aboriginal identity development in relation to youth suicide, the negative effects of colonization, and the overall well-being of Aboriginal communities. The authors developed a number of measures of what they called "cultural continuity" to understand the relationship between community well-being and suicide rates. Cultural continuity reflects the presence or the lack of several social, political, educational, and cultural factors in Aboriginal communities. Specifically, communities had no incidents of suicide if they: were self-governing and addressed land claims; had control over education, child protection, health services, police and fire services; encouraged women's presence in government; created cultural facilities; and embraced knowledge of Indigenous languages and traditions. These are the measures of cultural continuity that seemed to affect the well-being of people living on reserves. Communities that had none of these measures had the highest rate of youth suicide, noted as "epidemic" (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008, p. 72). The results of this study demonstrated that "constructing a sense of ownership of one's personal and collective past, and some commitment to one's own future prospects" (p. 69) relates to positive identity development among Aboriginal youth and healthy communities overall.

The transgenerational effects of colonization and resulting unmet needs faced by a large proportion of Aboriginal learners contribute to their educational disengagement. The school completion rate among Aboriginal peoples lags behind their non-Aboriginal peers and varies with their location of residence and their identity population groups. For example, approximately 60% of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada living off reserve and almost 75% of all Métis people complete high school. Among peoples aged 25 to 34 years old, about 30% of the non-Aboriginal population holds a university degree while only 8% of the Aboriginal population in the same age group holds a university degree (Richards, 2008). In BC overall, 54% of Aboriginal versus 81% of non-Aboriginal students attending public schools completed their Dogwood certificate (BC Teachers' Federation, 2012), which meant that they completed high school in

six years or less after enrolling in Grade 8. Specifically, 56% of female and 51% of male Aboriginal students, and 83% of female and 79% of male non-Aboriginal students, completed their Dogwood certificate in BC (BC Teachers' Federation, 2012).

Engagement in educational opportunities is a potential pathway to overcome some of the negative effects of colonization, as well as to gain access for participating in public political, economic, health, and education policy and decision-making. Graduation from high school, or the equivalent, is essential to further professional development, for example, to pursue a trade school, college, or university education. While studies have shown that some Aboriginal adults who left school early as youth do pursue and complete their high school equivalent as adults, others meet with barriers time and time again that reduce their participation. These barriers include: economic and health issues (Haig-Brown, 1995); unemployment, poverty, and racism (Brown, Higgitt, Wingert, Miller, & Morrissette, 2005); economic barriers and a lack of access to information on how to attain desirable goals (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives & The Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy, 2006); the pragmatic difficulties of not having a permanent address, as well as lack of access to distance and/or non-traditional education (Dhillon, 2005); and a lack of equal access to local community resources for educational purposes, including completion of high school, Aboriginal language courses, workshops providing information and training on government policies and employment rights, job training information, and educational alternatives (Kenny, 2002). What these studies tell us is that Aboriginal adults do attempt to complete their high school education, and that the barriers for adults are still substantial; the number who return to complete their high school equivalent is much higher than the number who succeed.

In a speech in the House of Commons, Member of Parliament Colin Mayes (2007) presented a report on Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada stating 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.

. . . Therein lies the challenge for us all. The cost of not meeting it is too high in too many lost opportunities for too many Aboriginal people, and for Canada. . . . It is incumbent on all of us, moving forward, to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians have all the educational opportunities and all the resources necessary to enable them to realize their potential. (p. xix)

Significantly, Aboriginal education is an issue of social justice and human rights for a growing population. Between 1996 and 2006, there was a 45% increase in the rate of growth in the Aboriginal population Canada-wide, in comparison to an 8% increase in the rate of growth of the non-Aboriginal population, making it the fastest-growing group of people in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013). In 2006, almost half of the Aboriginal population in Canada was under the age of 24, while the mean age of the non-Aboriginal population was 40. It is estimated that approximately 300,000 to 400,000 Aboriginal young adults will be entering the labor market in the next decade (Assembly of First Nations, 2012; Cappon & Laughlin, 2009). Mendelson (2004, 2008, 2009) noted the high unemployment rate and lack of high school completion as one of the most serious problems faced by the Aboriginal population at a time when Canada's demand for college- and university-educated professionals is on the rise and employers are struggling to find qualified professionals and workers in all spheres of employment (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2008). The lack of qualified, skilled employees will be a strain on the economy in the future that is exacerbated by the educational system if it continues to fail a growing young Aboriginal population (Mendelson, 2004; National Council of Welfare, 2006).

Experiences with colonization continue to carry transgenerational effects for children and youth who are now faced with difficult choices when deciding on their education and career path in a dominant European-Canadian society. Many youth face a dilemma of reconciling the past traumatic experiences of their parents and grandparents, their desire to reconnect with their traditions, and the need to acquire an education and the skills necessary to integrate into the dominant culture. The high rate of dropping out that continues, and the small number of university graduates among Aboriginal young adults, raises the question of whether the process of integrating Aboriginal curricula into school programs in Canada is enough. Although culturally relevant curricula are important, it is also imperative to recognize and address issues pertinent to the delivery of education according to the philosophy of Aboriginal teachings and the needs of Aboriginal learners (Ball et al., 2002; Ball & Simpkins, 2004). Indeed, recognizing the significance of Aboriginal epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of knowing—along with a better understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and curricula—may be needed (Assembly of First Nations, 2012; CCL, 2007), as well as ways of addressing the interrelated effects of colonization including transgenerational trauma, poverty, and cultural alienation (Chandler, 2010; Sam Ktunaxa, 2011; S. Wilson & P. Wilson, 2002).

## RETHINKING EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Today, the extent to which Aboriginal students are expected to acculturate into the public school system is a living remnant of colonialism, one that directly shapes how Aboriginal young adults view themselves, their cultures, and public education (Cheah & Nelson, 2004). The present mainstream education system does not address the above-mentioned concerns and needs of Aboriginal learners, and the opportunities are limited for education inclusive of Aboriginal worldviews, traditional ceremonies, practices, and skills, and learning Indigenous languages (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Mendelson, 2009). Under these conditions, Aboriginal learners may feel like outsiders in public education with potential challenges to identity, culture, and belonging (Kenny, 2002; Kirkness, 1999; Neil, 2000; Rudin, 2005; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). The Canadian Aboriginal population is diverse, and changing public education to address concerns, meet needs, and respond in culturally relevant ways is complicated, but not impossible. Educational models, partnerships, and programs already exist that make an enormous impact on outcomes for children and youth in and from Aboriginal communities (see Kelly, this volume).

This section highlights six successful educational programs that range from elementary school through post-secondary school, including: Mi'kmaq Schools, under the jurisdiction of the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey; *Career Counselling for Aboriginal Youth* and *Guiding Circles*, two career and vocational counseling programs; and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Red River College Access Nursing Program, and the University of Victoria's First Nations Partnership Programs. Each program description includes general characteristics, principles, and educational outcomes. As a general context, a holistic lifelong learning model is described.

### THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON LEARNING: HOLISTIC LIFELONG LEARNING MODELS

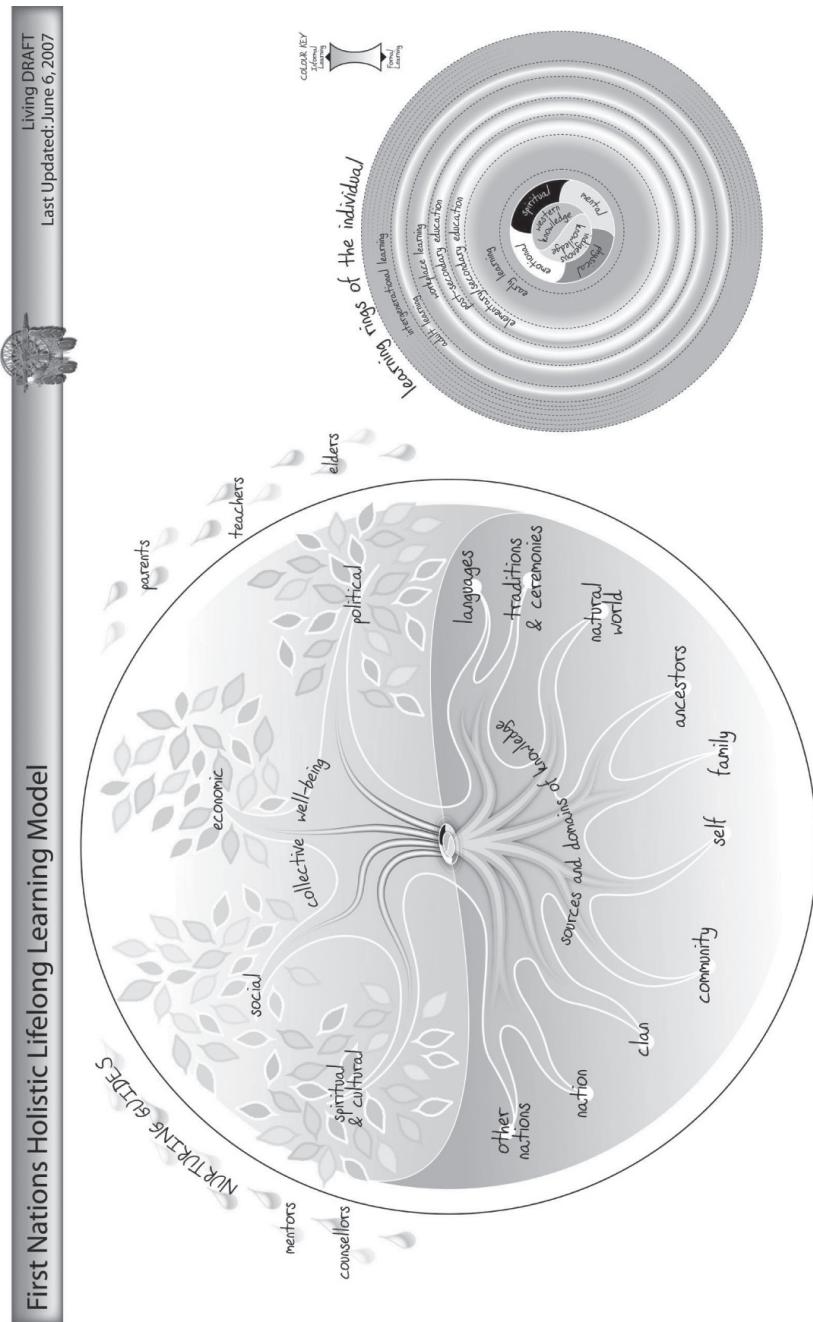
The Canadian Aboriginal population consists of many diverse groups with various worldviews, traditions, ceremonies, languages, and values. Aboriginal worldviews and cultural practices are diverse and cannot be homogenized; however, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2006) described the "values of wholeness, balance, harmony, relationship, connection to the land and environment, and a view of healing as a process and lifelong journey" (p. 15) as important values and worldviews common to all Aboriginal peoples in Canada and fundamental in addressing the needs of Aboriginal peoples in the process of healing from the effects of

colonialism. Learning is a lifelong process grounded in four domains of knowledge: the world of people; the land; the languages, traditions and cultures; and spirituality (CCL, 2007, 2009; Rheault, 2002). In a combined effort, first in 2007 and later in 2009, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) worked together with multiple Canadian Aboriginal groups consisting of Elders, researchers, educators, community members, and political and cultural leaders to create models of learning that are inclusive of the fundamental values and worldviews of Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Three *Holistic Lifelong Learning Models* were generated, grounded in the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditional knowledges: “The three learning models attest to the cyclical, regenerative nature of holistic lifelong learning and its relationship to community well-being” as the focus of learning and development (CCL, 2009, p. 11).

One model represents the First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (see Figure 1). On the right of the model, the process of First Nations learning for the individual begins as the infant is born into a world that includes both Indigenous and Western knowledges. Learning is four-dimensional—spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental—and each aspect is balanced from early learning through to adult and intergenerational learning. On the left, collective well-being is represented as a tree and defined through spiritual and cultural, social, economic, and political aspects, while sources and domains of knowledge, the roots of the tree, include other nations, one’s nation, clan, community, self, family, ancestors, as well as the natural world, traditions and ceremonies, and languages. The integration of Indigenous and mainstream knowledge and culture is a necessary process for a holistic and balanced way of living that leads to social change and growth along the four branches of collective well-being. This model emphasizes that knowledge acquisition is grounded in experiential and applied lifelong learning, and the meaning and the value of received knowledge is regarded as collective memory, manifesting “through oral tradition, storytelling, ceremonies, and songs” (CCL, 2007, p. 5). It has circular components that interconnect “knowledge of language, culture and traditions, and all existence (humans, animals, plants, cosmos, etc.)” (p. 5) with one another in ways that resonate with Western theories of learning, development, and culture that are holistic (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) (see, for integration, Cochrane, 2009). This model demonstrates the necessity for a holistic approach: being harmonious, balanced, and grounded in the principle of interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness and respect for all living things, harmony, and brotherhood and sisterhood are foundational concepts of Aboriginal epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of knowing that have practical applications in the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Helin, 2006; Martin, 2003;

Figure 1. First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model (CCL, 2007)



Portman & Herring, 2001; Ross, 2006; Sewell, 2001). These teachings encompass four types of knowledge, including: acquired knowledge, which is learned from stories, legends, and myths; traditional knowledge, learned through ceremonial teachings; revealed or spiritual knowledge, received through vision quests, dreams, and intuitions; and empirical knowledge, acquired through observation (Rheault, 2002). All elements of the Earth possess life, and kinship is the main model of the relationship between all forms of life, the environment, and the Creator. To understand this philosophy is to understand the significance of interconnectedness and the role of “kindness, honesty, strengths and generosity” in learning, teaching, and life (Rheault, 2002, n.p.). Aboriginal models for education and vocational and career counseling must be inclusive and participatory in nature, integrated with these values, and grounded in Aboriginal epistemology and cultural traditions. Ball and Simpkins (2004) spoke of Aboriginal identity as an “evolving process” and noted that individuals and communities need to participate in the development of interventions focused on empowering Aboriginal youth to embrace and maintain cultural practices. This can be accomplished only through the integration of and engagement in both Aboriginal and mainstream cultures as youth and their families are supported to reimagine their futures, individually and collectively, and pursue their educational and professional goals.

The First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model provides a foundation for the development of First Nations educational programs addressing the fundamental principles of lifelong learning. This model also creates an opportunity for non-Aboriginal Canadians to explore and develop an appreciation for and an understanding of the significant role played by Aboriginal epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of knowing for the peoples of First Nations, as well as how these perspectives would contribute to and expand Western knowledge.

#### **MI'KMAQ SCHOOLS, MI'KMAW KINA'MATNEWEY: RETURN OF EDUCATION JURISDICTION TO THE MI'KMAQ**

Twenty years ago, the people of Mi'kmaq First Nation in Nova Scotia requested that the Department of Education form a Task Force to advise and provide recommendations to the Minister of Education regarding the educational needs of Mi'kmaw students attending public schools. In 1996, a Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME), representative of various Mi'kmaq organizations and community members, was legislated under the revised Education Act (CME, n.d.). This act officially declared the return of the control over Mi'kmaq education to the Mi'kmaq people. In addition, the Mi'kmaq Education Authority was created and later named Mi'kmaw

Kina'matnewey (MK). Presently, education both on and off reserve is under the jurisdiction of the MK, including kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education (MK, 2012). The Board of Directors for the MK is comprised of 13 Mi'kmaq Chiefs working closely with their communities to develop a comprehensive, complex, and integrated education system that addresses all aspects of education for the Mi'kmaq people. The representatives of federal and provincial government together with the members of Mi'kmaq First Nation governance created a legally binding agreement to refute the education sections under the Indian Act (The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 2011).

The collaboration between the MK, the province, and the federal government has led to the development of Mi'kmaq language and culture immersion school programs, partnerships with post-secondary institutions, and the creation of Aboriginal post-secondary institutions focused on the needs of Mi'kmaq communities, thus providing a wide range of educational opportunities grounded in the Mi'kmaq worldview and cultural traditions that contribute to cultural continuity. Many practices have been and continue to be put in place to promote interest in post-graduate education among high school students. These practices include, but are not limited to: access and outreach initiatives in the form of education fairs, information websites, and pamphlets; summer camps; post-secondary programming that includes a variety of supports and recruitment practices to explore, inform and engage students in the process of career development while still in high school; and offering community-based preparatory programs (Assembly of First Nations, 2012).

As a result of this initiative, seven out of 10 Mi'kmaq communities exercise full control over their education. Presently, there are about 3,000 MK students that attend K-12 schools. The enrollment and attendance at the schools continues to improve. Since the 2008-2009 school year, the attendance grew from 88.8% to 90.7% in 2011-2012 (MK, 2012). Since 2007, over 420 young people have graduated from high school. In 2011-2012, their high school completion rate was 89.3% (MK, 2012), which is not just above the Canadian average for schools operated on reserves, but also above the average completion rate for all schools across Canada among youth 18 to 19 years of age (McMullen & Gilmore, 2010). Further, there has been steady growth in post-secondary attainment and an increase in the number of graduates: from 56 in 2004 to 127 in 2012 (MK, 2012). This successful initiative has resulted in the development and implementation of a culturally meaningful approach to educating Aboriginal learners based on the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledges and practices into a comprehensive framework that supports children and youth from early education through to post-secondary education.

## CAREER COUNSELING FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH: THE JOURNEY INWARD, THE JOURNEY OUTWARD

One example of a participatory and integrative approach to Aboriginal youth counseling for vocational and career development was designed and implemented by Charter, Persaud, Poonwassie, Williams, and Zinger (1994) (see also Poonwassie, 1995). This approach begins at the behest of members of a community who request access to the program and who will take a leading role in undertaking education and implementing it themselves. From this point, aspects of the program are developed in relation to needs identified by representatives from the community, including community Elders and parents, leaders, and educators, in collaboration with career counselors. Participating in the process of both the development and the implementation of this program enables ownership and participants to become advocates of the program as well.

The community counselors are prepared through a two-module program; each module takes one week. Week one, "The Journey Inward," is a self-exploration for the community counselors to reflect on their own adolescent experiences and, thus, to enhance their understanding of the educational and career challenges their clients may face. Week two, "The Journey Outward," incorporates the holistic model of counselling with what the community counselors discovered from week one. This model includes: (a) cultural knowledge and practices, (b) community resources, and (c) aspirations for socio-economic development of the First Nations communities. All interventions promote healthy emotional, physical, spiritual, and cognitive development in individuals, which are important parts of the identity development process. The program addresses "(a) enhancing self-esteem, (b) healing past hurts, and (c) modeling Aboriginal values by integrating Aboriginal" values and practices into the process of program delivery (Poonwassie, 1995, p. 4). Two manuals, *The Facilitator's Manual* and *The Participant's Manual*, provide counselors and clients with a step-by-step description and guide of the program, as well as educational and career-related resources. The program is strengths-based and attends to the principles of equality and respect in counseling sessions: counselors provide guidance, rather than expertise, and both clients and counselors participate in the co-construction of knowledge through an exploration of each client's educational and career challenges and goals.

Participatory research has found that youths' understanding of career counseling is closely related to issues of self-esteem, and healing from past experiences with violence and/or the break up of families (Charter et al., 1994). These issues cannot go unrecognized when discussing future education or career options. The Aboriginal youth who participated in

this vocational counseling program built new relationships with organizations and other communities, increased their knowledge regarding existing resources, contributed to the development of new inter-community and inter-agency networks, and promoted the facilitation of educational and career counseling programs in Aboriginal communities. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) identified the principles and approach to career and vocational counseling employed in this program as strategies for career counseling and guidance in the 21st century (IAEVG, n.d.).

### **GUIDING CIRCLES: A FIRST NATIONS CAREER-LIFE PLANNING MODEL**

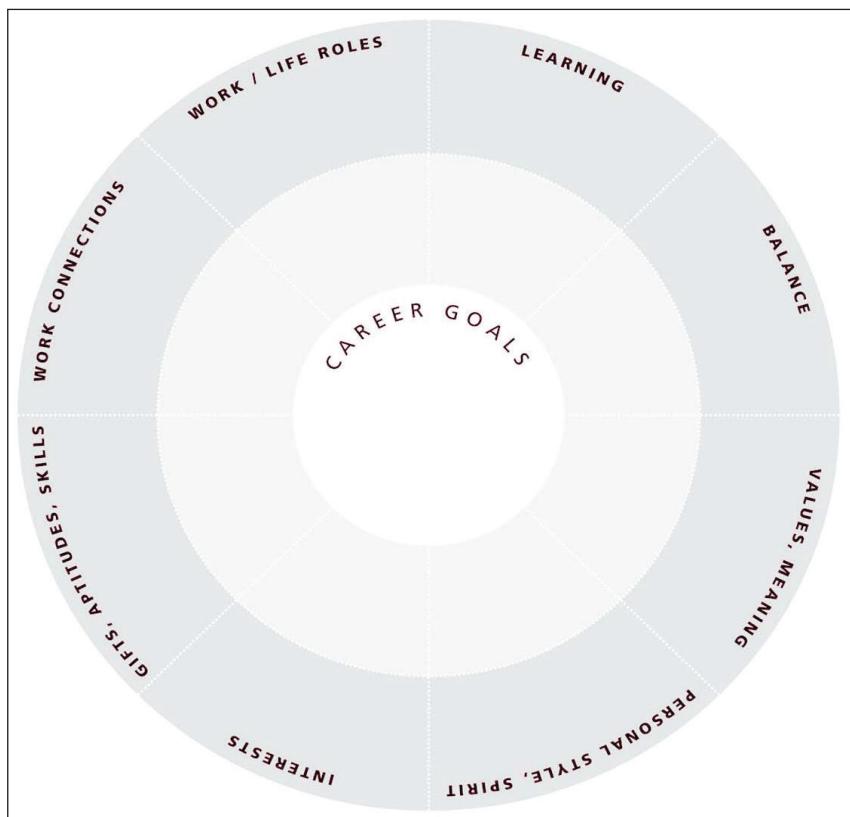
The “First Nations Career-Life Planning Model” (McCormick, Neumann, Amundson, & McLean, 1999; Neumann, McCormick, Amundson, & McLean, 2000)—which later became “Guiding Circles”—is a program developed at the University of British Columbia that is now used in vocational counseling with Aboriginal youth, young adults, and adults across Canada (Aboriginal Human Resource Council [AHRC], 2003; Poehnell, Amundson, & McCormick, 2006). The emphasis of this program is on exploring self in relation to community, family, and the world, focusing on the present to build strength, knowledge, and confidence. The authors described this program as interactive, involving parents, Elders, teachers, and other significant figures in one’s life to participate in career exploration so that the connection with the community is present and recognized as valuable. This approach was designed to promote responsible choices, strengthen the interconnections within and across whole communities, build a support system, and develop a vision for one’s life in terms of giving back to one’s community and enhancing the lives of others. This program incorporates traditional smudge and prayer ceremonies, which involve the burning of sage as a spiritual ritual to connect with others and the spiritual world, and a talking stick or feather ceremony to promote respect for the one who is talking and facilitate communication within the group.

A counselor or community professional who accepts the “Guiding Circles” approach to Aboriginal vocational counseling and career development implements the principles of active engagement (Amundson, 2003) with a client who is engaged in a holistic exploration of his or her life at all levels. These principles include: (a) establishing a trusting and safe environment in counseling sessions; (b) supporting and enabling creativity and imagination regarding the program as a source of guidelines applied to meet client-specific needs; (c) allowing a client to set the pace in a session and reflect on the process of exploration; and (d) focusing on strength through storytelling and the recognition of life patterns, values,

favorite activities, and a connection to community (Amundson, 2003). Counselors engage clients in a meaningful, goal-oriented career exploration process to achieve the client's goals. The interconnectedness between learning about one's self, in relation to others, and in relation to the larger whole—self, family, community, nature, and Creator—provides each client with a useful set of skills applicable to other situations that require decision-making abilities over the life course, thus providing lifelong career and decision-making guidance.

A graphic illustration, called the career circle, guides an exploratory process. It includes eight aspects of life that influence career decision-making (see Figure 2). Examination of each aspect leads to the development of a deeper understanding of career goals. Aspects include: (1) gifts, aptitudes, skills—to explore activities that clients enjoy and are able to do, as well as those they want to discover; (2) interests—to engage clients

**Figure 2. Guiding Circles Model**



in looking into work or non-work related interests that may lead to a career; (3) personal style, spirit—to look at how clients approach tasks and go about completing them; (4) values and meaning—to explore personal beliefs, emotions and their impact on actions; (5) balance—to focus on self-exploration of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of one's life; (6) learning—to discover what clients learned so far in life from all forms of knowledge, what clients want to learn in the future, and their learning style; (7) work/life roles—to explore social roles; and (8) work connections—to discover what work means to clients and who can support them to learn more about different careers and vocations (AHRC, 2003). This approach incorporates the principle of interconnectedness and the dimensions of a lifelong guidance process such as: (a) length, which incorporates the amount of time in the process of career exploration and counseling; (b) width, which is the level of competence and skills needed to achieve the career goal; and (c) depth, which is the meaningfulness of career choices for the client (Amundson, 2003, 2004).

Neumann et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive counseling for young adults in their exploration of educational and career choices. The authors conducted a study to evaluate the model based on the principle of interconnectedness. Seven male and six female Aboriginal young people between the ages 13 and 23 participated in career-life exploration together with their parents, peers, and community members, and all participants were asked to provide feedback regarding their experiences. The participants felt inspired by the process of exploration, and indicated it was a learning experience for them that contributed to a better understanding of self and their role in family and community. Specifically, the career-life model was inclusive of who they were as people, rather than simply focusing on occupational opportunities. The authors noted that this exploratory tool could be used to plan a process of reaching a career goal, or to explore all parts of the self to discover what career path to take. This program is appropriate for youth who are faced with educational transitions from school to post-secondary settings, as well as adults who are dealing with challenges related to their educational and career aspirations.

#### NICOLA VALLEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) in BC is an Aboriginal public post-secondary educational institution with two campuses: one located in the city of Merritt, in the interior of BC, and the second located in the Vancouver Lower Mainland city of Burnaby, BC. This institute opened in 1983 as a result of the collaboration of five local bands, with three

instructors and 13 students as an original cohort (NVIT, n.d.). NVIT grew over the next 30 years and became a leader in Aboriginal education with its approach to education grounded in both Indigenous and Western knowledges. The faculty is 57% Aboriginal and, in the years 2009-2010, 84% of all students were of Aboriginal ancestry out of over 1,300 total students attending NVIT on both campuses. The governance of NVIT is comprised of the Indigenous Board of Governors, management leadership team, faculty and staff unions, Elders' Council, Education Council, and Student Council, and together they create educational policies, leadership, and practices meaningful to Aboriginal peoples (Minnabarriet, 2012).

The NVIT governance is based on five factors that have a positive influence on engaging Aboriginal students in post-secondary education: the type of program and its quality; the level of faculty expertise; the geographic location and access to programs; the quality of Aboriginal programs and relevance; and the presence of Aboriginal faculty (Archibald, Pidgeon, & Hawkey, 2010). Technological advancement and the introduction of technology to communities is one of the ways that NVIT delivers academic programs. This provides students with a flexible schedule and ability to stay in their communities and with their families. The main factors considered and implemented at NVIT that promoted student engagement and program completion included: the involvement of Elders and Indigenous faculty; the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge; the cohort-oriented program delivery; the proximity to home; financial support; and lower tuition and cost of living (Minnabarriet, 2012).

Many academic programs were developed in partnership with communities, community organizations, and other post-secondary institutes to strengthen and build capacity of the local Aboriginal communities. In the last five years, about 20 communities participated in various levels of partnerships with NVIT annually. In addition to opening a new campus in the Vancouver area, the increase in enrollment in the last five years has contributed to the availability of community-based programs and Indigenous language programs and, specifically, First Nations teacher preparation programs.

#### **RED RIVER COLLEGE: ACCESS NURSING PROGRAM**

Another successful approach to engaging Aboriginal learners in post-secondary education was taken by the Red River College Faculty of Health Sciences in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In 1981, in collaboration with the existing nursing program, the Access Nursing Program was created to focus on the educational engagement of Aboriginal learners and members of other disenfranchised groups. This three-year program provides students

with an opportunity to pursue a nursing degree if they do not fully meet the entry requirements of the existing nursing program and/or require financial and personal supports to pursue post-secondary education in the nursing program (Laburn, 2002). The potential candidates for the program are recruited through outreach efforts from the communities and schools with a large number of Aboriginal peoples, refugees, immigrants, and other minority groups. Committees who review applications to the program include faculty, nursing students, community organizations, and members of the community representative of the target groups.

The introduction to the program begins with a two-week orientation period that allows students to: have a chance to meet and develop friendships with their peers; become familiar with the faculty members, counselors, and advisors; learn about academic expectations and policies; and receive information on how to manage their finances. Students in the first year of studies take their college preparation courses and some foundational nursing courses. These courses provide a hands-on approach to learning in order to ensure meaningful and relevant experiences. The students who successfully complete their first year and meet the entry requirements continue in the program and are admitted into the nursing major. The majority of the required courses in the second and third year are taken with the regular nursing program cohort. More complex courses, such as physiology, are offered over two semesters to the students in the Access Program; this option is also available to other students who desire the same learning experience. The third and final year of the program is mainly focused on professional coursework, as well as on discussions regarding finding employment, managing stress related to work, and understanding the importance of self-care (Laburn, 2002).

Allowing students to complete coursework more slowly, as in the two-semester physiology course, and the integration of Access Program students into the regular nursing program cohort creates an inclusive environment, promotes equality of access to educational opportunities, and helps to build confidence among the students. Faculty development is also an important part of the preparation for the program in order to foster open communication, flexibility, and trusting relationships. Through consultation with and ongoing collaboration between the Access Program and nursing program faculty, staff, and admission committees, participation in workshops on understanding and teaching non-traditional students, and presentations by the community members, such as Elders and community leaders, the Access Program faculty learn how to provide their students with an opportunity to succeed in the program.

Support systems have been developed for the Access Program students to enable a process of continual engagement and program completion.

These supports include counseling, close evaluation of students' progress, academic and social support, as well as financial support throughout the duration of the program. Each student is connected with an advisor/counselor and they work together to support and guide the student's educational progress. In addition to the support from the faculty and staff, students are encouraged to provide biweekly feedback to the faculty; this promotes the development of agency in students who often have experiences with being powerless and marginalized. As the students progress in their program, their independence is encouraged, as is the development of personal coping skills. Students who drop out, or consider dropping out for various reasons, are encouraged to discuss all potential options to continue their studies or to come back when they are ready to continue their studies. A variety of supports and flexible education options are offered to help students address the reasons for leaving (Laburn, 2002).

Sixty percent of the students who enter the program graduate and successfully complete national nursing registration exams. This program received the Faculty Recognition Award from the University of Michigan's Consortium for Community College Development and the Certificate of Achievement from the Manitoba Network for Science and Technology in 1998. It continuously attracts many potential candidates, though at present it is limited to residents of Manitoba. Unsurprisingly, this example demonstrates that when the needs of the students are taken seriously, when their challenges with access to post-secondary education are addressed, and when support is provided throughout the duration of their studies, success is possible (Laburn, 2002).

#### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA: FIRST NATIONS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

First Nations Partnership Programs focus on early childhood education for Aboriginal communities, initiated by the First Nations communities, and developed in partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, located on Vancouver Island in BC. This partnership has included over 50 Aboriginal communities across Canada located on reserves; the Cowichan Tribes, located on Vancouver Island, are the largest community partner. In addition to the involvement of Aboriginal communities, local post-secondary institutions also participate in this partnership, including Malaspina University College, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (Ball, 2003). The main purpose of this program is to create an opportunity for community capacity building by providing post-secondary education to the members of the Aboriginal communities based on

their needs and cultural values for family and child development programs. The specific goals for this initiative are to provide: developmentally appropriate, stimulating, culturally valid child-care on reserve; time for parents to pursue their educational and career training and future employment; work opportunities on reserve for community members; and opportunities to integrate and promote cultural values and traditional language for positive identity development in the younger generation (Ball, 2003).

Using a “Generative Curriculum Model,” the program is based on the idea that knowledge is generated through the understanding and integration of Western “theories, research, and practice models” (Ball & Simpkins, 2004, p. 3) and Indigenous knowledge specific to the Nation or community “in terms of: a) language and traditional activities; and b) Elders’ involvement and their beliefs and values” (p. 2), as well as specific “ways of teaching, learning and raising infants and young children” (p. 3). Through dialogue, reflection, and a co-construction process, the curriculum is generated. Common understandings regarding “the nature of childhood, goals for children’s development, and how to support optimal development from the students’ own cultural vantage points” (p. 3) are developed and integrated into curriculum. This process of co-construction and integration of knowledges follows different paths in different communities. Although it may be a lengthy process, the outcome benefits the community. For example, their needs are addressed, along with the issues and challenges specific to the community, and a common framework for early childhood education programs is created that allows the community to develop consistency and continuity of services for their families.

The students develop relationships with their peers in a cohort and continue supporting each other after the program completion. This way of learning has been shown to increase self-esteem as the students become recognized and valued for their knowledge and abilities by their families and communities. Over the years, the program development and delivery has evolved and several program outcomes demonstrate the positive influence this program has had, and continues to have, on the Aboriginal communities where it was implemented (Ball, 2005). One of these outcomes is community-wide participation and involvement, which promotes the development of intergenerational relationships between community members and engages Elders in mentorship and guidance processes with the students; as a result, relationships become stronger and more involved. Through this process, traditional knowledge is recognized and highly regarded as valid and essential to the process of child development through collective efforts promoting cultural identity development among the

students and community members. The availability of this program close to home is important for Indigenous students; it contributes to their emotional well-being and enhances their educational success. The program also allows students to challenge, question, compare, and integrate Indigenous and Western knowledges in their practice (Ball, 2005).

Several communities participated in the program evaluation and the outcomes showed “that this was most successful post-secondary program in Canada in terms of Aboriginal students’ retention and completion of a post-secondary credential” (Ball & McIvor, 2005, p. 6). The two-year, university-accredited program’s completion rate ranged from 60% to 100% across communities. New initiatives taken by the 65% of graduates in their communities have led to the development of a number of programs responding to the needs of communities for daycare, Aboriginal Head Start, infant development programs, youth and school readiness programs, and Indigenous language immersion programs. Almost 100% of the graduates were working in their communities after their graduation, and many acquired professional and managerial-level positions in child-care and development programs (Ball, 2005, 2009).

#### CULTURAL CONTINUITY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The existing research demonstrates a number of ongoing challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada that result from the transgenerational effects of colonization and that, for a large group of children and youth, result in educational underachievement. American educator and researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has argued that the “achievement gap” in the United States between Indigenous students and White students should be reframed as an “educational debt,” one that includes a historic, an economic, a sociopolitical, and a moral debt. She noted that the “largest moral debt is to the indigenous peoples whose presence was all but eradicated from the nation” (p. 8). This description has parallels with the current situation in Canada, given our history with Aboriginal peoples. Our efforts to change this situation must continue to address the transgenerational effects of colonization as a complex, interconnected, and multilayered issue that affects individuals and communities; crosses policies and practices within and between community, provincial, and federal governments; and requires integrated social, educational, political, and health care services.

Although the policy of Indian Control of Indian Education (National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations, 1972) was proposed by Aboriginal peoples and accepted by the Government of Canada over 40

years ago, the lack of support for this initiative from the government and the many challenges that continue to be present in Aboriginal communities has stalled policy implementation and the creation of an Aboriginal education system in Canada. However, many scholars continue to advocate for such a system to be developed. For example, McCue (2006) discussed the possibility of overcoming oppressive acculturation through the development of accredited and fully recognized Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, with Aboriginal-governed programs that reflect and integrate a curriculum content of Aboriginal tribal ancestral values and objectives for learning. The examples highlighted in this chapter are evidence of further steps toward learning opportunities created with Aboriginal peoples that holistically begin to address their needs for education and career and vocational counseling. Central to each example is the commitment to work in partnership *with* Aboriginal communities and community members to create programs that build on epistemologies and ways of knowing that are meaningful and significant.

This is a fundamental and ongoing issue for Aboriginal education: the lack of understanding, in mainstream society and the educational system, regarding the significant role Aboriginal epistemologies play in the lives of many Aboriginal peoples (Hart, 2010; Sam Ktunaxa, 2011). Smith (2005) addressed these concerns, indicating that there is a difference in how issues in Aboriginal education are viewed in mainstream and Indigenous cultures. The mainstream approach has been to develop culturally inclusive curricula and pre- and in-service teacher education to enable teachers to overcome biases and be responsive to cultural differences. However, Indigenous views of education mainly center on “epistemic self-determination that includes language and culture and the challenges of generating schooling approaches from a different epistemological basis” (p. 94). To meet the needs of Aboriginal students and their families, it is essential to adopt a new approach to schooling that incorporates Aboriginal epistemologies, worldviews, and ways of knowing, along with the development of an organized system of supports for addressing the legacy of colonial relations (Chandler, 2010; Sam Ktunaxa, 2011; S. Wilson & P. Wilson, 2002).

Educational research is required at both the community and individual level that maintains the interconnectedness of both. At the community level, educational research must attend to Indigenous epistemologies: to understand them in relation to cultural and language practices situated within communities, to examine the relationship between Western and Indigenous epistemologies, and, even more important, to learn about and appreciate the ways they are meaningful and valuable for different groups of Aboriginal peoples. In addition, at the community level it is important to engage in dialogue around program evaluation that reflects

the epistemologies that form the foundation of each program, along with some more common culturally relevant measures, in order to develop assessments that enable programs to be evaluated on their own terms (see Westoby, Toon, & Morris, this volume). At an individual level, educational research must attend to learning from children, youth, and young adults: (a) the factors and relationships that enabled their successes in schools (or disengagement), (b) the qualities that attracted them to afterschool programs (or dissuaded them from participating), and (c) their reasons for attending Aboriginal post-secondary educational programs (or educational programs not specifically for Aboriginal peoples).

The importance of the success of Aboriginal peoples in education is essential to break the circle of poverty, to rebuild identity and agency for individuals and communities, and to ensure access to and participation in negotiating collaborative relations between Aboriginal and mainstream cultures. Many colleges and universities in Canada have developed programs and partnerships to address issues with Aboriginal engagement. These programs demonstrate the potentials of education in collaboration with First Nations to develop learning opportunities that address the cultural continuity of Aboriginal children and youth from early childhood education through post-secondary education. These efforts are at the forefront of changes required to create awareness and develop research-based interventions that make rethinking education in Canada possible. Imagine what is possible when we rethink Aboriginal education in Canada with the purpose of creating equitable learning contexts that welcome a new generation and afford them possibilities for growing into a world very different from the colonized world of their parents and Elders.

#### *Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Vadeboncoeur, editor of this volume, for her expertise in the field of education, her high level of professionalism and ethics, and her passionate commitment to my work, which made this chapter stronger and more insightful. I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Michael Chandler (UBC), for guidance, academic resources, and encouragement to think critically. I would also like to thank the Aboriginal men and women who I had the privilege to meet and learn from and who inspired my interest in this work.

## References

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2006). *Aboriginal Healing Foundation final report, Volume III: Promising healing practices in Aboriginal communities*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
- Aboriginal Human Resource Council. (2003). *Guiding Circles demonstration project: Final report and recommendations*. Saskatoon, SK: Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada.
- Amundson, N. E. (2003). *Active engagement: Enhancing the career counselling process*. Richmond, BC: Ergon Communications.
- Amundson, N. E. (2004). *Forging the links between organizational and occupational career counselling: A lifelong guidance approach*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Archibald, J., Pidgeon, M., & Hawkey, C. (2010). *Aboriginal transitions: Undergraduate to Graduate. Phase II final report*. Retrieved from <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/aboriginal/docs/educator-resources/UBC-ATRF-II.pdf>.
- Assembly of First Nations. (2010). *First Nations control of First Nations education: It's our vision, it's our time*. Retrieved from [http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/3.\\_2010\\_july\\_afn\\_first\\_nations\\_control\\_of\\_first\\_nations\\_education\\_final\\_eng.pdf](http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/3._2010_july_afn_first_nations_control_of_first_nations_education_final_eng.pdf)
- Assembly of First Nations. (2012). *Education, jurisdiction, and governance: supporting First Nations learners transitioning to post-secondary*. Final report. Retrieved from <http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education2/postsecondarytransitionreport.pdf>
- Ball, J. (2003). A generative curriculum model of child and youth care training through First Nations-University partnerships. *Native Social Work Journal*, 4(1), 84–103.
- Ball, J. (2004). As if Indigenous knowledge and communities mattered: Transformative education in First Nations communities in Canada. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3/4), 480–498.
- Ball, J. (2005). Nothing about us without us: Restorative research partnerships involving Indigenous children and communities in Canada. In A. Farrell (Ed.), *Ethical research with children and those around them* (pp. 81–96). London, England: Open University Press.
- Ball, J. (2009). Centering community services around early childhood care and development: Promising practices in Indigenous communities in Canada. *Child Health and Education*, 1(4), 183–206.
- Ball, J., & McIvor, O. (2005, December). *Learning about teaching as if communities mattered: Strengthening capacity through partnerships*. Paper presented at the World Indigenous Peoples' conference on education, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Ball, J., Pence, A., Pierre, M., & Kuehne, V. (2002). Intergenerational teaching and learning in Canadian First Nations partnership programs. In M. Kaplan, N. Henkin, & A. Kusano (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange* (pp. 83–100). New York, NY: United Press of America, Inc.
- Ball, J., & Simpkins, M. (2004). The community within the child: Integration of Indigenous knowledge into First Nations childcare process and practice. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3/4), 480–498.
- Bell, D., & O'Reilly, E. (2008). *Making bridges visible: An inventory of innovative, effective or promising Canadian school-to-work transition practices, programs and policies*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council on Learning's Work and Learning Knowledge Centre.
- Boldt, M. (1993). *Surviving as Indians: The challenge of self-government*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- British Columbia Teachers' Federation. (2012). *2012 BC education facts*. Retrieved from <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/2012EdFacts.pdf>

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, J., Higgitt, N., Wingert, S., Miller, C., & Morissette, L. (2005). Challenges faced by Aboriginal youth in the inner city. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 1, 81–106.
- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives & The Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy. (2006). *Young women, work, and the new economy*. Retrieved from [http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/Manitoba\\_Pubs/2006/Young\\_Women\\_and\\_Work.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/Manitoba_Pubs/2006/Young_Women_and_Work.pdf)
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Redefining how success is measured in FirstNations, Inuit, and Métis learning*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council of Learning. Retrieved from [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/RedefiningSuccess/Redefining\\_How\\_Success\\_Is\\_Measured\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/RedefiningSuccess/Redefining_How_Success_Is_Measured_EN.pdf)
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2009). *The state of Aboriginal learning in Canada: A holistic approach to measuring success*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Council on Learning.
- Cappon, P., & Laughlin, J. (2009). *Redefining how success is measured in Aboriginal learning in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/site/progresskorea/44109743.pdf>.
- Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 941–993.
- Chandler, M. J. (2010). Indigenous education and epistemic violence. *Education Canada*, 50(5), 63–67.
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2008). Cultural continuity as a protective factor against suicide in First Nations youth. *Horizons*, 1, 68–72.
- Charter, G., Persaud, D., Poonwassie, A., Williams, S., & Zinger, D. (1994). *Career counselling for Aboriginal youth: The journey inward, the journey outward*. Toronto, ON: Guidance Centre University of Toronto Press.
- Cheah, C., & Nelson, L. (2004). The role of acculturation in the emerging adulthood of aboriginal college students. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 6, 495–507.
- Chiefs Assembly on Education. (2012). *A portrait of First Nations and education*. Retrieved from [http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact\\_sheet-ccoe-3.pdf](http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/events/fact_sheet-ccoe-3.pdf)
- Cochrane, K. (2009). *An articulation of Indigenous and sociocultural approaches: Theory, methodology, and application to Indigenous school engagement*. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. (2009). *Strengthening Aboriginal success: Summary report*. Retrieved from [http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/221/aboriginal\\_summit\\_report.pdf](http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/221/aboriginal_summit_report.pdf)
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. (2010). *Staying in school: Engaging Aboriginal students*. Retrieved from <http://www.abo-peoples.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Stay-In-School-LR.pdf>
- Dhillon, J. (2005). *Struggle for access: Examining the educational experiences of homeless young women and girls in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.justiceforgirls.org/publications/pdfs>
- Fournier, S., & Crey, E. (1997). *Stolen from our embrace: The abduction of First Nations children and the restoration of Aboriginal communities*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Fournier, S., & Crey, E. (2000). We can heal: Aboriginal children today. In D. Long & O. P. Dickason (Eds.), *Visions of the heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues* (2nd ed., pp. 303–330). Toronto, ON: Harcourt Canada.
- Frideres, J. (1988). *Native peoples in Canada: Contemporary conflicts*. Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall.
- Furniss, E. (1995). *Victims of benevolence: The dark legacy of the Williams Lake residential school*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Glavin, T. (2002). *Among God's own: The enduring legacy of St. Mary's Mission*. Mission, BC: Longhouse.

- Graham, B. (2005). The development of Aboriginal language programs: A journey towards understanding. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(3), 318–338.
- Green, R. (2012). Unsettling cures: Exploring the limits of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 27(1), 129–148.
- Haig-Brown, C. (1995). “Two worlds together”: Contradiction and curriculum in First Nations adult education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 2(26), 193–212.
- Hare, J., & Pidgeon, M. (2011). The ways of the warrior: Indigenous youth navigating the challenges of schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34(2), 93–111.
- Hart, M. A. (2010). Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and research: The development of an Indigenous research paradigm. *Journal of Indigenous Voices in Social Work*, 1(1), 1–16.
- Helin, C. (2006). *Dances with dependency: Indigenous success through self-reliance*. Vancouver, BC: Orca Spirit Publishing and Communications.
- Holmes, D. (2005). *Embracing differences: Post-secondary education among Aboriginal students, students with children and students with disabilities*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Hull, J. (2009). Post-secondary completion rates among on-reserve students: Results of a follow-up survey. *Canadian Issues*, Winter, 59–64.
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada. (2008). *Looking ahead: A 10-year outlook for the Canadian labour market (2008-2017)*. Retrieved from [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/publications\\_resources/research/categories/labour\\_market\\_esp\\_615\\_10\\_06/supply.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/publications_resources/research/categories/labour_market_esp_615_10_06/supply.shtml)
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2005). *Education action plan, 2005*. Retrieved from <http://www.nan.on.ca/upload/documents/edu-inac-education-action-plan.pdf>
- International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance. (n.d.). *Strategies for vocational guidance in the Twenty-first Century*. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/tve/nseoul/docse/rstratve.html>
- Kenny, C. (2002). *North American Indian, Métis and Inuit women speak about culture, education and work*. Retrieved from [http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662318978/200203\\_0662318978\\_e.pdf](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662318978/200203_0662318978_e.pdf)
- Kirkness, V. J. (1999). Aboriginal education in Canada: A retrospective and prospective. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 39(1), 14–30.
- Kirmayer, L., Simpson, C., & Cargo, M. (2003). Healing traditions: Culture, community and mental health promotion with Canadian Aboriginal peoples. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 11, 15–23.
- Laburn, E. (2002). The Red River College model: Enhancing success for Native Canadian and other nursing students from disenfranchised groups. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 13(4), 311–317.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3–12.
- Martin, K. L. (2003). Ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing: Developing a theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous research and Indigenist research. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 76, 203–214.
- Mayes, C. (2007). *No higher priority: Aboriginal post-secondary education in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/committee/391/aano/reports/rp2683969/aanorp02/aanorp02-e.pdf>
- McCormick, R., Neumann, H., Amundson, N. E., & McLean, H. B. (1999). First Nations career-life planning model: Guidelines for practitioners. *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 36(4), 167–176.
- McCue, H. (2006). *Aboriginal post-secondary education: A think piece from the Centre for Native Policy and Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.campus2020.ca/media/Aboriginal%20PostSecondary%20Education%20-%20Harvey%20McCue.pdf>

- McMullen, K., & Gilmore, J. (2010). *A note on high school graduation and school attendance, by age and province, 2009/2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/article/11360-eng.htm#cont>
- Mendelson, M. (2004). *Aboriginal people in Canada's labour market: Work and unemployment, today and tomorrow*. Retrieved from <http://www.aledoninst.org>
- Mendelson, M. (2008). *Improving education on reserves: A First Nations education authority act*. Retrieved from <http://www.aledoninst.org>
- Mendelson, M. (2009). *Why we need a First Nations Education Act?* Retrieved from <http://www.aledoninst.org>
- Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. (2012). *Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey annual report*. Retrieved from <http://kinu.ns.ca/downloads/MKAnnualReport2011-2012.pdf>
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879-1986*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2009). *Annual service plan report 2009/10*. Retrieved from [http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual\\_Reports/2009\\_2010/cfd/cfd.pdf](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2009_2010/cfd/cfd.pdf)
- Ministry of Children and Family Development. (2011). *British Columbia's changing families: Family roots*. Retrieved from [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about\\_us/pdf/CFD\\_FamilyRoots\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/pdf/CFD_FamilyRoots_booklet.pdf)
- Minnabariet, V. B. (2012). *Aboriginal post-secondary education in British Columbia: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology – “An Eagle’s gathering place.”* Retrieved from [https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/42089/ubc\\_2012\\_spring\\_billyminnabariet\\_verna.pdf?sequence=1](https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/42089/ubc_2012_spring_billyminnabariet_verna.pdf?sequence=1)
- National Council of Welfare. (2006). *Brief to the standing committee on human resources, social development and the status of persons with disabilities concerning employability in Canada*. Retrieved from [http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/publicstatements/2006PublicStatements/Nov\\_NCWBriefENG.pdf](http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/publicstatements/2006PublicStatements/Nov_NCWBriefENG.pdf)
- National Indian Brotherhood/Assembly of First Nations. (1972). *Indian control of Indian education*. Ottawa, ON: Assembly of First Nations.
- Neil, R. (2000). *Voice of the drum: Indigenous education and culture*. Brandon, MB: Kingfisher Publications.
- Neumann, H., McCormick, R. M., Amundson, N. E., & McLean, H. B. (2000). Career counselling First Nations youth: Applying the First Nations Career-Life Planning Model. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 34(2), 172–185.
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. (n.d.). *About Nicola Valley Institute of Technology*. Retrieved from <http://www.nvit.ca/about/default.htm>
- Peavy, R. V. (1993). *Development of Aboriginal counselling: A brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Vancouver, BC: University of Victoria.
- Poehnell, G., Amundson, N., & McCormick, R. (2006). *Guiding circles: An Aboriginal guide to finding career paths*. Saskatoon, SK: Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada.
- Poonwassie, A. (1995). *Career counseling for Aboriginal youth: A community-based program development approach*. Retrieved from <http://www.counseling.org/resources/library/ERIC%20Digests/95-047.pdf>
- Portman, T. A. A., & Herring, R. D. (2001). Debunking the Pocahontas paradox: The need for a humanistic perspective. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling Education and Development*, 40(2), 185–199.
- Rheault, D. (2002). *A discussion of major tenets and assumptions of Anishinaabe and Western philosophy and Aboriginal educational methodology concepts*. Retrieved from [http://www.skylynx.com/article/ed\\_method.htm](http://www.skylynx.com/article/ed_method.htm)
- Richards, J. (2008). *Closing the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal education gaps*. Toronto, ON: C.D. Howe Institute.

- Ross, R. (2006). *Returning to the teachings: Exploring aboriginal justice*. Toronto, ON: Penguin Group.
- Rudin, J. (2005). Aboriginal justice and restorative justice. In E. Elliot & R. M. Gordon (Eds.), *New directions in restorative justice: Issues, practice, evaluation*. Portland, OR: Willan Publishing.
- Sam Ktunaxa, M. A. (2011). An Indigenous knowledge perspective on valid meaning making: A commentary on research with the EDI and Aboriginal Communities. *Social Indicators Research*, 103(2), 315–325.
- Sewell, C. F. (2001). Decolonization through harmonization. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25, 94–104.
- Smith, L. T. (2005). Building a research agenda for Indigenous epistemologies and education. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(1), 93–95.
- The Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. (2011). *Reforming First Nations education: From crisis to hope. Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples*. Retrieved from [http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/411/appa/rep/\\_rep03dec11-e.pdf](http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/411/appa/rep/_rep03dec11-e.pdf)
- Statistics Canada. (2006). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-558/index.cfm?Lang=E>
- Statistics Canada. (2013). *Population growth. (Catalog number 89-645-XWE)*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-645-x/2010001/growth-pop-croissance-eng.htm>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language* (A. Kozulin, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Wesley-Esquimaux, C. C., & Smolewski, M. (2004). *Historic trauma and Aboriginal healing*. Ottawa, ON: Anishinabe Printing (Kitigan-Zibi).
- Wilson, D., & Macdonald, D. (2010). *The income gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/income-gap-between-aboriginal-peoples-and-rest-canada>
- Wilson, S., & Wilson, P. (2002). First Nations education in mainstream systems. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 2, 67–68.

NATALIA PANINA-BEARD is completing her doctoral work in Human Development Learning and Culture in the Department of Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. She completed her BSc in Engineering in Volgograd, Russia, her BA in Applied Psychology and her MA in Counselling Psychology in Canada. She is a Registered Clinical Counsellor and works as an Elementary School Counsellor. Previously, her research was focused on young Aboriginal women's experiences in educational settings. Her present research includes the educational engagement of culturally diverse and marginalized children and youth, creativity and art in education, and alternative educational programs.