U'H NOOK NOH KHUNUK (IN OUR OWN WORDS): LAKE BABINE NATION PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

By

Travis Holyk
Master of Arts, University of Northern BC 2001
Bachelor of Arts, Okanagan University College, 1999

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Name: **Travis Holyk**

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Examining Committee:

Chair: _____

Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones
Chair, Senior Lecturer

_____

Dr. Daniel Laitsch
Senior Supervisor, Assistant Professor, SFU

_____

Dr. Byron Robbie
Co-Supervisor, Adjunct Professor, SFU

_____

Mr. Warner Adam
Member
Executive Director, Carrier Sekani Family Services

_____

Dr. Michelle Pidgeon
Internal Examiner, Assistant Professor, SFU

_____

Dr. Tina Fraser
External Examiner
Assistant Professor, School of Education, UNBC

Date Defended/Approved: 21 April 2011

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the perception of assessment among parents of Grade 4 students within the Lake Babine Nation. The Lake Babine Nation, located in central British Columbia, represents 2228 members and has three currently inhabited communities. Eighteen semi-structured interviews were completed and parents provided perspective regarding their understanding of assessment and how schools can better involve parents in the education process. Major findings include the identification of communication as a key component of student success in school. Communication was noted as important in providing parents with information necessary to assist their children, improve levels of trust and contend with historical factors influencing parent's perceptions of school. Parents emphasized education as necessary for establishing a better life and placed importance on their children graduating with a Dogwood Certificate as a measure of success. Parents supported measures such as provincial testing to ensure the level of education a child receives is similar anywhere in the province.

Keywords: Assessment; First Nations; Lake Babine Nation; Education; Parents; Elementary; Culture; Communication

DEDICATION

To my grandfather, George Hanschen, who instilled

in us the importance of Education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1: CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is in large part a result of my continuing relationship with the Carrier Sekani peoples through my involvement in Carrier Sekani Family Services as the Director of Research and Policy Development. Carrier Sekani Family Services is an agency responsible for health, social and legal services to eleven member First Nations, including the Lake Babine Nation, in north central British Columbia. I am not First Nations but have worked with the community for 10 years and have learned important lessons about conducting research respectfully that serve as the core values in this dissertation. Carrier and Sekani people maintain that they have an inherent Aboriginal right to be self-determining which includes the ability to use Carrier and Sekani institutions in maintaining social order in their communities, and that this right is now protected under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* (Holyk, Shawana & Adam, 2005). Assuming responsibility for the care and protection of children, as well as the maintenance of family structures and governance systems are expressions of

self-determination. Indigenous rights are further affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) which notes the right to self-determination in pursuing economic, social and cultural development. Article 14 specifically addressing education asserting,

> Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

Premised on this rationale, Carrier Sekani Family Services has worked hard to reassert control in areas that have been sources of attack on community values and teachings such as maintenance of Carrier governance systems, working toward the cultural relevance of classroom materials (curriculum development and administration included) as well as preservation of family and guardianship of children.

Working at Carrier Sekani Family Services enabled me to dialogue with leaders who are at the centre of the political and social struggle and determine sites of resistance, one of which, education, became the start of my general dissertation topic. The Lake Babine Nation is a member of Carrier Sekani Family Services receiving social, research and child welfare services. Leadership at Carrier Sekani Family Services have continually recognized education as integral to improving the lives of Carrier Citizens. Education is also understood within the context of the negative impacts of colonization on the lives of First Nations peoples in Canada, of which the Lake Babine Nation represented in this dissertation are included.

Despite the negative impacts of the education system and its colonial roots, the reality for First Nations students today is that in order to improve their life chances they must negotiate the education system. Research indicates BC youth who drop out before completing high school are less healthy and have poorer family functioning than do those who graduate (Joint Special Report 2007). Clyde Hertzman (1998) argues, "if childhood interventions were to improve health and wellbeing throughout the lifecycle, and fundamentally address the socioeconomic gradient in health status, they would be more likely to be social or educational interventions than health interventions *per se*" (p.19). In Canada, not graduating is associated with a number of indicators of well being including time spent on income assistance and poverty. Richards and Vining (2004), examining the 1996 and 2001 Canadian Census data indicate, "as the education level of Aboriginals rises, so do their median incomes" (p.2). Income and education are positively correlated, increasing by stages between those who graduate high school, those who complete a trade certificate and those who complete a university degree (Richards & Vining, 2004).

It was in the summer of 2006, while at Simon Fraser University, that I decided to focus my research at the intersection of Aboriginal parents[1] and educational assessment. During the summer semester, the Education Program invited a number of guest speakers to the university to speak on topics related to education. One speaker, Peter Cowley of the Fraser Institute, was invited to speak on his co-authored report, *Report Card on Aboriginal Education in British*

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[1] In this research, I use the term parent to generally describe caregivers of children. It includes parents, relatives or other community members who may be looking after children. Foster parents who are not from the Lake Babine Nation were not included in the study.

Columbia: 2006 Edition. In his discussion, he noted the poorer achievement of Aboriginal students and the need for regular assessment of Aboriginal students and the public reporting of results. I questioned Peter Cowley regarding the Fraser Institute's determination of indicators of success, and, whether the Fraser Institute had consulted with First Nations communities to obtain their views regarding appropriate indicators. I also noted the potential damage results could cause in terms of promoting racism by publicly presenting schools with predominantly First Nation's students in a negative light without explanation of the social or cultural context. His response was, if First Nations are not happy with our indicators they are welcome to produce their own (Cowley, July 19, 2006). His statement encouraged me to think about parent's views of assessment and whether First Nations parents had been consulted regarding what they expect their children to receive from public education. Upon returning to Carrier Sekani Family Services and discussing with leadership[2] the concept of assessment and parents' involvement in education the following questions became the research topics of this dissertation; What do Lake Babine Nation parents of Grade 4 children deem as important indicators of their children's achievement in school and; what is Lake Babine Nation parent's understanding of their children's academic assessment?

The goal of this research became to examine the perceptions of parents of Grade 4 students from the Lake Babine Nation regarding the education system and in particular the processes used in the system to assess student learning.

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[2] The consultation process with Carrier leaders is discussed in greater detail in the methods chapter.

The analysis included definitions of student achievement and the concept of education from the Lake Babine Nation parent's perspective in order to address what parents believe their children should know and thus identify those methods most likely to be meaningful to parents.

The Lake Babine Nation is the largest community within Carrier Sekani Family Services representing 2284 registered members[3] (INAC, 2008). Of this total, roughly 1500 people live on reserve and the remaining individuals reside in surrounding communities as well as distant cities (INAC, 2008). The Lake Babine Nation currently has three communities/reserves inhabited year round, only two of which are within their traditional territory and all of which participated in this research.[4] The Lakes District, School District No. 91, is the district servicing on reserve Lake Babine children specifically as the Lake Babine community of Fort Babine has a band run school to Grade 7. Post Grade 7 children travel to Smithers to attend classes in School District No. 54.   In total, during the 2008/2009 school year in which I conducted this research, there were 36 children from 35 families registered with the Lake Babine Nation in Grade 4.

1.1 Colonialism and the Canadian Education System

The Carrier and Sekani people's right to self-determination has been eroded in part by provisions of the *Indian Act* and related policies that attempted

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[3] The LBN Steering Committee contends membership is higher but for the purposes of the research I used those registered with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to determine registered population.

[4] In the 1950s members of the Lake Babine Nation were moved from their traditional territory to Burns Lake to ease service provision. The community of Woyenne was created for this population. (Fiske, 2000).

to govern the lives of indigenous peoples in Canada. In 1876, all laws affecting

Indian people were combined under one piece of legislation known as the *Indian*

Act, which stated as its mandate the protection, civilization and assimilation of

Indians.The consolidated *Indian Act* is a comprehensive piece of legislation

providing legislated direction toward almost all activities and aspects of First

Nation communities. Under the *Act,* most vestiges of powers reside with the

Minister of Indian Affairs and Indian Agents. The underlying intent of this

legislation was the elimination of Indigenous worldviews and any jurisdiction over

their territories[5] (Joseph, 1991). The three areas in particular that were

addressed under the *Act* included band membership, local government

construction and land ownership[6] (Moore, 1978).

     The government, aided by the Catholic and Anglican churches, enhanced

its programs of political and cultural destruction by attacking the family structure,

which is the mechanism for the transmission of traditional knowledge. This was

largely completed through the removal of children from their homes, and placing

them in residential schools in order to prevent them from practicing their culture

or passing on knowledge through separation from parents and other teachers

(Kelm, 1998). As noted by Ball (2004),

> One of the main avenues for subjugating Indigenous peoples to colonial
> culture and governance has been through the imposition of education,
> most powerfully through the "Indian Residential Schools" program, that
> denies the legitimacy of thought, lifestyles, religions and languages of First
> Nations people (p.457).

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[5] The legislation also solidified the lack of recognition, present from the arrival of Europeans, of the matrilineal organization of Carrier communities and the organization of family and property.
[6] Land ownership included placing Indians on reserves to make way for further European settlement.

Aboriginal education during the residential school era, from roughly 1867 to 1945, concentrated on eradicating all traces of First Nations languages, practices and beliefs. The system, controlled by the Federal government and largely administered by churches taught practical skills with "substandard curricula and teaching practices" with no attention given to developing curriculum geared toward language difficulties or sociological needs of students (Fiske, 1981, p.1). Construction of Indigenous education made public access unattainable, excluding First Nations from the greater society while damaging cultural practice. According to Graveline (1998)

> Colonial forms of education, particularly residential schools, have contributed greatly to the efforts to eradicate Traditional forms of Aboriginal consciousness. The Ancestral practice of education as integral to daily life and to family and communal relationships shifted radically through colonial pedagogical measures (p.27).

The United Nations report on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous people concluded, "Aboriginal peoples in Canada are still trying to overcome the heritage of a colonial education system, which severely disrupted families, their cultures and identities" (quoted in Helin, 2006, p.210). The history of education within First Nations communities since contact has reflected a lack of rights to choose appropriate education options and the lack of power to make decisions on specific issues including facilities, locations, teachers, curriculum and programs[7]. As noted in transcripts from testimony, including the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission Report (1916), First Nations' parents and leaders continually voiced their concerns about

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[7] Steps have been made at a National level, Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Committee and a District level, Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements to improve communication with First Nations and reconcile the legacy of residential schooling.

education[8] and made recommendations for change (Haig- Brown, 1995).

However, the government largely ignored these requests, focusing instead on its

agenda of assimilation.

> From the first introduction of European models of formal education, First Nations' people saw education as an important tool in their interaction with non-Aboriginal society and attempted to participate in structuring effective education for their children (Haig- Brown, 1995, p.50).

Beginning in 1945, the provincial government introduced an open door

policy allowing students to travel off reserve to receive an education in the

provincial system. This was a departure from earlier policies of isolation and

reflects a government shift in discourse to integration.[9] The federal government,

responsible for First Nations, relies on provincial curricula and standards. The

provincial education system, designed for white, urban and middle class culture

and values was alien to life on reserve. Battiste (2000) suggests that for children

whose languages and cultures are different from the mainstream expectations

the education system has been a site of "cognitive imperialism" denying First

Nations people the right to exercise their own culture (p.193).

Education, or the transmission of knowledge, whether formal or informal in

structure, plays a significant role in the perseverance of a community or nation.

Education is the manner in which the worldview, practices, values and

knowledge system are transferred to subsequent generations. Education is the

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[8] Concerns included selection of teachers, public boarding or day school selection and curriculum (including the importance of literacy and learning viable skills)

[9] The Second World War forced re-examination of policies and previous treatment of First Nations as separate and inferior was questioned. Recommendations included First Nations integration into universal social programs. Social programs are provincial responsibility so there was negotiation as to how financial arrangements could be developed to integrate (assimilate) First Nations into provincial education.

principle means of teaching citizens the lessons of membership within a society and thus preparing members for life within a society. Education provides an important component of human development, teaching citizens important knowledge regarding their environment, culture and intellectual heritage (Gutmann 1995, p.60). As noted in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, education "shapes the language and pathways of thinking, the contours of character and values, the social skills and creative potential of the individual" (1996, Volume 3). The effectiveness of education is measured by how well citizens are prepared for their roles within society and course curricula is culturally constructed, grounded in the worldviews, beliefs and norms of those who conceptualize and teach the curricula (Ball, 2004). Battiste (2000) argues that through the education system, since there in no single culture in Canada, those in power use education to affirm the social and political status quo.

Western society typically uses schooling as a core institution for preparing citizens.[10] In British Columbia, at the age of five it is compulsory for children to enter the formal education system. While family and other social forces also influence children, from age five until their late teens it is expected that children spend a large portion of their day in classrooms learning curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education. As such, the formal education system is a compelling presence in the lives of all citizens of British Columbia, including First Nations, and is a significant contributor to the manner in which each citizen envisions their connection to others in society, or social imaginary as termed by Taylor (2004).[11]

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[10] First Nations children in BC are now also required to be enrolled in the BC school system.
[11] The concept of Social Imaginary is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Battiste (2000) indicates, "public schooling has not been benign. It has been

used as a means to perpetuate damaging myths about Aboriginal cultures,

languages, beliefs and ways of life" (p.194).

1.2 The Current Situation of Aboriginal Education

Despite the historically damaging impact of the school system, Carrier

parents reflect the same aspirations as all parents in terms of having their

children graduate and go on to university (Holyk & George, 2003). The Lake

Babine Community Needs Assessment (2003), designed to determine the social

service needs of Lake Babine peoples, sheds light on the fundamental

importance of education to the Lake Babine members. High school graduation

was very important to 93% of the respondents, 3% said it was important, 1% said

somewhat important and 3% did not answer[12] (Holyk & George 2003, p.27). The

vision of the members who took part in the survey is for the younger generation

to lead the Nation to become independent and self-sufficient. They believe

educated youth will be better equipped to help their Nation, including less

fortunate members. Participants also saw the importance of post-secondary

education as very significant. Eighty-nine percent of respondents said that post-

secondary education was very important, 7% said it was important, 1% said it

was somewhat important and 2% had no answer (p.28). Respondents felt that

continuing to gain education beyond high school would improve the quality of life

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[12] This research asked questions of 100 Lake Babine community members, a Carrier First Nation,
through structured questionnaires.

for children and all people in the future. They also reflected the need for more professionals in the community and viewed education as the manner to achieve this goal.

While there have been broad changes in First Nations education over the past 30 years, the achievement gap in education between First Nation and other Canadian students still exists. As noted by Ungerleider,

> Canadian public schools have failed the majority of Aboriginal students. Their success rates are much lower than those of students from other backgrounds. Significantly fewer Aboriginal students graduate than do non-Aboriginal students and those who graduate have too often been the recipients of an inferior education. Aboriginal students attend post-secondary education at about half the rate of non-Aboriginal students (2003, p.143).

Current education policies fail to realize the parity of First Nation achievement in education compared to other Canadians. The majority of Aboriginal youth do not complete high school and they leave the school system without the requisite skills for employment.[13] As a result, rather than nurturing the individual, the schooling experience typically erodes identity and self-worth (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

School District No. 91, one of the two districts in which Lake Babine Nation is situated, is a reflection of the lower success rates experienced by Aboriginal students. As of the 2005/06 school year, 30% of the total student population was Aboriginal and 868 students had Indian status and belonged to a

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[13] The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples also notes that students leave without First Nations' language or cultural knowledge of their people.

specific Carrier First Nation (School District No. 91, 2006).[14] As noted with the general trend of Aboriginal education, in 2005 the school completion rate for Aboriginal students, while continuing to improve since 1996,[15] was still low at 43% —compared to non-Aboriginal completion rates of 72% during the same period (p.7). Students of Aboriginal ancestry in the district achieve at lower rates than non-Aboriginal students in Grade 4 and 7 numeracy as well as reading and writing,[16] the areas noted as indicators of achievement for the Ministry of Education. With only a snap shot provided through quantitative statistics there is no analysis as to why this is the case. Additionally, without knowledge of how the parents view assessment and assessment outcomes, it is difficult to determine how meaningful such statistics are to the community and how important the community feels it is to change such indicators.

1.3 Assessment

A reduction in the gap between the general student population and First Nations in areas including literacy, numeracy, and school completion requires action on a number of fronts. Assessment is an important area for further study because information provided in such assessments guides direction of teachers and administrators in their performance plans and can have a direct impact on the community's engagement in educational efforts. There are two main

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[14] In British Columbia an Aboriginal student is anyone who self identifies as being of Aboriginal ancestry.

[15] In 1996 the completion rate for Aboriginal students was 21.1%.

[16] 2005 scores for those meeting or exceeding standards: Numeracy Grade 4 (58%), Grade 7 (51%), Writing Grade 4 (74%), Grade 7 (63%), Reading Grade 4 (49%), Grade 7 (37%).

purposes of assessment, assessment on a student level and assessment on a

system level (Laitsch, 2005). Teachers and administrators use assessment at a

student level to evaluate and improve instruction and student performance.

Administrators use system assessment to measure system performance and

improve the education system, including educator performance at a school,

district and provincial level (Laitsch, 2005). Within this research, I kept the term

assessment open to interpretation by parents asking questions of a systemic

nature and classroom student level to gain parent perceptions of various types

and levels of assessment. Questions included examination of parents' views of

the role of school, determining success in school, Foundation Skills Assessment,

provincial comparison of students as well as specific questions regarding

information received, knowledge of classroom assessment, and strategies used

to check student progress.

Student assessment provides feedback regarding student performance in

order to inform professionals and parents about the progress of their children and

the effectiveness of educational programs and as such teachers use a variety of

assessment methods for gathering the information they need to assess,

evaluate[17] and report on regarding student learning (Ministry of Education, 2000;

Ungerleider, 2003). Achievement is typically gauged through performance

indicators that describe and analyze key aspects of schooling. Indicators have

three basic functions. First, they assist in evaluating and monitoring student

performance by providing an at-a-glance indication (measurement) of student

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[17] Assessment is generally used to refer to all measurable activities teachers use to determine student knowledge and skills whereas evaluation is typically used to determine the value of programming.

learning (Hulpia and Valcke, 2004). The second basic function is communication - indicators help to inform stakeholders about the state of student learning and the education system in general. Lastly, indicators provide standardization by illustrating to what extent the situation deviates from established benchmarks, standards or goals (Hulpia and Valcke, 2004). This research provides insight into the importance of assessment functions, particularly communication between parents and teachers.

On a day-to-day basis, teachers use classroom assessment as an information gathering device. Classroom assessment methods include such activities as questioning, homework, projects, lab work, journals, tests and quizzes (Laitsch, 2003). The results of classroom assessment are not generalizeable beyond the context of the classroom but do provide immediate and detailed feedback to teachers and students regarding how effectively students have learned subject matter (Laitsch, 2003). Teachers use each method depending on the purpose and intended impact of the learning opportunity. The range of assessment tools has expanded improving opportunities for communication with stakeholder and parents within the public school system (Ungerleider, 2003). As noted by Laitsch (2005), "educators argue for the use of multiple measures in evaluating students—so that a more complete picture of the student can be generated" (para.8).

A key component of assessment in the modern education system focuses on testing. According to Ungerleider (2003), "teachers use tests to assess student learning and the success of their teaching. Tests are also used to

motivate students to learn prescribed material and to make sure that all of the

students in a school or district at a particular grade level have achieved common

outcomes considered important" (p.249). Norm-referenced assessments are

aimed at determining how well students perform in relation to one another.

Criterion- referenced assessments are primarily used to test an individual

student's knowledge of information deemed appropriate for the students taking

the test (Ungerleider, 2003). Criterion reference tests typically include tests and

quizzes performed by teachers in order to determine whether a student has

learned desired curriculum.

Volante (2006) affirms the mixing of large and classroom-based

assessments as a method of supporting or challenging the limitations of each

method. Another advantage of this utilization approach is that it leads to

improved student retention rates.[18] Systems that rely on multiple measures such

as portfolios, performance assessment, grades in courses tied to provincial

standards, and student exhibitions of learning tend to maintain higher and

steadier rates of graduation as opposed to test-only graduation systems

(Volante, 2006).

1.4 BC Context

The Provincial government requires schools to report regularly about

student progress to parents. School Districts[19] administer public schools under

the *School Act (1996).* The Minister, through the *School Act* directs learning and

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[18] Volante argues over-emphasis on high test scores as pre-requisites to graduation have the unintended result of pushing students from the school system.

[19] School District No. 91 in particular.

assessment in provincial schools through Orders outlining the responsibilities of schools. For example, the *School Act* defines assessment and provides guidelines for Board responsibilities as well as duties in the administration and completion of assessment. The Ministry of Education also provides a set of standards (success indicators) for reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility designed to help teachers improve their in class assessment of student work.[20] Most jurisdictions, including British Columbia, provide curriculum guidelines for teachers outlining recommended materials, instructional strategies, and methods of assessment (Ungerleider, 2003).

In British Columbia provincial examinations count for 40% of a student's overall mark in examinable Grade 12 subjects (Ungerleider, 2003). For students in British Columbia, graduation requirements begin in Grade 10 with students completing specified courses and writing at least five provincial exams. Mandatory exam[21] subjects include English 10, Principles of Math 10, Applications of Math 10 or Essentials Math 10 and Science 10 (which count for 20% of final mark), Socials 11 or Civic Studies 11 or First Nations 12 (which count for 20% of final mark) and Language Arts 12, including English 12 or Communications 12 (which count for 40% of final mark) (Ministry of Education, 2010b).

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[20] Performance Standards are broken down by Kindergarten to Grade 3, Grades 4 and 5, Grades 6 to 8 and Grades 8 to 10.

Student progress reports are legislated Under the *School Act* through the Student Progress Report Order. Outlined is the content required for Kindergarten to Grade 3, Grade 4 and 5, Grade 6 and 7, and Grade 8 to 12.

[21] Students have the option of taking examinations related to specific Grade 12 level courses. Full credit may be earned for these courses whether or not the related provincial examination is taken. If students choose to write these exams, results will count for 40% of the final course mark. Many Post-Secondary institutions continue to require students to take exams for all provincially-examinable courses as an entrance requirement.

Important to this research, and described in greater detail in Chapter 2, is the Foundation Skills Assessment, first administered to children in Grade 4. The Foundation Skills Assessment is an annual province-wide assessment of students' academic skills. The skills tested are linked to provincial curriculum and performance standards, designed and delivered by teachers, and administered each year to Grade 4 and 7 students in public and provincially funded independent schools. The main purpose of the assessment is to evaluate how well students are achieving basic skills (criterion referenced) in reading comprehension, writing and numeracy (Ministry of Education, 2008b). According to the Ministry of Education, Foundation Skills Assessment reading scores are a reliable predictor of a student's likelihood of completing school on time (Ministry of Education, 2008b). The Ministry of Education reports results of the annual Foundation Skills Assessment at the provincial, district, school and individual student levels enabling school districts to provide support for students through early intervention and inform teaching strategies for subsequent years and provide feedback to districts for regional and local improvement. Foundation Skills Assessment scores do not count toward student grades.

With lower success rates of First Nations students and recognition at a provincial level to improve the education outcomes of First Nations students, Districts track Aboriginal student progress, including information linking students to particular First Nations' communities. The tracking includes both information from standardized tests such as Foundation Skills Assessment as well as local

measures defined in Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements and Local Education Agreements.

Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements, which evolved from a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1999[22], are agreements between a school district, local First Nations, and the Ministry of Education designed to enhance shared decision making and goal setting in order to improve education outcomes of First Nations students (Ministry of Education, 2010a). Agreements also recognize the importance of First Nations culture and language and require the incorporation of the culture and language of the local First Nations where the district is located. The Nechako Lakes School District No. 91 Agreement includes such goals as: improved relations between the district and local Aboriginal communities and parents; improved literacy and numeracy and graduation rates; improved attainment rates of Dogwood diplomas for Aboriginal students and increased student and public awareness of Aboriginal languages and cultures. The performance indicators associated with parent satisfaction with school-home communication, a major component of this research, are addressed in detail in Chapter 5.

1.5 Involving First Nations Parents in their Children's Education

The provincial government has recognized the need for improved First Nations outcomes in the school system throughout the province (Ministry of Education, 2008c). However, the involvement of parents in the assessment

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[22] The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Chiefs Action Committee, the Provincial Education Minister, the Federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs and the President of the BC Teachers Federation.

process continues to be an absent component in the Ministry's strategy to improve outcomes. This research analyzed not only parent involvement in the school but also the parent's involvement in their children's schoolwork. Research indicates that family participation in the education of children improves the quality and impact of schooling (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostoleris, 1997; Martinez, Martinez & Perez 2004; UNESCO, 1995). Weiss et al. (2009) indicate after-school learning, summer learning, and family involvement in learning are major predictors of children's development, educational achievement, and school success. Epstein (2001) and Martinez, Martinez and Perez (2004) indicate that families from low socio-economic status benefit most from school-parent partnerships because parents may lack academic knowledge is assisting their children. Brady (1996) suggests that difficulties in school faced by many First Nations' students can be explained by low socio-economic status than any other indicator.

While this is the case, literature suggests First Nation parents' involvement in the school system remains low due to some of the historical issues surrounding parent relationships with schools and districts in the province (School District No. 91, 2006). In addition, the number of First Nations individuals involved in the school system as teachers also remains very low.[23] This research attempted to understand parent involvement in homework and communication levels with their child's teacher. If parents do not understand the tools used or do not agree with the measures, community participation can be difficult to achieve.

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[23] At the time of the writing of this document there were two Aboriginal teachers in the district, one of Carrier ancestry.

Research indicates cooperation, shared vision and goals, frequent monitoring, evaluation and positive reinforcement, communication between stakeholders regarding pupil rights and expectations and parental involvement are keys to school effectiveness (Hulpia & Valcke, 2004). The National Indian Brotherhood document *Indian control of Indian Education* (1972) policy statement marked a watershed in Aboriginal education sending a clear, unequivocal call for local control of education by First Nations communities and parents. It highlighted the failure of federal and provincial governments to implement appropriate policies to address First Nations goals for education. One of the key recommendations was local control over education, including First Nations parental involvement in culturally based curriculum. Control, as defined in the National Indian Brotherhood policy is defined as "the right to direct the education of our children. It includes the freedom to choose among many options and alternatives and to make decisions on specific issues" (Haig-Brown, 1995, p.25). Freire (2009) suggests, "pedagogy must be forged *with*, not *for,* the oppressed" (p.48).

The ability to choose from options and make decisions is contingent on having information and parents must be involved in determining the education outcomes for their children and communication with teachers and school administrators in order to be informed. Direct involvement also includes parents being a partner in defining education as well as education achievement for their children.[24] The UNESCO report (1995) supports the need for parent involvement

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[24] The principle of this research, the need to define culturally appropriate indicators, is shaped by this position.

stating, "it is unproductive to focus exclusively on school-based programmes when research indicates that family processes and participation in the education of children greatly enhances the impact of schooling and improves its quality" (p.12).

The goals of education that are embodied in assessment strategies are defined by non-Aboriginal authorities, and while some Aboriginal parents and communities may share these goals, it should not be assumed that they will place them above their own goals for the education of their children (or that all First Nations communities support the same goals). According to Pushor and Murphy (2004), the assumption that educators must overcome is the notion that school culture and environment are superior to home culture and environment, particularly in marginalized communities, and that parents' ways of knowing are of lesser value than professional experts.

Carrier and Western systems have different ways of perceiving and creating meaning about the world. Translation and exchange of knowledge requires mutual acknowledgement and acceptance of what the other has to offer (Edwards, 2007). To foster resilience at an individual and community level multiple types of knowledge and knowledge holders are essential. Janet Smylie (2007) argues that each type of evidence requires different approaches and skills for assessment. Developing innovative approaches to assessment will help rebalance the historical and current marginalization of Indigenous knowledge. Nelson-Barber and Trumbull (2007) posit,

> If in fact, the use of local wisdom, recognition of culture, and active
> involvement of community are mainstays in the established standards of

education practice in Indigenous communities (and contribute to student success), why is this understanding not applied to the realm of assessment? Are we confident that test developers have broad enough understandings of Indigenous students' ways of knowing to enable them to construct appropriate assessments? (p.134)

The inclusion of the voice of parents and determining their knowledge and perspective of the system also relates to another core strategy of both this research and education in the province, creating conditions for members of First Nations communities to become involved in the public schools their children attend. As stated by Ungerleider (2003), "many Aboriginal parents feel uncomfortable approaching teachers and principals about issues affecting their children" (p.146). Past experience, whether due to residential school abuse or experience in the public school where parents had negative experiences of being sent to the office results in avoidance of the school, particularly if they must meet in those same offices because their children are now the ones in trouble (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009). Often parents are unaware of their rights involving the education of their children, such as the right to consult with the principal or to see their children's work and progress. Parents may also be unaware of how tools such as assessment are used by the school and the impacts this has on children.[25]

The level of education of many First Nations' parents compared to teachers and the culture of colonization is still a significant barrier to communication. Negative experiences of parents within the school system, including residential school experiences and systemic racism experienced in the

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[25] Both in terms of student sense of belonging but also impacts on a student's future. The level of parent knowledge will be examined in this research.

post residential school era, create situations where parents are less likely to become involved or feel empowered to advocate for their children in a system that has historically been demeaning (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009). In addition, parents who have experienced negative school experiences are more likely to accept what teachers and other professionals claim regarding their children without adequate justification, if the teachers consult parents at all.[26]

As noted by Freire (2009), cultural invasion has resulted in many individuals who consider themselves inferior, which is a necessary tool of oppression. This is the case for many parents who have been influenced negatively for generations within the residential school system or been influenced by systemic racism in a system that has not respected their culture or world-view. A Lake Babine Nation Steering Committee member noted that her cohort was the first group of First Nations students allowed to attend the non–Aboriginal school in Granisle and were victimized daily by students and adults upon entrance (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009). The discrepancy undoubtedly results in difficulty for parents in advocating on behalf of their children in the education system. The inequity of input manifests in a number of ways including lack of parent involvement in meetings with teachers and principals and lack of understanding of their rights as parents (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009).

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[26] This is an area that will be researched in greater detail in the study.

1.6 Parent Involvement and High Standards

Parent involvement in the development of indicators of success is very important for First Nations communities because how districts determine success will influence the e`ducation students receive including the curriculum topics deemed important. The definition of achievement focuses the attention of schools on specific outcomes in order to improve targets in defined areas. If the indicator of success is completion rates[27], the result may be simply reducing the challenge and pushing children through the system in order to meet targets (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). As noted by the provincial government "the key indicator of success will be reducing the discrepancy in high school graduation rates by 2015 between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners (Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2008, p.8). This is an important indicator noted by parents in this research only if it results in graduation with a Dogwood and not a leaving certificate.

International research reflects similar apprehension with parents from American Indian communities alarmed that public schools often assessed and placed their children in special needs programs (Robinson-Zanartu & Majel Dixon, 1996). Kavanagh suggests that too often First Nations' students are labelled as having special needs due to inappropriate testing techniques. Thirty-four percent of respondents, representing 55 Bands in the United States indicated their children had been evaluated for placement in special education (Robinson-Zanartu & Majel Dixon, 1996). While the schools believe alternative

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[27] High School completion is typically the success indicator used to define how students, and thus school districts are doing.

classes best meet the academic needs of these students by reducing the class size and increasing teaching time, clearly, there is at times a discrepancy between school and parent viewpoints and additional analysis is required. This research adds to this discussion reflecting the need to inform parents of the assessment techniques used and continue communication so that parents are aware of how their children are progressing in alternative or extra classes.

The knowledge of parents in providing direction to their children also relates to provincial exams, as many students are unaware of the impacts of not participating in provincial exams that are not mandatory. As a result, students are not prepared for entrance to university programs because they have avoided subjects required at a university level (P. Michell, Personal Communication February 11, 2010). Similarly, parents who have not graduated high school typically do not understand the implications of their child entering alternative programs and what that will mean for the child in the long term.[28] The use of alternative schools is a contentious issue with districts arguing that intensive remediation and support for students not succeeding in the regular school system will improve outcomes and many Lake Babine Nation parents seeing it as a method of removing children from classes based on ethnicity (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009).

Parents who have not completed their own education are ill equipped to assist children in areas such as homework. This places children at a

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[28] Children who have been placed in alternative programs will not have the skills necessary to pass provincial exams necessary for university entrance. This is important from the beginning of the education system because if a child falls behind even in grade one, with the first assessment at grade four it will be very difficult to bring children back to standards required, setting the child up for lower achievement throughout their academic life.

disadvantage systemically and practically. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), term this concept "social capital" asserting forms of knowledge, skills, education and values provide an individual with advantage or disadvantage based on status within society. The mismatch between home and school language often directly influences First Nations students' achievement in literacy and numeracy placing children at a disadvantage when those skills and knowledge are the focus of testing (Klenowski, 2009). [29]

Helin (2006) argues for a focus on educational achievement that is demanding of children in order to reduce the sense of failure that occurs through watering down programs or segregating children. This argument supports the parents of the Lake Babine Nation who call for completion of Grade12 as well as successful completion of core subjects. According to Helin (2006) "given the right environment, it is evident that kids, whether Aboriginal or otherwise, respond to high academic expectations placed on them with results" (p.213). Watt-Cloutier (2000), argues, "the watering down of programs, the lowering of standards and expectations is a form of structural racism that we must make every attempt to stop" (p.115).

In some communities, academic standards and rigour have been lowered in the name of respect for the "different learning styles" of Aboriginal peoples or in order to meet targets set (p.115). As an example, Helin cites the Grandview/?Uuquinak'uuh Elementary School in East Vancouver, which is roughly 50% Aboriginal and demonstrated a considerable improvement on the

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[29] A one example, in 2005 only 20% of Aboriginal students took the Grade 12 English Exam and 5% participated in the Grade 12 math final exam. This will have implications for university entrance.

Foundation Skills Assessment between 2001 and 2004 by focusing on shared

vision for academic success. In 2001 only 22% of Grade 4 students passed the

reading test, 63% passed writing and 42% passed numeracy (Helin, 2006,

p.212). The school avoided culturally centred curriculum that segregated

Aboriginal students focusing instead on creating an atmosphere of success.

Some of the key elements denoted in creating a learning environment included

high expectations, focus on academics, early literacy programs, regular

assessment and strong parent and community support (p.214). By 2004, 88% of

Grade 4 students met or exceeded expectations in reading, writing and

numeracy (Helin, 2006). It is useful to set high goals for students and ensure

students are encouraged to meet those goals. Research supports the East

Vancouver example indicating there is a strong correlation between teacher

expectations and student achievement (Rampal, Singh & Didyk (1984) cited in

Kavanagh, 1998, p.80). In addition, failure to develop literacy and numeracy skills

during primary school related to a disproportionate number of Indigenous

adolescents not attending school (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

1.7 Final Remarks

There is a considerable amount of information available to direct

educational policy at a macro-level but community specific research is limited

(Hulpia & Valcke, 2004). The assessment tools used, even those of School

District No. 91, while providing important information in specific areas, do not

reflect the complete picture of community needs. Beyond the narrow scope of the

research, there are philosophical issues in how assessment is conducted when working with First Nations' communities. Research that focuses in-situ, or within a particular culture, is much more appropriate to First Nations conceptions of knowledge (Berkes, 1999). Methods of Indigenous knowledge generation and application are participatory, community based, experiential, and reflective of local geography (Smylie, Martin, Kaplaan-Myrth, Steele, Tait, & Hogg, 2003). First Nations communities have argued against pan-Indian models that do not reflect group differences in the knowledge utilization process. Lafrance (2000) argues that while careers require knowledge provided by the sciences and mathematics, comprehensive education must not displace the values and knowledge of First Nations peoples.

In most school effectiveness research there is an over-reliance on large-scale quantitative research and positivist epistemology at the peril of more detailed qualitative methodologies (Thrupp, 2001). As such, Ministry-derived standards often neglect the social situations of parents, diversity of school aims and community perceptions of achievement. Parent feedback at a community level regarding performance of students, classes and schools is an integral component of assessment that will guide the improvement of processes at a micro (community) level (Hara & Burke 1998). Large- scale testing results in a narrow focus of achievement and defines educational success only in terms that can be quantifiably measured (Morley & Rassool, 1999). The result is that we know First Nations children are achieving at a lower rate than non- Aboriginal children but this information does not explain why this is the case. As noted by

Ungerleider, 2003), "large- scale testing schemes do not by themselves improve the performance of students. Without making sure that a large number of other factors are present, it would be unrealistic and unsound to embark upon such assessment. The use of large- scale assessments to inform changes at the school and classroom level must address the aforementioned obstacles and challenges" (p.263).[30]

As has been demonstrated throughout the history of interaction between the Canadian governments and First Nations, working in isolation within the perspective that external researchers and policy makers know best without involving those directly affected, is ineffective. Allowing parents control over the development and maintenance of their children's education is an important step for all parties. There remains a lack of understanding of parent's understanding of assessment and the perspective of First Nations parents remains limited within the literature creating an important area for dialogue.

This research, through qualitative methods outlined in Chapter 4, invited parents to address the complex interplay among community, school, class and individual factors affecting what children learn (Ungerleider 2003). In doing so, a secondary goal is to raise awareness of the importance of assessment and strengthen the role of communities and families in children's education. As noted by Martinez, Martinez and Perez (2004), traditionally families have been left out of the assessment process despite parents' awareness of the needs of their children. The research process will create a grass roots approach in which

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[30] While all schools are required to use the FSA, and report the results at the school and district level, most schools also use a variety of school-wide literacy and numeracy assessments to learn more about how students are doing with regard to specific literacy and numeracy skills.

stakeholders are actively involved in implementing improvement strategies. The research adds to the field of assessment by shedding light on parent knowledge of assessment and involvement in their children's education as well as providing some suggestions for better practice in Aboriginal education. The research contributes to ongoing consideration of partnerships between parents and teachers when developing and administering and analyzing student assessment (Martinez, Martinez & Perez, 2004).

The structure of the dissertation in addressing parents perceptions of education and assessment are as follows. Chapter Two provides a brief historical overview of assessment and the political and social movements during varying eras that have influenced assessment. The discussion provides context for the perceptions of Lake Babine parents regarding assessment. It also assists in explaining how First Nations, as people on the margins, have been excluded from the assessment process and thus their views of what is important for their children to learn have not been included in methods or curriculum.

Chapter Three addresses the colonization process and its impacts on the social imaginary of the Lake Babine Nation. The forming and reforming of Lake Babine social imaginary due to the influence of other societies and the reconciliation of the colonization process provides an important lens for addressing contemporary Lake Babine society and parents' understanding of education and assessment. The multiple social imaginaries present in community are reflected in the research findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter Four provides an explanation of the methods used in the research. The methods exemplify how research should be conducted in First Nations communities and reflects the overall theme of the research that First Nations should be included in all decisions affecting their nations.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the research. Within the chapter, I share the voice of parents by providing their understanding of a number of concepts including definitions of education and assessment. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by discussing the key findings of Chapter 5 and providing recommendations and implications.

2: CHAPTER TWO: ASSESSMENT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The transmission of knowledge and the mechanisms for assessing what students have learned (education) can be seen as a cyclical process in virtually all cultures. It begins with the premise, whether conscious or unconscious, of what members need to know and the method for conveying this information, both of which are embedded in the community's worldview. Knowledge transfer also includes an approach for determining if the learner has acquired the information. This process, often termed assessment, determines learning through a variety of strategies from informal observation to formal examination. The word assessment comes from the Latin "assidere," which translates "to sit by one's side" (Wiggins, 1993). The process is cyclical in that the knowledge provider and student continually engage in the process to determine what the student has learned and what information requires further explanation.

The assessment process can be conscious and unconscious, however, for the purposes of this research I focus on the process of measuring, documenting

and reporting student understanding, knowledge and skills attained in British

Columbia Ministry of Education delineated curriculum. While a historical overview

of assessment could be a dissertation topic on its own, it is important to this

discussion to provide a brief historical overview of assessment, particularly the

influence of large-scale assessment and the imposition of Western concepts of

assessment as it shapes the perceptions of Lake Babine parents regarding

assessment and testing.

Historical, social and political systems influence parents understanding

and views of the role of education and assessment within the school system.

Assessment is inherently a social and political event, as reflected in the historical

and contemporary use of assessment tools both internationally and specifically in

British Columbia. Members of the Lake Babine Nation are influenced by the

larger social debate regarding what children should know and how what they

know should be assessed. It is clear from discussion with the Lake Babine Nation

Steering Committee guiding this research that the current influence of large-scale

assessment has entered their consciousness when talking about assessment.

The steering committee wanted the term assessment replaced with test or testing

when speaking with parents, as they believed this would be the term parents

knew. There was considerable dialogue regarding this point as testing is just one

facet of assessment and I did not want to narrow the scope of the question solely

to tests, as there are many forms of assessment available. [31] However, testing

pervades both Western and Lake Babine cultures alike through mediums

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[31] As seen in chapter 4, parents also use the term test more often than assessment in the interviews supporting the suggestion by the LBN Steering Committee that this is the term parents recognize.

including schools, media and trivia-based leisure activities. There is a general perception that tests indicate achievement and are a legitimate means of determining who succeeds and who fails, and, while some parents challenge the validity of testing, they are still proud when their child improves on a spelling test.

The means of assessing student achievement - including instruments, rationale and formats - have changed over time reflecting broader social and political epochs. Assessment informs societal goals for education in relation to what the government, guided by public and economic pressure, deems important knowledge for students. In terms of assessment, public confidence in the education system has specific consequences for policy. Reporting standard performance measures reassures the public that the government monitors the education system and maintains efficient use of public funds (Volante & Ben Jaafar, 2008). In addition, the government, when challenged by the public regarding education, favours poll sensitive reforms such as standardized testing and shifts in curriculum standards in an attempt to satisfy public confidence (Guppy & Davies, 1999). The easiest goal to implement is directly measurable standards, typically through manipulation of standardized tests (Hillocks, 2002). Linking politics and education further, Hillcocks (2002) indicates, "when the demand for testing is made law, someone has to decide what the tests will examine, what the content of the subject matter is, and what part of that subject is legitimate for testing" (p.16). Just as curriculum development is a political process, determining what will be included in assessment is also political

(Shepard, 1989). Canada attempts to balance the standardization of assessment with the concept of diversity within the nation (Volante & Ben Jaafar, 2008).

In Canada, while each province is responsible for education and thus assessment, approaches to large- scale assessment reflect the global trend that urges educational reforms through accountability measures (Ben Jaafar & Anderson, 2007). In Canada, the historical use of large- scale assessment continues to increase. Every province and territory in Canada, with the exception of Nunavut, administers some form of mandated large-scale assessment (Volante & Ben Jaafar, 2008). A provincially mandated school system means that there are different curricula in each of the educational jurisdictions and subsequently a different criterion-referenced assessment. However, Canada still has a role and attempts to verify its global position within education by participating in various international large- scale assessments. According to Volante and Ben Jafar (2008), the assessment process in Canada embraces a common standard for assessment despite 13 independently governed jurisdictions. The assessment process attempts to satisfy Canadian citizens that action is being taken at a local, provincial, national and international level, preparing students to compete worldwide.

The democratization of education has also changed the role of assessment with public demanding access to education and standardized outcomes for all students. Allowing access to education for all is important within discussions concerning First Nations because it also parallels human rights movements designed to be inclusive of all peoples in accessing services such as

education. For First Nations, this also becomes complex because inclusion has been associated with policies of assimilation imposed by provincial and federal authorities. It was with amendments to the *Indian Act*, in 1951, which coincides with examining human rights on a global scale post World War Two, that the Federal government altered policy of segregated education for First Nations children allowing attendance at public schools. Groups questioned previous treatment of First Nations as separate and inferior and there was a move towards increased assimilation, termed integration.

The present assessment culture in British Columbia is a legacy of early Western societies and practitioners have adopted assessment procedures of the past into the mass education system of the present. Testing developments in British Columbia have been similar to initiatives elsewhere in the western world. Assessment, even in the early stages of Western Education, was a reflection of political and knowledge systems of the day and played a key role in shaping curriculum and determining readiness or selection for occupations. Before the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the motivations and procedures that characterize assessment today were already present (Wilbrink, 1997). Large-scale assessments since their inception have typically been used as accountability mechanisms serving broad societal and political goals and large-scale assessment is well entrenched in government practice within the province of British Columbia. It represents a key feature of organizational structures and practices of public school over time, well beyond recent recognition and debate (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). Politically the government of British Columbia has

generally been interested in assessment of group learning, largely dependent on large-scale student assessment, for promoting accountability of public schools, rather than the assessment of individual learning, which officials view as the role of the classroom teacher (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). As such, provincial large-scale assessment programs originate in legislation, which sets out the academic areas to be tested and the grade levels for the tests to occur (Hillocks, 2002).

In terms of accountability, large- scale assessment in British Columbia tends to have high stakes consequences for students rather than teachers or administrators (Volante, 2006). Teachers and administrators may feel pressure to improve test scores, particularly when scores are published or schools are ranked, and teachers may be required to develop an improvement plan submitted to administrators but there is rarely official sanction (Volante, 2006). As well, no bonus or merit pay incentives are attached to improved test scores, as is the case in other countries. The high stakes for students are reserved for upper divisions, where assessment results may count as a percentage of the final marks for graduation. In the lower grades, including Grade 4, large-scale assessments do not have direct consequences for students and are intended to be used for improvement purposes rather than passing a grade or graduation.

An area of consistency has been the divide between government-initiated large-scale assessment and teacher-implemented classroom based assessment. Large- scale assessment creates a system where instruction is the responsibility of the teacher and assessment is the responsibility of experts who use elaborate

measures for test development[32] (Dochy & McDowell, 1997). The work of experts

regarding assessment started largely due to demand for objectivity and fairness

in assessment through standardization. It fits with the scientific paradigm of

external observers viewing an object from outside as a scientist does using a

microscope. However, educators have also used assessment as a political tool,

accepting the scientific methods associated with assessment to increase

professional designation, particularly beginning in the 1920s, and for challenging

methods that threaten autonomy throughout assessment periods.

On a national and international level, examinations are used to assess

what students have learned in common areas of curriculum in order to gauge

levels of performance nationally and internationally for comparable age groups.[33]

Beginning in 1993 the Council of Ministers of Education Canada established a

national testing program known as the Student Achievement Indicators Program

(SAIP). SAIP consists of tests administered to Canadian students from 13 to 16

years of age in mathematics, reading, writing and science (Ungerleider 2003).

Canada also participates in international assessments of student

achievement including the Programme for International Student Assessment

(PISA). The PISA assesses the performance of 15 year-old students in over

6000 schools across 32 countries in reading, mathematics and science literacies

using common tests (Marks, 2006).

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[32] In recent years the Ministry of Education has involved teachers, as experts, in the development of tests in an attempt to connect teaching and large-scale assessment.

[33] While the majority of national and international examinations are at the post secondary level, it is important to note their use as well as the fact that it is important to prepare students from a young age so that they do not fall behind prior to partaking in provincial, national or international exams.

2.1 Assessment and Indigenous Students

The policies and practices of educational assessment have not met the needs of First Nations students (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007). Historically, curriculum and assessment has imposed a Western worldview on First Nations people with the implication that the imposed worldview is superior (Battiste, 2000). Klenowski (2009), in discussing the lower performance rates of Australian Indigenous students, argues that improvement is more than an equity issue and must be addressed pedagogically and in terms of assessment practice. Research from Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia affirm the connection between cultural continuity and education outcomes, and call for new assessment practices that link to culturally responsive pedagogy (Gould, 2008; Harris, 2009; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Klenowski, 2009; Pewewardy, 2002; Robinson- Zanartu, 1996; Sheilds, 1997; Svihla et al., 2009).

Assessment is a cultural process associated with assumptions about how it should be conducted and how students should participate (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007). In some cases, assessment policy interferes with attempts to make assessment appropriate for First Nations learners by driving curricular change, rather than measuring learning in an equitable manner (Klenowski, 2009; Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007). Researchers have indicated the negative impacts of curriculum that does not reflect First Nations cultures and the role of assessment in perpetuating such biases (Battiste, 2000; Bordeaux 1995; Klenowski, 2009; Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007; Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996; Kavanagh, 1998). Control of history legitimizes the social structure

and the decisions of those who are writing the accounts. From first contact, European writers distributed negative characterizations of First Nations throughout the European continent in order to justify expansionism (Klug & Whitfield, 2003). Writers portrayed First Nations as lacking culture and Christian morals, rationalizing the Western duty to save indigenous peoples. The negative characterization continued through generations entering the curriculum of the school system. Materials used in school reveal that while the majority of events depict the European viewpoint, a large number of historical events were not even recorded, diminishing the role of First Nations in Canadian history. The message sent to children through such materials is that they no longer exist, having no future in current societies (Klug & Whitfield, 2003, p.280). Taylor argues through omission those excluded receive a demeaning picture of themselves as though creativity and excellence is solely a Western male endeavour (1994, p.65). He continues, "enlarging and changing the curriculum is therefore essential not so much in the name of broader culture for everyone as in order to give due recognition to the hitherto excluded" (Taylor, 1994, p.66).

Assessment plays a large role in the lack of integration of culturally appropriate curriculum. Assessment is directly associated with education standards and the determination of school effectiveness, based on narrowly defined core subjects, and plays a large role in promoting teacher focus on largely Western forms of knowledge. Even if there is recognition of the need for inclusion of First Nations culture in curriculum, not including culture as a core of assessment sends a subconscious message to teachers who typically prefer

formula-based methods or rely on principles and formats of large-scale testing

when they construct informal assessments (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007).

The culture created under longstanding testing policies and practices

communicates to teachers that programs created outside of the standard rubric

are less valuable than rigorous coursework of the mainstream educational

program, thus limiting their inclusion in the classroom (Klenowski, 2009).

Shepard (1989) indicates, "researchers have found ample evidence that testing

shapes instruction" (p.5). A statement made by Principal Krause, from BC,

reflects the perception of culturally centred curriculum when she suggests

curriculum based on Indigenous principles is "long on cultural sensitivity, self-

esteem and hugs, but very short on literacy" (quoted in Helin, 2006, p.213). With

the pressure to meet targets, schools often view programs related to culture or

language as add-ons or supplementary.

Despite improvements in materials and curriculum, educators often do not

write texts and design learning environments specifically for First Nations'

students resulting in a cultural gap between the home and school. Curriculum

guides for public schools now address inclusion of First Nations' culture in

materials. However, educators have typically not fully incorporated Indigenous

culture in the curriculum nor have they integrated parental involvement into the

broader educational decisions made in schools (Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-

Dixon, 1996). Shifts in pedagogy must be holistically driven and focused on local

wisdom and recognition of culture and worldviews as main components of

standards of educational practice in First Nations communities (Nelson-Barber &

Trumbull, 2007; Reyhner, 1992). True integration does not rely on one-time activities, or "add-on" units, it employs materials from the child's culture and history to illustrate principles and concepts (Hilliard, 1991/92).

Determining what will be included in assessment is a political event associated with culture-based assumptions (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007; Shepard, 1989). Learning and assessment are socially negotiated and embedded within cultural communities that have different views regarding the nature of learning and valued knowledge (Klenowski, 2008). Nelson-Barber and Trumbull (2007) argue "those who are not members of [privileged] groups, and have different experiences and values, will be affected by those assessments developed using the perspectives of those with power" (p.85). Without changes to assessment and curriculum in unison, standardized tests, in effect measure how well First Nations' students learn curriculum deemed by the larger society to be appropriate but may not necessarily reflect parent's views of what their children should know.

Standardized tests go through a consensus building process where teams of curriculum experts and teachers agree to the content of the tests (Shepard, 1989). First Nations are typically under-represented in the rank of expert and teacher and as a result, the learning needs of First Nations people are under-represented in standard tests. In addition, content analysis is completed to ensure test objectives are well matched to widely used textbooks. While educators have made efforts to increase First Nations content in text books, and remove content that is offensive to indigenous peoples, the content is still not

significant enough to represent First Nations, particularly the geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity that exist (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2007).

Procedures to develop standardized tests can also have a homogenizing effect, limiting depth of content in order to reach the breadth of material covered. As a result, cultural content is reduced to a few questions on an overall exam. Similarly, test construction is constrained by emphasis on basic skills needed to move forward, often excluding the full range of important instructional objectives (Shepard, 1989). Stiggins (1997) found that similar issues are reflected in classroom assessment where teachers often use formats of standardized testing when constructing their own informal assessment.

As noted by Nelson- Barber and Trumbull (2007), "given the longstanding detrimental effects of testing policies and practices on the educational outcomes of countless Indigenous students, finding ways to minimize testing biases and reveal students' strengths is a high research priority" (p.132).

2.2 Eras of Assessment in British Columbia

Raptis and Fleming (2006) note that since large- scale assessment of student learning began in 1876 in the province of British Columbia there have been four specific testing eras. The First era of assessment (roughly 1876-1924), began in order to determine who had gained knowledge and skills needed to move beyond primary education. The Victoria High School, which opened in 1876, was the only institution of higher learning in the province. The provincial government required a system of determining who was appropriate for admission

and followed the lead of other Canadian provinces, particularly Ontario, and implemented its first large-scale examinations (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). The high school entrance exam consisted of problem solving and open- ended questions requiring students to use subject matter to make connections and support solutions within the subjects of arithmetic, spelling, grammar and geography. For admission, the evaluation guidelines required at least 30% knowledge attainment in each subject, with exception to grammar, which was determined to be foundational to all further study and thus required 50% (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). The assessment was elitist, using assessment instruments to select limited numbers of individuals to continue their studies and enter professions of teaching, law and medicine. No such measures were created for northern British Columbia or rural communities at this time.

The concerns of educators raised during this period are similar to those noted today including the pressure felt to teach only information contained on exams. The pressure from government and others placed on the assessment results created a system where unprepared students were excluded until teachers were reasonably sure they could pass. Still, the average pass rate over the era was roughly 55% (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). The exams were successful as sorting mechanisms, illustrating what students did not know and used to exclude individuals from high school, and as a result admission to professions, rather than as tool for improved education (Raptis & Fleming, 2006) .

As with the social, economic and political pressure influencing assessment in earlier periods around the world, social reformers, community leaders,

politicians and educators during this period of history in British Columbia

challenged the structure of assessment and the impact that student inability to

pass high school entrance exams would have on the province. Leaders

challenged the focus on grammar as an unnecessary barrier to those students

who would not require linguistics for future endeavours. By 1911, pressured by

employment demands of an expanding economy, the Education Office prepared

different exams for rural and urban schools to increase pass rates and in 1918,

the Education Office regulations were eased to allow promotion to high school

based on recommendations of teachers and principals (Raptis & Fleming, 2006).

The exclusive nature of schooling and assessment shifted dramatically in

the mid-1920s when the province's social context and views of schooling

changed. The urbanization and industrialization of British Columbia resulted in a

second phase of assessment created through demands on schools to prepare

increasing numbers of students for trade and commerce. Mandatory school

attendance laws[34] resulted in increasing numbers of students who needed to be

assessed to determine their progress. Instruments used to assess student

performance changed with a shift in views of schooling and curriculum, regarded

by administrators as the tools for preparing as many students as possible with

the knowledge and skills necessary for life within an industrial economy. Mass

education was, in part, a response to the requirements for a skilled and literate

workforce (Macionis & Gerber, 2005).

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[34] In 1920 the Canadian government adopted mandatory education to age sixteen (Macionis & Gerber, 2005, p.521) .

The second phase of assessment (1925-1972) - influenced by the modernizing of the provincial economy, promotion of greater access to education and higher levels of learning for all citizens - focused primarily on standardized intelligence testing as an objective measure for assigning student placement[35] (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). In addition, the department of education introduced standardized, multiple-choice testing used throughout this era in various subjects. The multiple-choice format used during this era differed from earlier methods, which focused on open-ended essay style questions.

Reflecting the social and political nature of testing, particular subjects of study have dominated the testing agenda of specific eras, determined to be indicators of the key learning needed by students at specific times. For example, in British Columbia from 1925 to 1972 the majority of government-administered tests were multiple-choice with mathematics featured prominently. Since 1976, literacy and numeracy have dominated large- scale testing as the foundation to learning in other subject areas (Raptis & Fleming, 2006).

2.3 Intelligence Testing

Intelligence testing developed during the 1925-1972[36] period was highly political and created great mistrust of testing in minority populations. The

[35] It should be mentioned again that First Nations were exempted from public schools until 1951 and at this time were only allowed access when numbers resulted in the need for increased enrollment.

[36] In 1905 Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon announced the development of an objective measure capable of diagnosing different degrees of mental retardation. In 1916 Stanford psychologist Lewis Terman released revision of Binet's work that became the Stanford-Binet test (Becker, 2003). The tests have been used since with the fifth revision occurring in 2003 (Becker, 2003).

American Psychological Association, in response to the debate regarding

intelligence testing during this period suggested that "research findings were

often assessed not so much on their merits or their scientific standing as on their

supposed political implications" (Neisser et. al, 1996, p.77). The evolution of

intelligence testing, while turbulent, must be considered because much of the

theory of standardized assessments evolved from work done on standardized

intelligence testing (Laitsch, 2005). Historically, institutions used intelligence tests

to establish the inferiority of non-white peoples, largely based on cultural biases

contained within the testing measures (Gould, 2008). Intelligence testing in the

education system often resulted in placing immigrant and marginalized ethnic

groups into low-level courses and vocational schools arguing they had low

mental abilities (Laitsch, 2005).

Intelligence testing has been used in other controversial ways including

the eugenics social movement of the mid twentieth century (Depew, 2010;

Laitsch, 2005; Leyva, 2009; McLaren, 1990; Roman et. al, 2009). Proponents of

the eugenics movement attached themselves to intelligence testing as a scientific

foundation used to identify individuals, including First Nations, who could be

defined as mentally incompetent on the basis of genetics (Roman et al., 2009).

Proponents of eugenics then used the information gathered from intelligence

testing as justification for the institutionalization of individuals or placing them on

basic skill tracks. During this period many countries, including Canada, enacted

eugenics policies and programs including genetic screening, promotion of racial

and genetic segregation and sterilization based on the eugenics movement. Law

in two Canadian provinces, BC and Alberta, enforced eugenics. Alberta enacted

a Sexual Sterilization Act in 1928, creating a Eugenics Board with the power to

authorize the sexual sterilization of individuals. BC enacted similar legislation in

1933 and both provinces had the laws in effect until 1972 (McLaren, 1990). In

Alberta, at least 2822 individuals were officially sterilized while in BC the number

is unclear as records of the program were destroyed (McLaren, 1990).

Opponents of the early use of intelligence testing argue that its use in

assessment failed to account for factors including cultural bias, language and

socio-economic status when attempting to determine cognitive competence

(Gould, 2008; Klenowski, 2009; Turkheimer et al, 2003). Scholars opposed to the

intelligence testing have argued intelligence testing to be the basis for scientific

racism against marginalized groups (Croizet & Dutrevis, 2004; Cronshaw et al.,

2006). Gould (1996) states intelligence-testing supports,

> the abstraction of intelligence as a single entity, its location within the
> brain, its quantification as one number for each individual, and the use of
> these numbers to rank people in a single series of worthiness, invariably
> to find that oppressed and disadvantaged groups—races, classes, or
> sexes—are innately inferior and deserve their status (p. 24).

The importance placed on scientific measurement in British Columbia

shares similar support with the rise of modern states in nineteenth century

Europe. State influence, particularly the bureaucratization of states, was critical

in assessment shifts all over Europe. Where earlier family background and

wealth were decisive in obtaining attractive government positions, merit was

becoming a key criterion. Assessment, as noted by Wilbrink (1997), played a

large role in occupational acquisition as, "examinations were the main way of

becoming a civil servant" (p.42). With bureaucratic states basing systems on meritocracy, the marking system shifted to reflect changes and objective assessment based on competitive examinations gained favour. In addition, the curricula itself was changed as objectivity demanded curriculum content be narrowed and adjusted to make objective assessment feasible (Wilbrink, 1997).

In British Columbia, various groups supported standardized assessment instruments for social and professional reasons. Educators supported the scientific approach of standardized testing as a means of raising professional status by linking education to scientific enquiry. Educators and researchers viewed the adoption of a program of standardized testing as a more accurate and objective assessment of students' academic abilities, ranking standardized tests as the pinnacle in the hierarchy of tests. Administrators also supported standardized intelligence testing as an objective means for ensuring teachers followed curriculum at all grade levels. In addition, the use of standardized tests allowed for comparison between schools, increasing public awareness of testing results and challenging performance based on tests rather than other social factors. Governments provided data regarding provincial and district averages so that educators and the public could compare their school's results with other districts, including rural and urban schools as well as schools in other countries using standardized exams (Raptis & Fleming, 2006).

The idea of objective measurement is reflected in teaching and learning models of the era. Science attempts to understand the entire universe by reducing all of the mysteries of the universe into a finite set of laws (Knudtson

and Suzuki 1992). It is the responsibility of educators to teach students those laws in an objective manner. In mainstream education, proponents view culture as something separate from learning and from relationships. This attitude is the result of the Western reductionist worldview, which tends to compartmentalize and categorize life and institutions including learning (Robinson-Zanartu & Majel-Dixon, 1996). The principle of philosophical realism premised on the argument there are universal truths outside of individuals and independent of their thoughts that individuals can study empirically, pervades the school system. The teacher is an objective individual responsible for presenting facts.

The dominance of normative tests reflects the form of subject matter and teacher's beliefs regarding the nature of evidence and principles of fairness (Shepard, 2000). Standardized assessment methods are consistent with theoretical frameworks closely aligned to scientific measurement; assessment is an official event separate from instruction. The methods of assessment include recall, completion, matching and multiple choice questions designed to measure specified ideas within curriculum through formula-based methods designed to be objective (Shepard, 2000). Traditional views of testing, curriculum and teaching reflect the view that learning occurs by accumulating bits of knowledge and precise standards of measurement are required to ensure mastery of each skill at the desired level. Teaching and learning operate under the same model as the factory assembly line. Learning is sequenced and hierarchical and tests are frequent to ensure mastery prior to moving on to the next objective (Shepard, 2000). In this method, schools require students to learn pieces of overall

concepts, indoctrinating students with facts and memorization so they are prepared for the future (Klug & Whitfield, 2003).

By 1972, the provincial government phased out standardized intelligence testing, again largely as a result of changing social and political views including heightened calls for social equality (Raptis & Fleming, 2006). The debate regarding large- scale assessment has gained momentum since the 1970s resulting in unprecedented calls for reform and accountability within public schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In addition, social movements of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the validity of large-scale measures of student achievement and the assessment of individual students as focused on White-middle class values. Provincial governments were cautious regarding individual rights and reported only aggregated data designed to revise education practice. The provincial government shifted attention from individual students to the government itself through a system of program evaluations designed to measure effectiveness of government programs and services, including education. The focus of assessment became informing the public about student achievement and assisting teachers and curriculum developers in improving courses through curriculum design, professional development and resource allocation. As one example, the 1976 language arts assessment resulted in one-hundred recommendations related to curriculum development and teaching strategies (Raptis & Fleming, 2006, p.1202).

The major assessment model of this era, initiated by the new Education

Minister in 1975[37], was the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (Raptis &

Fleming, 2006). The purposes of the program were to "evaluate student progress

over time, account to the public for strengths and weaknesses of the K-12

system, provide individual districts and schools with performance data, support

curriculum change and educational research, and provide management

information for resource allocation" (Raptis & Fleming, 2006, p.1202). The

program was in all provincial and public funded independent schools and with

limited exceptions, all students in Grades 4, 7 and 10 were expected to

participate (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Based on the provincial curriculum,

panels made up of 60 teachers, 20 from each grade category, determined what

knowledge and skill level students from various grades were expected to obtain

(Ministry of Education, 2008a). The children were assessed relative to provincial

standards and expectations set by the panel. With the exception of reading and

writing, the Provincial Learning Assessment Program focused primarily on

multiple-choice as the most frequently used format to determine subject

knowledge.

2.4 Foundation Skills Assessment

In 1999 parental pressure and requests from numerous district

administrators resulted in the government changing the provincial testing

program to its current form, the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). As with the

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[37] The Social Credit Party was elected in 1975.

Provincial Learning Assessment Program (which was not officially supplanted by FSA but has not been used since FSA's inception), the Foundation Skills Assessment is an annual province-wide assessment of students' academic skills. The skills tested are linked to provincial curriculum and performance standards. The Foundation Skills Assessment narrows the scope from previous assessment programs, focusing instead on reading comprehension, writing and numeracy as areas requisite to all other learning (Ministry of Education 2008b). The assessment, designed and delivered by teachers, is administered each year to Grade 4 and 7 students in public and provincially funded independent schools. The Ministry of Education reports results of the annual FSA at the provincial, district, school and individual student levels. Parents receive their child's individual FSA results indicating whether their child does not yet meet expectations, meets expectations or exceeds expectations in the three core areas. The Foundation Skills Assessment also breaks out data on First Nations' students at a school, district and provincial level.

The Foundation Skills Assessment remains highly politicized and contested by various groups. Educators continue to resist the tests as measures of educational quality (Volante, 2006). The BC Teachers Federation does not support the assessment method arguing that it is used solely to rank schools when money could be better spent elsewhere (BC Teachers Federation, 2008). The Federation encourages teachers not to assist in distributing or marking the student assessments. Critics of large-scale assessments such as the Foundation Skills Assessment argue the tests hold teachers responsible for such results

when results are dependent on other external factors, provide information that does not translate well to improving classroom practice and damages student self-concept leading to disengagement (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Meaghan & Casas, 1995; Stiggins, 2002). Critics suggest that the tests widen the gap between groups such as First Nations because they do not account for factors known to affect student performance such as socio-economic status, language of origin, and physical and emotional health (Valencia & Villarreal, 2003). Volante (2006) argues that more attention should be given to communication strategies that report the results including reporting limits of the test and avoiding ranking systems that promote misinformation or inappropriate competition (Volante, 2006). Other unintended consequences of improper reporting of results can include the possibility of narrowing curriculum by guiding what knowledge is measured, and by extension taught. This often means teachers may not emphasize subjects related to First Nation's culture that are supplementary to other subjects in the curriculum and thus not included in testing at the same levels.

One of the reasons for rejection of the Foundation Skills Assessment by the BC Teachers Federation is the manner in which organizations such as the Fraser Institute present the information. The Fraser Institute uses a number of indicators, based on a school's average scaled FSA performance to rank the performance of individual schools (Cowley & Easton, 2007). Reflecting the interconnection of politics and assessment, the Fraser Institute, a right wing political organization, uses assessment measures in an agenda noted as an

attempt to discredit public education in order to privatize the education system

(Cowley, July 17, 2007). As noted by Guppy and Davies (1999), "teacher's

unions have been reluctant to admit that confidence [in education systems] has

declined. Instead, they have pointed to "special interest groups," often the New

Right and religious groups, as the sole doubters of the merits of public education"

(p.278). In the *Report Card On Aboriginal Education in BC, 2006 Edition*, Cowley

and Easton (2006) argue that Aboriginal educational performance compared to

other Canadians can only improve if "Aboriginal Students' academic achievement

is regularly assessed and school-by-school results are publicly reported" (p.3).

Public debate has resulted in calls for the increased use of other

assessment methods to take precedent over large-scale assessment.

Assessment practices in British Columbia are changing and teachers recognize

the need for alternatives, or enhancement, to standardized testing methods. In

response, the Ministry of Education has created an assessment handbook series

devoted to student self-assessment, student centred conferences, performance

assessment and portfolio assessment (Ministry of Education, 1994). The range of

assessments, including notification of risk of failure, conferences, performance

based and standardized tests and written comments have expanded assessment

tools used in the public school system (Ungerleider, 2003). However,

assessment tools that carry the most weight are the standardized measures that

are typically publicized and that schools use to track performance.

2.5 Final Remarks

Parents perceptions of assessment are influenced by the images portrayed in the media and through political debate. As noted in this chapter, assessment is much larger than what takes place in the classroom, and is influenced by historical, social and political systems. As members of those systems, parents are active participants in assessment both acting to create and reacting to the information provided regarding assessment. The Lake Babine Nation is not exempt from the influence of philosophies of objectivity that permeate the climate of assessment and the methods used. The focus on large- scale assessment in this chapter is not to suggest that it is the only process of assessment, it is discussed as a means to demonstrate how social and political systems influence how we determine the best methods of assessing students. Parents' perceptions of assessment, including large- scale assessment, will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

3: CHAPTER THREE: THE LAKE BABINE NATION: WORLDVIEW AND EDUCATION

The role education plays in the lives of members of the Lake Babine

Nation has changed significantly with the introduction of Western economic,

cultural and social systems. The involvement of the Lake Babine peoples with

settlers and the Canadian state in the past two hundred years, and relationships

fostered continue to affect the worldview of the Lake Babine peoples.[38] The

concept of social imaginary, as termed by Taylor (2004), is very useful in

examining the changing worldview of the Lake Babine peoples and is important

to this discussion in terms of what Freire (2009) terms the "duality of the

oppressed" (p.55). Freire argues that often the oppressed "are contradictory,

divided beings shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression"

(p.55). The more those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture

and from themselves the more they take on the characteristics of the oppressor

and reflect the duality of their own and invading cultures. The social imaginary is

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[38] Earliest European residency in the Lake Babine Region is noted as circa 1822 (Fiske, 2000, p.36).

the manner in which people imagine their social existence and conceptualize their connection to others within the society (Taylor, 2004, p.23). The exploration of this notion is important to later discussion regarding parents' conceptions of assessment because social imaginary guides understanding and the present Lake Babine Nation worldview cannot be understood without explanation of the colonial history that has affected the nation. The colonial culture, and its oppressive nature, is embedded in the education system. To understand how education in Canada continues to suppress Lake Babine consciousness I must address the shaping of modern social imaginary.

This chapter will contribute to the dissertation by addressing the Lake Babine Nation social imaginary through a discussion of the spiritual, economic and political spheres present in contemporary Lake Babine moral order as a tool for examining parents' understanding of education and assessment. Freire (2009) argues "societies which are dual...invaded, and dependent…cannot develop because they are alienated; their political, economic and cultural decision-making power is located outside of themselves, in the invader society" (p.161). In keeping with the premise of this research, that quality research with First Nations must empower individuals and provide tools for resistance by increasing understanding of the impacts of colonization, the discussion provides an opportunity to address the historical influences on the Lake Babine Nation and their role in shaping the Nation's modern social imaginary. Battiste (2000) states, "Aboriginal consciousness cannot be maintained without first challenging the assumptions of modern society" (p.193). It is a useful tool in understanding the

establishment of a philosophical shift from community to individual focus and the

issues created when the shift in social imaginary remains in flux all of which

shapes how parents view the concept of education and the information it is

important for their children to learn.

Indigenous social imaginaries, including the Lake Babine Nation, are

unique and require analysis because they diverge from the Western social

imaginary largely because of the different historical circumstances of colonization

that continue to shape their worldview (Dussel, 1996, 2002). The understanding

of colonization and its impacts on the oppressed builds on the premise of this

research to be a tool of resistance, empowering the Lake Babine Nation. As

Freire (2009) indicates "the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly

critical and thus constantly less alienated" (p.81). Divergent worldviews play a

role in the manner in which parents view education and the education system in

general. Western society has forcefully placed notions of a just society over

Indigenous spiritual, political, economic and cultural systems already in existence

at the time of contact and while Indigenous nations have incorporated some

aspects, others are continually challenged because they remain too divergent

from Indigenous philosophy. The *Indian Act* (1876), the main piece of legislation

governing Canadian First Nations' people for the past 130 years, specifically

targets two areas of Indigenous society noted by Taylor (2004) as crucial to

modernity, economics (land ownership) and governance. This chapter examines

the historical impacts of colonization on Lake Babine systems, particularly

church, state and industrial alienation of the Nation from their economic, political,

spiritual and cultural systems in the twentieth century, and the attempts by the

Lake Babine Nation to reclaim their own social imaginary within a pluralistic

society.

3.1 The Lake Babine Nation

The people of the Lake Babine Nation, *Nedut'en,* have always lived along

Lake Babine. The lake extends approximately 177 kilometres in north-central

British Columbia (Fiske & Patrick, 2000). Prior to 1939, many members of the

Nation lived in the village of Old Fort, across the lake from the present village of

Granisle and the Lake Babine Nation community of Tachet. In the 1940s, the first

roads were built within Lake Babine territory and a number of families moved to

Topley Landing and Decker Lake where men worked on the railway. In 1956, the

Department of Indian Affairs moved the majority of members out of Fort Babine

and Pendelton Bay into Burns Lake in order to reduce the travel of officials,

improve housing and other services, and enable children to attend mission

schools. Prior to this period, many children missed school for part of the year

assisting their fathers with hunting and trapping (Fiske & Patrick, 2000).

The Lake Babine Nation currently has three communities inhabited year

round, only two of which are within their traditional territory (INAC, 2008). The

Lake Babine Nation comprises 2284 members and of this total, roughly 1500

people live on reserve while the remaining individuals reside in surrounding

communities as well as in distant cities (INAC 2008). The largest inhabited

community and administrative centre of the Lake Babine Nation, known as

Woyenne, is located 220 km west of Prince George within the Village of Burns Lake. Children in Burns Lake typically attend public school at Muriel Mould Primary School (Kindergarten to Grade 3), Decker Lake Elementary or William Konkin Elementary School (Grade 4 to 7). The community of Tachet is isolated, situated 12 kilometres from the community of Granisle, 100 kilometres east of Burns Lake. Children from the community of 130 permanent residents attend Babine Elementary- Secondary School located in Granisle[39]. Fort Babine is located at the northern tip of Babine Lake, approximately 100 kilometres north of Smithers. It is a small community with 60 year-round residents. Children attend a band run school in Fort Babine until Grade 7 at which time they travel to Smithers.

The Lake Babine Peoples, who are part of the larger Carrier Nation, speak a distinctive dialect of the Athapaskan language group (Fiske & Patrick, 2000). Lake Babine society is matrilineal, although men and women share important roles in the community. For example, both men and women inherit and are groomed to be healers as well as hereditary leaders (Holyk, Shawana & Adam, 2005). Lands and resources were the responsibility of hereditary leaders who effectively managed the resources within the clan system. The Lake Babine peoples relied, and continue to rely, specifically on the salmon harvest each summer and throughout the year supplemented their diet with large and small game and fresh water fish taken from the territory.[40]

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[39] At times there is a band run school which children attend but it was not open when the research was being completed.

[40] As noted by Fiske (2000), "changes in living patterns and resource harvesting have been continuous since the earliest colonial period" (p.34).

Lake Babine people maintain a governance system commonly referred to as the *bah'lats* or potlatch. Four primary clans make up Lake Babine society *Likh ji bu, Gilhanten, Jihl tse yu* and *Likh sta Mis yu* (Bear, Caribou, Frog, and Beaver respectively), each with several sub-clans. Generally, there is one head clansman for each primary clan and a hereditary chief who holds rank in the *bah'lats* as a wing chief represents each sub clan. These positions are passed down through family or clan lineages as well as the result of selections guided by clan Elders. The role of the head clansmen is varied and includes being main spokesperson for the clan they represent, looking after people's welfare, and providing direction to clan members.

The *bah'lats*, organized around the clan system, is the core economic, political, social, legal and spiritual institution of the Lake Babine peoples. While protocol is flexible and adaptive to the differing practices of each community, the guiding principles of the *bah'lats* system are shared among the communities. The *bah'lats* is inclusive of all members of the nation and all formal business in the *bah'lats* is conducted in an open and transparent environment where clan members (whether hereditary chiefs or not) are witnesses to transactions that occur. As witnesses, individuals are expected to commit to memory the details of transactions, and in the case of hereditary chiefs to recount through oral histories the transactions at future feasts when those transactions are relevant. The *bah'lats* brings together members of the community for major events such as birth, coming of age, taking of hereditary names, and death. It introduces children to the beliefs and workings of Lake Babine society and connects people to the

land. With its central role in all aspects of life, the *bah'lats* is a key component in fostering social obligation and civic responsibility.

3.2 Social Imaginary

In order to discuss the development of the present Lake Babine social imaginary, an explanation of Taylor's characterization of the modern social imaginary is needed. For Taylor (2004), the social imaginary is the manner in which people imagine their social existence and conceptualize their connection to others within the society. The social imaginary is the common understanding that is shared by the majority of citizens, guiding common practices and unconsciously reinforcing those practices as legitimate. The social imaginary provides individuals of a particular society with a "map of social space" that makes interaction between people possible, predictable, and understandable (Taylor, 2004, p.25). Taylor (2004) claims that the social imaginary "incorporates a sense of the normal expectations we have of each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life" (p.24). The understanding of the group is both factual, in terms of the explicit rules of how things should function, and normative, in terms of unconscious ideal of what action ought to be. Within the moral order created, the group has a sense of not only what is right but also the context of what makes these norms realizable and in turn worth striving for (Taylor, 2004). The moral order conveys how individuals ought to live together in society and the social imaginary assists in providing individuals with the internal framework that make

society seem just. The social imaginary is what enables the practices of society through the common understanding of the moral order.

The social imaginary, which is socially imbedded, meaning those within a society cannot imagine themselves outside of a certain matrix, can be shifted as new theories and knowledge systems are introduced. Such a phenomenon is what Taylor describes as the modern social order, which is based on individualism as opposed to community-centred organization. According to Taylor (2004), our first self-understanding was deeply imbedded in a social construct; our essential identity was as a father, a son, and a member of a clan, community and nation. It is a recent phenomenon that we consider ourselves as individuals within a community and this process involved a profound change in our moral world. In Western Society the self-understanding of identity and one's role within society, which today offers unprecedented primacy to the individual is what Taylor (2004) terms the "Great disembedding" (p.50). According to Taylor, the collective nature of community and the internal and unconscious connection between each person, the community, and the cosmos has been displaced by an understanding of society as made up of individuals who are part of a community. Each individual has relationships to the community as a whole and to personal devotion in which religion is separated from the developing secular world of the economy, public space, and the self-governing individual.

Lake Babine social imaginary continues to adapt, experiencing an ever-increasing adoption of certain concepts such individualism that reflect changes in economic and governance structure in community. However, the process is not

entirely realized.[41] As with society as a whole, the more the Lake Babine are alienated from the spirit of their own culture, market economics continue to seep into the Lake Babine system and disrupt values including the concept of community and the guiding principle of reciprocity. The introduction of private interest is beginning to take precedent over common good and has the potential to depose the cultural, spiritual and political traditions the Lake Babine society is built upon[42].

In traditional Lake Babine social systems an individual acts not necessarily to maximize her own potential but as a public minded member of a community (Denis, 1997). As Taylor (2004) notes, if individuals imagine their social existence as actions on behalf of the whole society, which is the case for Lake Babine philosophy as well as economic and political systems, the social imaginary informs the individual's sense of self in relation to others. The philosophical basis of Lake Babine social order is that people are connected to each other and their environment. This connection results in obligations to maintain balance within society beyond individual interests such that if a person is balanced he/she is in a position to fulfil his/her responsibilities to the whole.

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[41] This is not to suggest that concepts of individualism did not exist prior to contact as noted by Shawana in his discussion of private and public knowledge among the Carrier Peoples (Shawana 2007). It is too simplistic to suggest communitarian notions are the sole concept and may suggest why certain aspects of Western systems have been adopted while others are still challenged.

[42] The education system reinforces Western values and practices that at times are opposed to Carrier philosophy. For example, the competitive hierarchical structure of schools, and assessment that emphasizes individualism, is foreign to Carrier values and a direct threat to the importance of community (Nelson-Barber & Trumbull, 2009). The use of competition as opposed to cooperative learning models, place students at a disadvantage by forcing them to learn in an environment that challenges their worldview. The value of community is discussed by parents in greater detail in chapter 5.

Maintaining group balance is in the best interest of the individual, so community and individual interests are one in the same. In Lake Babine culture, everyone has a role in the community and makes decisions to provide maximum benefit to the group. For example, when a community member is experiencing problems, setting the problem right is a concern of the whole community and community supports, such as Medicine people and Hereditary Chiefs, are responsible for restoring balance on behalf of the entire community (Denis, 1997). Particularly in times of crisis the community works together in order to support those requiring assistance. For example, mechanisms such as the *bah'lats* ensure the redistribution of goods when people are in need (such as when a family member passes away).

While the philosophical base of Lake Babine culture is still intact, it is interesting to trace shifts in Western social imaginary and the manner in which those in the West began to see European philosophical traditions as the pinnacle achievement of society. The developmental shifts in the Western social imaginary foreshadow the manner in which colonizers viewed and treated First Nations upon contact, as well as how Lake Babine society continues to address living within dual worldviews.[43] The transformation of Western social imaginary, including the Renaissance notion of civility in Europe, drives the assumption that "those who lack excellences, refinements and the importance of achievements valued in western society" are savage and in need of refinement (Taylor 2004,

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[43] While I speak of two worldviews this is not meant to be entirely dichotomous as this research suggests no worldview is static or universal leaving room for internal disagreements and shifts as new conceptions arise.

p.35)[44]. Roughly six centuries ago a number of reform movements in Western

Europe led to some significant changes in society and in the social imaginary of

European societies. The notion of civility, reflecting the transition that European

societies were undergoing beginning in 1400, was seen as the result of taming of

the originally wild, raw nature. According to Taylor (2004), this process continued

for roughly four centuries until by 1800 a normal civilized society was determined

to be one that ensured continued domestic peace, where commerce had

replaced war as the paramount activity of the state.

While an extensive discussion of European transformation is beyond the

scope of this chapter, it is important to mention a number of systems of control

including religious reform, indoctrination in ethics of industriousness, production

and moral refinement because they are particularly analogous to views that were

later imposed on Indigenous peoples of North America (Taylor, 2004, p.44). In

Europe, the push for civility in all spheres meant imposing features of the ideal of

civility on an increasing segment of the population in order to provide a self-

understanding of sociability, ideals and the training required to fulfil their roles.

Examples of moral refinement noted by Taylor (2004) are particularly

enlightening regarding the treatment of First Nations centuries later. For

example, Erasmus condemned the Carnival he saw in Siena in 1509 as

"unchristian" on the grounds it contained traces of ancient paganism and the over

indulgence of individuals (the same argument made against the *Bah'lats*) (Taylor,

2004, p.43). Governments and church authorities came down hard, attempting to

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[44] The assumption of cultural superiority of European worldviews are built into the current
education policy. Curriculum projects European knowledge as universal, normative and
supreme (Battiste, 2000, p.193).

eradicate such public displays. In Lake Babine territory, Oblates emphasized the repression of undesired behaviour through close supervision and harsh public punishments including whipping, confinement and public confession. Father Morice, a Catholic Priest who served in Carrier territory from 1885 until 1905, insisted on public confession and denied confession to anyone who attended a *bah'lats*. Morice also refused to visit the community of Fort Babine on various occasions because members were known to have participated in the *bah'lats* (Fiske & Patrick, 2000).

In much the same manner as the "rod of Circe" was used in Europe to "tameth both man and beast that are touched therewith, whereby each one is brought in awe and due obedience where before they were all fierce and unruly," upon settlement in North America First Nations people were believed to be in need of discipline in order to make them human according to Western conceptions of civilization (Justus Lipsius as cited in Taylor 2004, p.38). Colonizers did not see First Nations, such as the Lake Babine Nation, as being distinct culturally and politically but rather as connected to nature and lacking civility. Western doctrine was premised on the notion that in order to become complete citizens individuals must be trained, disciplined and formed. It was believed this training was based on severe discipline in order to tame raw nature. As Taylor (2004) notes, "the child embodies the "natural" condition of lawlessness and has to be made over" (p.39). These new forms of discipline include moral, economic, religious and political intervention.

In order to intervene, Taylor (2004) indicates, "reforming states saw religion as a very good source of discipline and churches as handy instruments" (p.39). In North America, the churches also saw this as a beneficial partnership because it opened access to society and individuals, particularly children, deemed in need of intervention and conversion. The First Priest to visit Carrier territory was Father Demers who travelled to Stoney Creek and Fort St. James in 1842 (Munro, 1945). Father John Nobili entered Lake Babine territory three years later bringing the Gospel message. As one example of the attempted conversion to Western systems, Father Nobili endeavoured to abolish the Carrier custom of cremating their dead (Munro, 1945).

Spiritual recovery and rescue of civil order were intrinsically linked and church officials argued First Nations were "handicapped by the lack of effective discipline in economic, moral and socially helpful habits" (Kelm, 1998, p.63). One important aspect of the strategy for discipline was targeted at First Nations' children. Education, and the residential school was seen as a means of producing cultural conformity designed to produce civilized individuals well suited for their particular social roles (Kelm, 1998). Residential school officials were convinced that strict obedience to a rigid routine would produce disciplined workers and assimilated citizens. Lejac Residential School opened in Carrier territory in 1922 and remained an instrument of attempted assimilation for roughly 50 years (Fiske, 1981).

The Federal government joined forces with the church to Christianize and civilize First Nations children by supplying funding as well as creating legislation

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designed to make attendance at residential schools compulsory (Kelm, 1998). A report by Nicolas Davin, which was commissioned by the Federal government after the enactment of the *Indian Act* and led to the establishment of the residential schools, provides insight into the position of the government. Davin strongly recommended residential schooling suggesting that First Nations' children could be best educated apart from their parents and bush life placing them in institutions where values, language and culture of the Western nations would predominate (Kelm, 1998). Focusing on the child and his embodiment of the natural Davin indicated, "if anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young" (as cited in Haig-Brown, 1995, p.51). The Canadian government removed children from their homes and communities and subjected them to pedagogy designed to demean their culture and provide discourse regarding the superiority of Western worldviews (Kelm, 1998).

Administrators, attempting to shift the worldview of First Nations children, did not allow for open dialogue within Lake Babine society. Administrators only allowed parents to visit with their children for two and one half hours per week while their children attended residential school at Lejac and all visits were supervised (Fiske, 1981). Visits were also restricted solely to parents or guardians further challenging the role of extended family and elders in the translation of knowledge. The denial of extended families and communities resulted in a rupture in the connection between youth and knowledge holders.

The heart of any society, children, were forcibly removed from the community. Without support from extended families and community, the physical,

emotional, sexual and cultural abuses that occurred required children to turn inward, and resulted in dependence on self. The abuse resulted in a survivor mentality where individuals retreated from the public sphere and avoided sharing culture and language. The lack of cultural understanding among younger community members is considered a critical area of concern and has significant implications for the development of Lake Babine social imaginary. Elders believe the younger generations do not understand or practice their culture while the younger generation expresses a willingness to learn and is disappointed at not being taught such important aspects as the language and worldview.

3.3 Spirituality and Worldview

The fundamental feature of Lake Babine philosophy was, and continues to be, that all of life is a manifestation of spirituality. As noted in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) speaking more generically regarding First Nations philosophy but equally reflecting of Lake Babine worldview, "we come from spirit; we live and move surrounded by spirit; and when we leave this life we return to the spirit world. All perceptions are conditioned by spiritual forces, and all actions have repercussions in spiritual reality" (as cited in Denis, 1997, p.14). In Lake Babine worldview every aspect of the environment is alive and filled with spirit and worthy of great respect. It is how people behave and how they integrate which creates a vision of society where every member has a role and a sense of value. The Lake Babine people share a belief in the existence of unseen powers and a number of customs are performed in this

regard (Aasen, 1992). In Lake Babine tradition, spiritual life is intrinsically linked with the social life and is reflected in procedures that connect spiritual and physical practice. Lake Babine behaviour is conducted in relation to spiritual energy. The Lake Babine people believe whatever energy is expressed, good or bad, will be visited on the individual in the future. This belief guides the respect demonstrated towards all other beings including practices performed prior to activities such as hunting designed to demonstrate respect (Holyk, Adam & Shawana, 2005).

Contrary to the primacy placed on the individual in Western society, Lake Babine spirituality and worldview create a sense of place that connects all individuals guided by the ancestors through a shared history, language and culture. This deep-rooted shared existence provides a moral code for ways of being through common action (Denis, 1997). In Lake Babine spirituality, individuals relate to the creator and other spirits as a society (Taylor, 2004). According to Taylor (2004), growing up in a world where the social imaginary accepts the shared existence with spiritual forces sets limits on one's sense of self, embedding individuals in society as well as the cosmos.

The attempted removal of Lake Babine worldview and spirituality can thus been seen as an attack on the Lake Babine concept of community. Spirituality and in particular the removal of spiritual forces in favour of a rational order was one of the key objectives of the shift from natural to civil order (Taylor, 2004). The Lake Babine inseparably link spiritual life with social life and the church worked hard to dispose of Carrier concepts of spirituality. As noted by Fiske & Patrick

(2000), "the Babine did not necessarily deem transgressions to be an affront to spiritual obligations, as did the Roman Catholics, but saw them as an expression of disregard for the code of respect that define appropriate interactions" (p.152). Christianity played a large role in the shift in conception from family, clan and community obligation challenging individuals to leave such spheres and accept their individual place in the kingdom of Heaven. According to Taylor (2004), we see this reflected in the manner churches operated "where one was not simply a member by virtue of birth but had to join by answering a personal call" (p.62). Similarly, in accepting the Christian religion, First Nations first had to denounce all traditional forms of spirituality in order to be accepted into the church (Kelm, 1998). Thus, what was required of members was a denouncement of community in favour of personal salvation. In practice, priests did not provide last rites to those who did not denounce Lake Babine practice and often prevented individuals from being buried in the church graveyard.

The Lake Babine nation struggled to reconcile their spirituality with Christianity and often shifted between belief systems depending on the context. According to Jenness (1934), the supernatural world has not been abolished but rather the community added a second layer of religion and incorporated knowledge of the Christian religion within traditional system (as cited in Aasen, 1992). The Lake Babine never intended to abandon their own philosophies but rather integrate Christian concepts and practices into their own belief system (Fiske, 2000). In this manner the Babine were defining the formation of a new social imaginary. However the Lake Babine social imaginary continues to be

developed as the Lake Babine balance incongruencies between Western and traditional philosophical traditions including divergent views of economics, spirituality and governance (Taylor, 2004). Elders typically recognize that Lake Babine society was not secularized in the past and want self-governance to contain aspects of spirituality (Aasen, 1992).

3.4 Governance

The principle shift in spirituality within Western societies is guided by the view that Modernism, society's political self-making, can and will bring about fundamental human emancipation through systems of governance structured around the secular. According to Taylor (2004), the transformed social imaginary shifts focus from the spiritual realm, to a vision that elections are the only source of legitimate power. The process removes the Creator, or more generally the spiritual from the centre of human life and replaces it with society, which maximizes individual freedom by providing security and prosperity[45] (Taylor, 2004). The process of popular sovereignty, or self-rule renders individual's lives and property safe under the law. The system becomes so embedded in the social imaginary of the society that the state is able to maintain its claim to the legitimate legal authority, enforced by police, judges, social workers and courts as well as by consent of equal citizens (Denis, 1997). However, members of the Lake Babine view those seen as the legitimate legal authority in Western society as actors in the process of cultural invasion (Freire, 2009).

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[45] This again can be seen as an attack on community by providing Individual rights.

The Canadian state that regarded the Lake Babine peoples as lacking

political systems, based on the manner in which the Lake Babine system

opposed the concept of liberalism and the state imposed Western political,

cultural and economic systems over existing systems. By the 1890s Fiske (2000)

notes that the government was taking an active judicial role in the affairs of the

Lake Babine peoples. In 1880, the federal Department of Indian Affairs was

created and empowered the Superintendent General to impose the elected band

council system on any band he determined to be ready (Tobias, 1991, p.133).

The new regulations incorporated into the *Indian Act* also state that once

implemented only those elected according to the provisions of the *Indian Act*

were enabled to speak on behalf of the band, attempting to eradicate hereditary

leadership. In 1884, the *Indian Act* further extended the ability of the

Superintendent to direct political affairs, including the ability to call and supervise

elections, as well as call and supervise band meetings. In recognition that many

nations were electing traditional leaders, the *Indian Act* allowed the

superintendent to dismiss any leader he determined to be incompetent or

immoral (Tobias, 1991). This piece of legislation was often used to remove

hereditary leaders or anyone not following the direction of the Indian Agent. In a

continued attack on the hereditary system, the *Indian Act* also banned the

potlatch because "they promoted pagan beliefs and were anathema to the

development of a concept of private property" (Tobias, 1991, p.135).

Contrary to Western views of Lake Babine governance, Lake Babine

history recognizes the integration of the *Bah'lats* as a method of preserving

peace at a time when civil unrest between nations was at a peak. The Lake

Babine determined the distribution of food and gifts at a *bah'lats* as a method of

maintaining reciprocal obligations and providing economic balance within society

as well as a method of witnessing business of the nation. The Lake Babine

people regard the system as transparent because all business is conducted in an

open forum. Transparency within Lake Babine society requires discourse, which

is defined publicly and continually repeated and acknowledged through group

process. The government was concerned about assembly and attempted to

abolish the *bah'lats* because as Freire (2009) notes, "cultural revolution develops

the practice of permanent dialogue between leaders and people" (p.160). The

hereditary system reflects egalitarian values in that even the most powerful chief

will not act without consulting wing chiefs and clan members prior to decisions

being made. As such, the system provides the Lake Babine nation with a means

to maintain order and reciprocal economic exchange.

3.5 Economics

While Lake Babine and Western systems place importance on organized

society through governance as well as economic exchange, the philosophical

underpinnings differ dramatically. In Western systems of economics, concepts

including maximizing individual benefit began to play a central role in social

stability with the shift to the liberal ethic. According to Taylor (2004), "because the

whole theory emphasized a kind of profitable exchange, one could begin to see a

political society itself through a quasi-economic metaphor" (p.71). Leadership in

Western societies determined that the path to peace and orderly existence was through economic activity. Taylor (2004) notes, "the more a society turns to commerce, the more polished and civilized it becomes, the more it excels in the arts of peace" (p.74). Both Lake Babine concepts of connection based mutual obligation and the commercial, Western system provided connection through interlocking activities of production, exchange and consumption that created reliance on individuals within society (Taylor, 2004).

Post Enlightenment, this translated into an increased emphasis on productive and material features of society that support individuals in maximizing their potential for the benefit of society as a whole. The basic normative principle is premised on the individual within society. Personal independence is a moral ideal maintained by the fact that "disciplined, honest imaginative entrepreneurial people were seen as the cornerstone of the new society, which combined order and progress" (Taylor, 2004, p.150). In theory, supporters of the Western economic paradigm suggest individuals serve each other's needs, help each other, and behave like rational and social creatures in order to maximize their own potential; in doing so, the society or collective benefits (Taylor, 2004).

Within the Lake Babine economic system, the clan system managed and protected resources. The clan, through hereditary leadership, provided a means for ownership and sharing of resources within and outside of the membership (Hudson, 1983, p.58). Each clan had several title-holders who controlled access to resources on behalf of the clan. The resources of other clans could only be obtained through sharing (allowing access to territory) or exchange (formal trade)

(Hudson, 1983). Title meant the ability to use a particular resource area and the capacity to utilize the land meant drawing on the labour of all clan members thus creating a system of interdependence. In addition to clan interdependence the cyclical nature of resources and production of higher salmon yields on various river systems depending on their cycle, required an escalating dependence on other clans in order to survive. The dependence created obligations and respectful relations with members of the nation including a considerable emphasis placed on reciprocity and support. Such obligations were reduced with changes to Lake Babine economic system.

The transformation of the Lake Babine economic system began during the fur trade but was accelerated as trapping companies gained access to trapping territories and wage labour became part of the Lake Babine economic base (Hudson, 1983). While the Lake Babine actively participated in trade during the early period of contact, this was done while still maintaining their property rights, laws and social structures. They were active in trade with other nations prior to contact so the fur trade extended these relations. However, with settlement Hudson indicates, "economically, the region became integrated into an expanding industrial capitalism, which replaced mercantile interests" (Hudson, 1983, p.106). The establishment of registered trap lines, placed over existing territories of the Hereditary Chiefs undermined the power of the Lake Babine system. Clan leaders lost control over resource use as trap line registration shifted land to individual or family trapping groups. Even when clan leaders attempted to rectify this by registering their hereditary lands, often the land

allotment, cut as square blocks on the territory did not match the natural geographic features of hereditary territories and issues of overlap between hereditary territories became an issue. The Lake Babine also had to compete with non-Indigenous peoples for access to land and resources placing further strain on Lake Babine economic and political systems by forcing individuals out of their own territories taken by non-indigenous peoples and forcing them to compete for other clan territories. Matrilineal property rights, tracing your lineage through the female line, and the hereditary system of governance was undermined because of trap line registration strictly to men.

Pressure by the church and government further destabilized the matrilineal inheritance rights to estates dramatically affecting not only the role of the passing on of hereditary names but also the rights of citizens (Hudson, 1983). Under the direction of the Catholic Church, families were to be male headed and men were reminded "in the family it is the father who is the master" (Morice as cited in Fiske 1981, p.92). The Oblates assumed in order to "become thorough Christians and imitate the whites they must sacrifice nearly all their social institutions and customs… [including] heredity through the female line" (Morice as cited in Fiske, 1981, p.92). As such, matrilineal systems were forcibly challenged and effort was made to institute paternal systems.

Economically, the power of the hereditary system was increasingly challenged through federal government restrictions on fishing methods. Under pressure to eliminate interior salmon fishing by First Nations, the federal government challenged the Lake Babine use of fish weirs and traps (Hudson,

1983). In 1905 through 1907 fisheries officers destroyed Lake Babine fishing weirs and in 1907 members of the nation were arrested (p.107). According to Fiske & Patrick (2000), "the struggle over fishing rights clearly illustrates the most dramatic loss of legal authority suffered by the hereditary chiefs since the inception of the anti-potlatch law of 1884" (p.167). The compensation received through the Barricade Treaty did not achieve social goals of Lake Babine including respect and reciprocity. Seizure of their fish and other natural resources discounted and disempowered the laws of the *bah'lats* and the role of Hereditary Chiefs responsible for the protection of their territories (Fiske & Patrick, 2000).

The act of destroying fish weirs had an important impact on the emphasis placed on reciprocity and support. The elimination of weirs at Lake Babine meant the virtual cessation of trade and the end to the use of Lake Babine for surplus fish production; thus forcing individuals into wage labour. Similarly, the government further emphasized individual labour through government provision of farming implements, nets and protection of fishing stations in exchange for the dismantling of weirs (Hudson, 1983). Through direct government intervention "the collective labour required to erect and maintain the weirs was replaced by family-owned means of fishing production" (Hudson, 1983, p.108). With weirs banned, the clan-based production was no longer as effective in resource use and local groups began to move seasonally across various watersheds to produce rather than trade resources needed.

Despite the influences of capital, the Lake Babine system was able to adapt to a large extent and redistributive mechanisms continue to operate.

Hunting, trapping and fishing remain integral to Lake Babine social systems and the hereditary system has adapted to meet challenges imposed on their authority. The wage economy has resulted in cash and commercial goods becoming a key component of the *bah'lats* system while the core values have remained intact.[46] As noted by Taylor, "new imaginary doesn't just displace the old one. It reinterprets the key values of the older tradition but retains the sense of its origin in its earlier tradition" (p.153).

3.6 Reclaiming Social Imaginary

Just as Western social imaginary has been shaped by war, revolution and economic change, the Lake Babine Social imaginary is largely a response to and transformation of practices resulting from both colonization and the attempts to decolonize. Colonization has played a large role in developing the Lake Babine vision of their place within time and space as well as characteristics that establish the Lake Babine peoples as a nation. The racism faced by First Nations in the general population made the ideal of individual equality easy to challenge by the Lake Babine who remained on the margins and thus still required a sense of community. Taylor (2004) contends, "one of the most powerful narrative modes centres around the nation" (p. 176). The Lake Babine peoples are believed to belong together "in virtue of common language, common culture, common religion, or history of common action" (Taylor, 2004, p.177). The past two hundred years of contact have fundamentally shaped Lake Babine knowledge of

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[46] It is a constant struggle for leadership to ensure the values and systems remain intact.

their relation to other nations as well as their history. One of the paramount victories seen by the Lake Babine Nation is that despite all of the attempts at cultural destruction from the outside the nation is still intact and behind the political nation stands a pre-existing cultural nation.

One important aspect of the development of Lake Babine social imaginary is the reclamation of the public sphere. As Taylor (2004) notes,

> the public sphere is a common space in which members of a society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face to face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus be able to form a common mind about these (p.83).

In the public sphere, widely separated people sharing the same view are linked through a space of discussion, wherein they are able to exchange ideas with others and reach common understanding (Taylor, 2004). While forums of public discussion involve various mediums, the *bah'lats* has remained a central institution in the maintenance of common interests. The *bah'lats* is a common space in which people come together to celebrate and witness major events and engage in common purposes such as assumption of hereditary names, rites of passage, acknowledgement of death and resolution of disputes. The *bah'lats* system and its importance in the creation of a national identity is guarded as not only an example of the perseverance of the Lake Babine peoples but also as a core institution in the preservation of Lake Babine identity and thus social imaginary. As one elder noted "we have more in common than our differences. We all follow our mother's clan. We all belong to clans and we can have pride in that" (as cited in Aasen, 1992, p.64). It is a core tool in the perpetuation of the Lake Babine dialect and culture. The *bah'lats* provides a key link to the ancestors

and fosters social obligation and civic responsibility through maintenance of reciprocal obligation between clan members.

The Lake Babine continue to cope with incompatibilities between Lake Babine values and those of the Western society as their own social imaginary is formed. With the *bah'lats* as a core feature of the Lake Babine social imaginary, there is concern that a shift to a solely western system of governance will result in a loss of Lake Babine culture and identity. As noted by Fiske & Patrick (2000), "contemporary customary law has emerged from a series of struggles over meaning, morality, and spirituality as an integrated phenomenon that takes meaning from a political and economic environment that is profoundly different from the one in which it originated" (p.176). Problems in modelling government arise when Lake Babine leaders attempt to translate Lake Babine institutions into systems found in state society (Aasen, 1992). The *bah'lats* has clearly been impacted by traders, missionaries and the appointment of democratically elected leaders in Lake Babine communities and continues to develop as the Lake Babine social imaginary is formed and reformed.

3.7 Final Remarks

The Lake Babine Nation has been impacted by spiritual, political, economic and cultural systems that have shaped the Western world and have been introduced, if not imposed on the Lake Babine peoples. As noted, in this analysis the Lake Babine continue to reconcile their worldview with Western ways of knowing. In doing so, the Lake Babine social imaginary continues to

evolve, as issues of historical and contemporary life are reconciled in theory and practice. The Western concept of a modern social imaginary has not fully become imbedded in Lake Babine society because the Lake Babine still live in a pluralistic society where traditional concepts and Western ideologies conflict. As such, the Lake Babine social order is complex and people rely on traditional Lake Babine systems when a situation deems the system appropriate and Western concepts when dealing with situations where Western ideology is appropriate. Freire (2009) argues "The solution is not to "integrate" [the oppressed] into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves" (p.74). The Lake Babine people continue to develop their social imaginary while being influenced by the dominant Western system, which is pervasive in their lives. The Lake Babine moral order continues to struggle with the cognitive imperialism used to challenge or disclaim their knowledge base and values. However, the Lake Babine social imaginary is not static and continues to develop as new concepts are introduced from various sources including other Indigenous nations. Discussion in this chapter reflects the historical and cultural complexity of the Lake Babine Nation and the multiple social imaginaries that are now present within the Nation (Lemert, 1994). This analysis creates an understanding of how divergent histories and worldviews influence the Lake Babine Nation parents' understanding of education and assessment within the school system. As I note in later chapters, parents demonstrate the flux between Western and Lake Babine worldviews when discussing subjects required by their children and assessment methods.

The Lake Babine Nation social imaginary continues to be formed and reformed due to the influence of other societies and the reconciliation of the colonization process. The battle against colonial processes has resulted in a number of conflicts within LBN society including individual vs. community, hereditary governance vs. elected leadership, and Catholicism vs. Carrier Spirituality. The uniqueness of LBN society supports Taylor's statement,

> If we define modernity in terms of the spread of the modern bureaucratic state, market economies, science, and technology, it is easy to go on nourishing the illusion that modernity is a single process destined to occur everywhere in the same forms, ultimately bringing convergence and uniformity to our world. Whereas my foundational hunch is that we have to speak of "multiple modernities," different ways of erecting and animating the institutional forms that are becoming inescapable (p.195).

4: CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

4.1 History of Research in Indigenous Communities

The history of research in Indigenous communities is important to acknowledge because it shapes the community perception of research and willingness of community members to engage in the process. Culturally respectful research includes an understanding of the distinct nature of First Nations communities, as opposed to pan-Indian approaches, as well as the historical context of research in First Nations communities (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2007). According to Steinhauer (2002), Indigenous research methods must emphasize "the social, historical and political contexts which shape [First Nations'] experiences, lives, positions and futures" (p.72). The colonial history imposed on First Nations, including the Lake Babine Nation, reflects a legacy of cultural disruption and trauma that continues to influence communities (Caldwell et al., 2005). The historical circumstances of First Nations peoples and their contact with Western systems, including research and the role it has played in the colonization process, affect the manner in which researchers

must conduct ethical research. Research cannot be carried out in indigenous communities without "understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply imbedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices" (Smith, 1999, p.2). A parallel relationship exists between the historical treatment of First Nations and the research methods used to study them.

Understanding of contemporary communities requires knowledge of the history of First Nations including the dispossession of lands and attempted eradication of First Nations culture, political systems, language and spirituality as well as the role research played in facilitating such processes (Caldwell et al., 2005). Research during the contact period, conducted by both explorers and researchers reflects a justification for European expansionism and the devaluing of Indigenous Knowledge. Research, informed by ideology, legitimated the policies and practices of Western governments and the imposition of decisions affecting every aspect of First Nations' lives. The research legitimated the attempted destruction of culture and expropriation of lands (Smith, 1999).

Formal research completed since the 19th century typically legitimated the status quo. Following premises reflected in the *Indian Act* legislation researchers and policy makers were external to First Nations communities.[47] In addition, while First Nations populations have been continually researched, their health, social and legal status continues to fall below other Canadians (Kendall, 2009). The dominant culture dictated questions derived from outside of the community with research being done to rather than with the communities. Researchers have at

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[47] The *Indian Act* indicates the responsibility of Federal Government for Indians and Lands reserved for Indians.

times regarded communities as a source of data with research questions and results creating no local benefit to the community, and in some cases harming the peoples involved (St. Denis, 1992). The presentation of inaccurate or insensitive research has caused stigmatization or legitimization of the status quo regarding the perception of First Nations within the dominant culture. Researchers have also either unwittingly or unethically placed sensitive knowledge of flora and fauna in the public domain, providing information to corporations or other bodies who use Indigenous knowledge for financial gain without any obligation to return the benefits to the community (St. Denis, 1992). Many researchers have collected data without the full knowledge and consent of participants or respect for the culture and individuals being studied (Caldwell et al., 2005). On occasion, researchers have taken the cultural property and human remains of First Nations for exhibition or sale. Within Carrier Sekani Family Services specifically, of which Lake Babine Nation is a member, there have been a number of ethical breaches including publishing information without consent, researching without agreement by the nation, attempts to control ownership of community information and research conducted without informed consent of participants (Holyk, 2008). As a result, First Nations' communities regard research as a pillar for the regulation and realization of colonization and many individuals regard research with mistrust and apprehension.

Despite the problems associated with the past conduct of researchers, research when done with respect and community-driven, has become a tool of resistance, addressing social issues within the context of self-determination. First

Nations organizations, including Carrier Sekani Family Services have developed policies regarding the practice of research involving their nations, demanding control of research activities and knowledge produced (Smith, 1999). Community organizations recognize the importance of research in informing decision-making, improving programming and designing programs that meet the needs of the community members they serve. Carrier Sekani Family Services developed ethics guidelines for research in order to ensure research reflects the interests of the community, is culture specific and brings direct benefit to the community.

4.2 Research Framework and Priorities

One of the core goals of the research was to exemplify methods of respectful research in First Nations communities. As a result, the research involved the community in all stages of research conception and design. I determined the central questions of the research through consultation with leadership of the Lake Babine Nation. Out of that process, two questions were generated:

What do Lake Babine Nation parents of Grade 4 children deem as important indicators of their children's achievement in school? And,

What do Lake Babine Nation parents understand related to their children's academic assessment?

In order to address these questions I used a qualitative approach to research applying conventional methods of data collection, specifically

participatory action research (utilizing interviews as the primary data collection method), while maintaining Carrier First Nations' values, practices and methods (see Table 1).

Table 1. Carrier First Nations Values, Practices and Methods Utilized

	Actions Taken
Respect for Participants	• Anonymity of Participants was protected by protecting access and dissemination of personal information and not including information that identified smaller communities where there were few participants. • Participants signed a consent form and agreed to interview being recorded • Participants were given a copy of transcripts to ensure accuracy and remove anything they did not want included. • Honorarium (50 dollar gift certificate to local food store) provided to show respect for participation and information provided. • Lake Babine Nation (LBN) Steering Committee reviewed results for accuracy of information, quotes used, information that should be omitted or altered to protect participants or First Nation
Benefit of the Research	• Engaged community leaders in discussion regarding an education research topic of interest to the community • LBN Steering Committee Agreement to the benefits of the research

Direct involvement of Community	• Participatory Research Methods • Engagement of Community Leadership • Involvement of LBN Steering Committee (comprised of Carrier parents, elected and hereditary leadership, youth and education professionals) • Involvement of an LBN Research Assistant.
Information Provided to Community	• Meetings with Chief • Transcripts provided to participants • Presentations at various stages to LBN Steering Committee • Conference presentation where numerous community members were in attendance • Community Presentation • Copy of final report provided to Chief and Council and member of LBN Steering Committee
Originality of the Research Proposed	• Views of parents regarding assessment have not previously been completed in LBN • LBN Steering Committee agreed to the usefulness of the project • Chief and LBN Steering Committee reviewed and altered proposed questions
Increasing Community Capacity to Complete Research	• Youth included on the LBN Steering Committee to learn research methods • Community Based Research Assistant trained
Management of Research Materials	• Research Protocol defined the roles and responsibilities of myself and community and established policy for ownership, control, access and possession of research materials

Qualitative research is an interpretive method in which researchers attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people, or a group of people, bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research begins with the acknowledgement that there is a gap in our understanding and that clarification or illumination will be of benefit. Qualitative research does not necessarily provide definitive explanations but it does raise awareness and increase insight. The methods provide rich and personalized information leading to a more complex understanding of the factors involved, in this case, indigenous education, specifically within the Lake Babine Nation (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). My experience working with Lake Babine members has taught me they welcome the opportunity to tell their story and qualitative methods provide the opportunity for participants to express their voice.

In addition to meeting all research ethics requirements at Simon Fraser University, this research adopted guiding principles and processes from the Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) Research Ethics Policy, which outlines community perspectives regarding the conduct of research. The guiding principle of the CSFS Research Ethics Policy is respect, specifically respect for participants and their informed consent to participate in research, protection of their confidentiality and protection of intellectual property and cultural integrity of information provided. As noted, "Carrier Sekani Family Services shall protect the (cultural, mental, spiritual, physical, emotional) interests of participants throughout the research process" (CSFS, 2004, p.2). Researchers carrying out research in Carrier communities are responsible to the communities for engaging

in research in a respectful and ethical manner that adheres to the specific protocol of each Carrier First Nation. The basic tenet of the research process involving Carrier First Nations is that the research must benefit the community directly. I incorporated this principle in a number of ways outlined in the research design below and noted in Table 1.

4.3 Sample Overview- Building Lasting Relationships

I chose the Lake Babine Nation as the community for this study for substantive and methodological reasons. Communities have often criticized researchers for their methods of conducting research because they enter the community, collect their data and are never heard from again (Brizinski 1993; St. Denis, 1992). I have built lasting relationships with the Lake Babine Nation professionally and personally over many years, having engaged in research with the Lake Babine Nation since 2003 when I conducted research with the community on a community needs assessment used to structure child welfare services. The community is also a participant in ongoing youth suicide research of which I am involved. Working closely with the community on an ongoing basis provided opportunity to consult with leadership of the Lake Babine Nation and develop a research question that was mutually important.

Personally, I have developed close relationships with community members and I, as well as my wife and children, actively participate in *bah'lats* and cultural activities, supporting the trust and responsibility necessary to conduct research in First Nations communities. Participation in cultural activities on an ongoing

basis, rather than only when associated with research, supports the idea that I am involved with the community and will not disappear after receiving the research information. It is a commitment to participating with the community in all aspects of culture to gain an understanding of Lake Babine ways, thus improving the work completed and building an understanding of the sensitivities and values needed to do this research humbly and respectfully.

The relationship provides unique opportunity and responsibility that add value to my scholarship. Living and working in the community creates obligations to ensure the accuracy of the information and produce a document that has local benefit. The trust also provides an environment where individuals feel open to speak because they know I will respect the information and I have a community responsibility to use the information in a manner that will do no harm to the participants. This method of research creates an important dynamic of being both an insider in some regards as well as an outsider.

With 2282 members, the Lake Babine Nation is the largest Carrier First Nation, one of the largest Bands in Northern British Columbia, and has enough members to provide a sample for this research. My goal is to create a community specific study that may have implications for other nations, following the principle that Indigenous knowledge is community specific. I am critical of studies and programs that suggest a Pan-Indian approach that devalues the richness in diversity of the First Nations of British Columbia. Even within Carrier territory, while Carrier nations share a language, they are culturally diverse with varying dialects, clans and governance systems as well as a vast geography with a

traditional territory spanning 70,000 square miles.[48] I did not want to delineate between possible community differences, as this was not the research goal and decided to choose one community to work with.

4.4 Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research most closely reflects the values and ethics policy of the Lake Babine Nation and forms the over-arching method of inquiry used in this research (Creswell, 2003). In the case of First Nations peoples, The Tri Council accepts participatory approaches as the preferred research strategy for research involving First Nations, noting many of the practices incorporated in participatory approaches as "good practice" (Tri Council Policy Statement, 2005, p.6.3).[49] Action Research is appropriate because the research values are empowering and reflect an explicit commitment that the outcomes of the study benefit the participants and their communities. Dickson and Green (2001) advocate that participatory approaches are the best way to ensure research accurately reflects the experiences of marginalized peoples, including First Nations.

Participatory action research is a social process that explores the relationship between individuals and social systems. This research focuses on improving assessment practice by informing community leadership and the

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[48] For example, some communities do not participate in the potlatch or *bah'lats* system.

[49] The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) describes the policies of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), expressing the three Agencies' continuing commitment to the people of Canada to promote the ethical conduct of research involving humans.

school district regarding parent knowledge and expectations of education and education assessment. The process supports the concept of participatory research, employing an alternative philosophy of research associated with social transformation (Mitchell & Baker, 2005). According to Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) "through participatory action research, people can come to understand that- and how- their social and educational practices are located in, and are a product of, particular material, social and historical circumstances that produced them" (p.565).

In practice, participatory action research facilitates the ability of community knowledge holders and leaders to inform the research design, decision-making, research questions and analysis. The principles of inclusion shift the balance of power, allowing the community to control the research process affecting their lives (Minore, Boone, Katt, Kinch & Birch, 2004). Actively involving the community in the research process results in an improved likelihood that the research will benefit the community and have direct impact (St. Denis, 1992). Participatory action research engages individuals in examining their worldview and values to reflect critically on how their knowledge frames any action taken (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The method reinforces the mutual production of knowledge between researcher and community (Mitchell & Baker, 2005). This research has assisted community members by providing information regarding assessment as part of the dialogue, and engages parent's in consideration of concepts such as assessment, which can powerfully impact their children.

4.5 Community Engagement

Specifically, the Lake Babine Nation was involved in all aspects of research project design and implementation through the methods outlined in Table 2:

Table 2 Community Consultation Steps

Community Consultation Steps
Discussion with leadership to determine a relevant topic
Development of a Research Protocol outlying expectations
Letter of Support Signed by Chief of First Nation
Creation of a formal community research steering committee
Hiring and training of a community research assistant
LBN Steering Committee Meetings at each stage of research (Study and Questionnaire Design, Results interpretation, Final Report
Presentation of Final Report- LBN Steering Committee and Chief Copies of Report provided to Steering Committee and Chief

I initiated the research process by engaging community leaders in discussion regarding an education research topic of interest to the community. Community leaders in political, education, health and social services were informally asked what areas within the realm of education required research. Informal discussions between myself, service providers, hereditary, and elected

leadership determined assessment to be an important area of enquiry in education.

Building on the initial consultation, I established formal relationships with the Lake Babine Nation including the development of a Research Protocol between the community and myself. Chief and Council provided a letter of support endorsing the project. The Research Protocol defined the roles and responsibilities for the community and me and established policy for ownership, control, access and possession of research materials (OCAP) (see Appendix A). The Lake Babine Nation and I agreed to create a formal research steering committee comprised of Lake Babine parents, elected and hereditary leadership, youth and education professionals to guide the research process and inform the process at strategic points in the research[50].

The Nation also agreed I would undertake the research with the assistance of Rosa Johnny, who is a member of the Lake Babine Nation, in order for members of the nation to gain valuable training in research skills and for me to gain further acceptance in the community while completing the research. Rosa engaged in a number of activities including participation in LBN Steering Committee meetings, calling potential participants and setting up interview times, attending the majority of interviews, peer debriefing, transcribing interviews and taking LBN Steering Committee meeting minutes. Calling potential participants and attending interviews was advantageous in establishing participant trust from first contact. In some cases, due to the mobility of potential participants it was

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[50] Referred to throughout the document as LBN Steering Committee in order to distinguish between the community established committee and the Dissertation Supervisory Committee.

difficult to locate parents without the use of family networks that only a community member would possess. When interviewing community members who did not know me, having Rosa provide introductions established instant credibility that I was someone who is trusted by the Lake Babine Nation. I also informed the participants that the research was designed in partnership with a Steering Committee comprised of respected community members, and approved of by both the Committee and Chief and Council. In some cases, due to the mobility of potential participants it was difficult to locate parents without the use of family networks that only a community member would possess. Rosa knew individuals from each family and was able to contact relatives in order to determine where the potential participant was currently living.

The purpose of the LBN Steering Committee was to ensure the research was culturally appropriate and adhered to the highest research standards and ethics. Chief Betty Patrick and I determined the complexion of the LBN Steering Committee and the specific individuals who participated based on consultation[51]. For example, Chief Patrick noted that having a youth on the committee was important to capacity building through allowing a youth to provide perspective into the research but also learn about the research process and design. The LBN Steering Committee came together at strategic points including an initial meeting October 17, 2008 to discuss the project rationale, approve the overall research question, assist with research design and develop interview questions. I held a

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[51] If I had worked with someone previously I requested he/she participate and if not I sought advice from Chief Patrick. The Hereditary Chiefs and youth for the project I had worked with previously on youth suicide research. The counsel member was selected because she held the education portfolio.

second meeting November 6, 2009 to discuss the completion of the interviews and results and a third meeting February 19, 2010 to review a preliminary draft. At the first meeting, I asked the LBN Steering Committee what they would like to know about assessment, their view on success in education and how to create questions that would evoke a process of change in order to encourage parents to think more deeply regarding assessment. The LBN Steering Committee also provided their perspective on the possible sample including the geographic area of the study, sample size and representation within the Nation.

The LBN Steering Committee agreed with my suggestion to the focus on Grade 4 as an important transition period, from primary to intermediate grades. Children at this age are settling into the school system and beginning to demonstrate leadership as well as knowledge patterns. It is also early enough in the process to be useful in providing context for First Nations parents to consider important concepts such as assessment, and in the process potentially improve how they relate to their children's education and the system as a whole. Research by Henderson and Mapp (2002) regarding family school partnerships demonstrates it is easier to involve parents in their children's education early rather than when in secondary school (as cited in Martinez, Martinez and Perez, 2004). I also chose this sample because Grade 4 is the first time children participate in the Foundational Skills Assessment and the cohort provided information regarding parents' knowledge of large-scale testing and their perceptions of its usefulness. The LBN Steering Committee indicated these subjects as important.

At the October 17, 2008 meeting, the LBN Steering Committee expressed their pleasure that the research was taking place, noting, "We have been battling with the School District #91 for years and years to do assessments on our students, but they will not listen… This would be a really good document to take back to the school district and tell them "See this is what we have been telling you" (LBN Steering Committee Meeting Transcripts, October 17, 2008).

The LBN Steering Committee met November 6, 2009 to review preliminary information from the data analysis. I presented the information in the aggregate and names were kept confidential with only numbers attached to quotes in the same manner as provided in the dissertation. I attempted to keep the LBN Steering Committee Members informed of my progress when I visited the community. The majority of LBN Steering Committee members and Chief Betty Patrick were also present the first time I presented preliminary research results at an education conference in December 2009.

4.6 Questionnaire Design

In order to establish research questions, I designed a draft questionnaire based on dialogue with community leadership and the result of a literature review regarding parent understanding of assessment and provided a list of questions to the LBN Steering Committee for discussion and approval (Anderson & Bachor, 1993; Battle Bailey, 2006; Benner & Mistry, 2007; deGroot- Maggetti, 2002; Denney, English & Gerber, 2001; Dorman & Knightley, 2006; Guppy & Davies, 1999; Hallett et al. 2008; Kavanagh, 1998; Martinez, Martinez, & Perez, 2004; Miretzky, 2004; Prince & Howard, 2002; Prince, Pepper & Brocato, 2006;

Rosenzweig, 2001; Van de Grift & Houtveen, 2006). The questions remained in

draft form until the LBN Steering Committee, my Dissertation Supervisory

Committee, and I all agreed the questions were acceptable (Coggins, Williams &

Radin, 1997; McLean, 1997). The LBN Steering Committee played an important

role in the process by ensuring questions encouraged conversation and used

non-technical and non-threatening language. The LBN Steering Committee and I

engaged in considerable dialogue until everyone was satisfied with the

questions. Table 3, outlying changes made by the LBN Steering Committee,

indicates the level of involvement in shaping the questions. I then provided those

questions to the Dissertation Supervisory Committee who reviewed the questions

based on the appropriateness of the questions for finding the needed data.

Table 3. LBN Steering Committee Assistance with Questionnaire

Draft Questions	Change made LBN Steering Committee
What does it mean to be educated	What does education mean to you?
What do you feel is an important indicator of your child succeeding in school?	Deleted
How should we measure success?	How should we determine success in school?
How do you know how your child is doing in school?	What kinds of information do you receive about your child?
On an ongoing basis, what strategies do you use to check your son's/daughter's academic progress?	On an ongoing basis, what strategies do you use to check how your son/daughter is progressing in school?

When you think about student assessment or evaluation- what do you think teachers are doing in the classroom to assess your child?	What do you think teachers are doing in the classroom to understand how your child is doing?
Do assessments connect with learning activities you would like to see for your child?	Deleted
What do you feel are/should be the most appropriate methods of assessment used by teachers?	What do you feel would be the best way for teachers to find out how your child is doing in school?
What assessment strategies would help students achieve in both Carrier and Western culture?	What form of testing would help students achieve in both Carrier and Western culture?
What do you feel needs to be assessed in order for your child to be successful?	Deleted
What do you think of the provincially mandated assessments in Grade 4?	How do you feel about provincial testing in Grade 4?
What do you think the provincially mandated assessment in Grade 4 tells you about your child's progress?	Deleted
Added	Do you want to know how your son/daughter is progressing compared to other children his/her age?
Added	What is it you would like your child to learn at school?
Added	What is the role of a school in your child's life?
Added	How could schools make it easier for you to be involved in testing your child's progress in school?

Added	When you think about your child's understanding in school, do you agree with the results of school tests?
Added	What should passing to the next grade be based on?

4.7 Research Sample

The population sample for the research consisted of Lake Babine Nation parents of Grade 4 students in the 2007-2008 school year and living in areas between Prince George and Smithers[52]. With the assistance of the Lake Babine Nation Indian Registry Administrator, I determined there were 36 children who are born in 1999 and thus potentially in Grade 4. With LBN Steering Committee assistance, I concluded that at least one parent from half of the possible sample, or at least 18 separate families would be invited to participate in the study. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) in qualitative research, "only one type of statistical generalization is pertinent, namely generalizing findings from the sample to the underlying population" (p.240). With a population of 36 children, I estimated half of the parents would be a large enough sample to assume I had heard most of the perceptions of assessment that might be important in order to achieve data saturation, while at the same time being a workable number of interviews that would enable deep, case oriented analysis

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[52] In consultation with the Steering Committee I excluded those who reside outside of the Lake Babine Nation Geographic area from participation for reasons of access.

(Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Sandelowski, 1995).

Due to parental interest in joining the research project, all but one of the parents who were available at the time of a scheduled interview agreed to participate, raising the final sample size to 18 families. When contacting participants I typically asked for the parent who was responsible for primary care-giving role and involvement with their child's school to participate in the interview. In two interviews, both parents were present and I counted these interviews as one interview as one parent provided the majority of information and the other added a few comments.

Based on discussion with the Indian Registry Administrator I established that there were 29 possible people to interview in the Prince George to Smithers geographical area. However, through the actual tracking of parents for the research I concluded that parents have a high level of mobility as nine of the possible participants had moved outside of the geographic area within the year when the Indian Registry Administrator had updated the addresses. [53]

The movement of parents outside of the geographic area of the study resulted in a further reduction of the participant pool to 20 individuals to occupy 18 interviews. During the process, one person declined an interview and another

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[53] Mobility of parents suggests a concern regarding education performance. Residential moves and transfers to different schools have been associated with children dropping out of school, and is associated with negative impacts particularly for younger children (Alexander, Entwistle, & Horsey, 1997). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that students who drop out are more likely to have changed schools before or during high school. Such research reflects even more negatively on children from reserve such as Fort Babine who have to leave home and their community in order to enter the high school systemThe research completed in this study also indicates that children from Fort Babine are ill prepared to enter higher grades putting them at an even greater disadvantage and increasing their likelihood of dropping out.

person who Lake Babine members believed to live in Smithers could not be located resulting in 18 possible families to be interviewed.

Prior to knowing the number of participants, which I did not confirm until late in the interview process, my intention was to select participants through a combination of purposive and random sampling (Boulton, 2005). When I discussed the project with the Chief of the Lake Babine Nation as well as the LBN Steering Committee one of their first questions and main concerns was that the research represents all Lake Babine communities. As posed in the LBN Steering Committee meeting "Are you going to do Fort Babine and Tachet? You will get a totally different perception from them" (LBN Committee Meeting Transcripts, October 17, 2008). In order to ensure this happened, the parents from Fort Babine and Tachet were purposefully included.

My intention was to determine the remaining participants through random sampling. Initially, in order to ensure all participants had a chance to participate, I assigned each child within the Prince George to Smithers area on the band list a number and used the computer program Research Randomizer to select numbers. I placed 18 names on the list and numbered the remaining people 19 to 29 as auxiliary if someone declined to participate. Rosa Johnny contacted parents associated with each number and requested the parent who assumed the majority of child rearing responsibilities or responsibility in education to participate in an interview. This process continued until 18 parents had agreed to participate. If parents had moved outside of the geographic area, I excluded them from participation and moved on to the next person on the list. Thus, it was not

until late in the sampling process, through directly trying to contact participants, that I knew my potential pool of participants was 18.[54]

In addition to the mobility outside of the region, mobility of participants occurred within the geographic area and locating parents would not have been possible without community participation. The assistance of a community researcher in the process helped with tracking down participants as frequently this required knowing family lineages and contacting a parent, sibling or cousin when a person's address was not current or no phone number was available.

4.8 Data Collection

I used qualitative data gathering techniques as the most appropriate for this research because they are the best method for obtaining the detailed data required regarding parent's understanding, in this case of academic assessment. The purpose of the interviews was to explore topics and elicit responses that are embedded in the participants own perspectives. Qualitative open-ended interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, which is an underlying theme of this research regarding the inclusion of First Nations parents in school processes (Patton 1990). Interviews involved collecting information from individuals who have special knowledge or perceptions that I would not otherwise have access to (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The use of open-ended (or semi-structured) interviews is appropriate because

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[54] It also appears that during the time of the study the movement was outside of the geographic service area. A review of those who had been excluded from the list initially provided indicated that none of those individuals had returned to the area.

there is no strong sense of First Nation parent perspective on assessment, so a format allowing unconstrained responses was used to provide the widest range of data collection. Because the research questions required in-depth parental engagement and an unconstrained exploration of issues, I used interviews rather than surveys or focus groups.

I collected data through face-to-face interviews, a method that is conducive to Lake Babine approaches to knowledge transfer allowing participants to reflect on their social reality *in situ*. Face-to-face interviewing is a culturally appropriate method of research with the Lake Babine Nation because of the personal nature of the technique and its maintenance of notions regarding the accountability of researchers, including myself, to the community (Boulton, 2005). I completed interviews between November 2008 and May 2009, during the 2008/2009 school year. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 150 minutes.

I recorded interviews and the interview format was semi structured, incorporating elements of quantifiable, fixed choice responses regarding demographic information as well as open-ended questions within the context of the target research area (Brewerton & Millward, 2006).[55] The fixed-choice questions provided background information regarding the participants in order to provide participant context as well as differences and similarities within the participant group[56]. To mitigate possible discomfort with answering questions regarding socio-economic status I provided income categories to the participants.

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[55] See Appendix C for a full copy of the interview questions and Protocol.
[56] See page 27 for questions and page 30 for rationale stemming from literature review.

Frequently during the process, I also provided this sheet to the participant and had her/him circle the appropriate category.

I used open-ended questions to provide opportunities for the participants to discuss topics related to assessment in detail. If the participants had difficulty answering a question or provided only a brief response, I used cues or prompts to encourage the participant to consider the question further. I also enabled the participants to provide their own information within the interview by following lines of discussion introduced by the participant. While used to guide the process, the questions allowed parents to discuss assessment, as well as education in general, from their own perspective.

I wrote field notes after each interview regarding descriptions of events and notes regarding what people said, particularly if parents made comments when I was no longer recording the interview. Information documented included observations that would not be accessible through the transcripts such as: perceptions of the interview, thoughts about the parent's responses and general observations of parent's homes and actions of parents, and their comfortability with answering a question. I also recorded connections, or themes that began to emerge in interviews and areas to explore further in subsequent interviews to determine if there was a pattern to information that parents provided.

At times, parents asked questions regarding assessment prior to or after an interview and I recorded this information in field notes. For example, one parent who did not know about provincial assessment in Grade 4 wrote about the information provided regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment on a white

board on the fridge as a reminder to ask the school about the provincial

assessment the next time she was at the school. Parents were often curious

regarding provincial assessment and had a number of questions. Due to the

reciprocal nature of the research noted above, I also saw the interviews as an

opportunity to inform parents and have them think about assessment and its

impact on their children. I answered questions regarding the intention of the

provincial assessment strategy but did not want to persuade parents in either a

positive or a negative manner regarding the exam. For those who indicated they

did not know about provincial testing I provided a brief explanation regarding the

Foundation Skills Assessment. The explanation consisted of a script informing

parents the assessment is completed in Grade 4 and 7, it is compulsory for all

students, it focuses on numeracy, reading and writing as foundational skills, it is

used to evaluate how well students are achieving basic skills, and is reported at a

provincial, district, school and individual level.

The tape-recorded interviews[57] were transcribed as soon after the

interview as possible. Rosa Johnny, the research assistant transcribed the

interviews and I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. I identified transcripts by

code only based on the interview date and the interview number, with identifying

information kept in a locked cabinet separate from tapes and transcripts. If a

parent used their child's name during an interview, I kept this information in the

transcript but removed identifying information from any discussion within any

public documents. In addition, I removed names of specific district schools from

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[57] In each interview the participant consented to having the interview tape-recorded.

public documents as parent comments regarding a school seemed to be isolated to specific issues rather than systemic problems with a school within the school districts involved. If a number of parents identified a specific school within a district and I deemed this information important, I would have sought approval from the district to release the information.[58]

In a meeting with the LBN Steering Committee after analyzing the information, I brought up comments made regarding the school at Fort Babine and asked if the information should be included because parents in Fort Babine and those who had moved to other communities, were critical of the school. There was consensus from the LBN Steering Committee that the information be included in order to draw attention to the issue. The LBN Steering Committee also stated the information was important because it provides them the documentation to take to School District No. 54 in order to develop a plan for targeting children who leave the community of Fort Babine to attend school. The LBN Steering Committee was clear that they wanted children entering the public system from Fort Babine assessed to determine their level of education. The LBN Steering Committee stated the information was known at a community level but the research reaffirmed the information and provided the evidence they required to meet with various levels of government to advocate for funding. The LBN Steering Committee discussed the issues faced by the communities of Old Fort, Fort Babine and Tachet in accessing funding because Indian and Northern Affairs Canada focuses on the larger administrative centre Woyenne. The LBN

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[58] When the Band school was mentioned by various parents, I met with the Lake Babine Chief to discuss possible solutions and develop strategies for the school.

Steering Committee Stated that education is one of the major issues at the elementary level as well as those attempting to access funds for university. I also met with Chief Betty Patrick to discuss the information supplied by parents and sought her approval for the inclusion of information regarding Fort Babine.

I provided parents full transcripts of their interviews and gave participants three weeks from the time the transcripts were mailed to reply with comments. I made the participants aware of the reply time and process through a letter provided with the transcript. I also provided this information during the discussion at the beginning of the interview when I asked participants to consent to the interview being tape-recorded.[59] If the participants did not reply by the date, as noted in the letter, I included the transcripts as complete and approved. None of the participants contacted me with comments or additional information.

4.9 Ownership of the Collected Data

In keeping with the OCAP Principles (ownership, control, access, possession) of data and information obtained from research involving Aboriginal peoples, I collected and housed the data for the period of time necessary to complete my dissertation (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2007). Upon completion of the dissertation, I archived copies of the research material in facilities designated by Carrier Sekani Family Services for those purposes in trust for the Lake Babine Nation. A protocol agreement with the Lake Babine Nation

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[59] All of the participants consented to having their interview tape recorded.

and consent forms approved by Simon Fraser University outlined acceptable

uses of the research material.

4.10 Data Analysis

Theme analysis was the primary analytical process used with the interview

transcripts. The analysis focused on identifying a small number of qualitatively

distinct categories regarding the manner in which participants understood (or

conceptualized) assessment. The method fits very well with earlier discussion of

Taylor and the understanding of how people imagine their social existence.

According to Opler (1945)

> In every culture are found a limited number of dynamic affirmations, called
> themes, which control behaviour or stimulate activity. The activities,
> prohibitions of activities, or references which result from the acceptance of
> a theme are its expressions… the expressions of a theme aid us in
> discovering it (cited in Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p.86)

Within the process, I sought to discern patterns of understanding as well

as describe differences in the manner parents ascribed meaning to the world

around them. The aim was to reach a summary expression of the meaning of

data as close to the participant meaning as possible. Content analysis involves

developing a category- coding procedure in order to organize data around key

themes and determine how well information fits into the categories (Gall, Gall &

Borg, 2007). A typical content analysis consists of determining the frequency of

the occurrence of each coding category within the sample. Opler (1945) suggests

the importance of a theme is associated with how often it appears and how

persistent it is across various cultural principles. Coding is the process of

combining data into themes, and categories so that I could compare and analyze information provided (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The process of coding began with the proofreading of transcripts, which allowed me to understand key phrases and commonly occurring topics. The information typically fit well into the themes naturally created by the interview schedule, termed *a priori* coding and I used this technique as a starting point for determining themes (Reflected in Table 4). In some instances, the information provided by parents when asked different questions elicited similar responses and I combined this information into one theme. In this manner, the LBN Steering Committee assisted in developing *a priori* themes by determining what topics to cover in the interviews and how to query participants regarding the topic areas (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Many of the topic areas determined by the LBN Steering Committee became the theme headings in the results chapter. The process also related to the validity of the inquiry through the process of collaboration and peer debriefing (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The LBN Steering Committee and Rosa Johnny, as collaborators, were involved throughout this research study as partners and the LBN Committee reviewed all chapters including the results chapter to determine if it accurately reflected the community. Rosa Johnny, who typed up the transcripts and sat in on the majority of interviews and thus was familiar with the expressions of participants, participated in validating and agreeing to how the themes were applied to the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Patton (1990) terms this validating technique of agreement among investigators "triangulation through multiple analysts" (p.468).

Table 4. A Priori Themes

Questions	*A Priori* Theme
What does education mean to you?	Education
How do we know someone is educated (Western)? *How do we know someone is educated (Cultural)?*	Western Educated Carrier Educated
What do you want your child to achieve from school? *How should we determine success in school?*	Achieve in School
What is the role of a school in your child's life?	Role of School
What kinds of information do you receive about your child? *How often? When?*	Information Received
How do you use this information?	Behaviour after Receiving information
When you think about your child's understanding in school, do you agree with the results of school tests?	Agree with Results
What do you think teachers are doing in the classroom to understand how your child is doing?	Teacher's Methods of Assessment
On an ongoing basis, what strategies do you use to check how your son/daughter is progressing in school?	Strategies used to check
What should passing to the next grade be based on?	Passing to Next Grade
How do you feel about provincial testing in Grade 4?	Provincial Testing
What do you feel would be the best way for teachers to find out how your child is doing in school? *What form of testing would help students achieve in both Carrier and Western culture?*	Additional Forms of Assessment

I completed the organization of information from each interview into themes using various stages of analysis. First, I added all of the *a priori* themes identified to each transcript as headings and began a process of cutting and pasting information into each theme.

Table 5. Sample of Transcript Excerpt Edited for a priori Theme

PARTICIPANT NO. 04/08/09-015:

What does education mean to you?

Education means – I want them to live life to the fullest. I don't want them to struggle like the way we are right now. I try to talk to them about that too. We are living on low income and you guys won't like that. Just try talk towards them, that'll help them want to keep going to school. It's just hard right now not having an education and having 7 kids.

I would rather them finish off school and go to college, have a better education than I did.

The process included a word search using the edit- find tool in Microsoft word to search out a list of words that I identified as repeatedly used by parents in the interviews when reading and re-reading the transcripts. The word search assisted in identifying information that fit within themes but also when a parent discussed a theme in response to a different question. At times parents would provide information that fit within an *a priori* theme prior to me asking a question or would refer back to an idea they had discussed earlier so word search assisted in finding this information. Listed in Table 6 are words commonly

occurring in the text and the number of interviews in which they occurred. The number of times the words occurred is not intended to indicate that a certain theme is more important to individuals even though they were referred to more often (Sandelowski, 2001).

Table 6. Words Commonly Occurring

Words Commonly Occurring in the Interview Text	Themes	Number of times Occurring	Number of Respondents N=18
Assess (test)[60]	Agree with Results Teacher's Methods of Assessment Provincial Testing Additional Forms of Assessment	Assess 31 Test 122	Assess 11 Test 16
Carrier	Carrier Educated Subjects	96	16
Communication (talk, speak)	Communication	127	18
Compare	Passing to Next Grade Challenging Carrier Students Provincial Testing	21	14
Educate/ Education/ Educated	Education Western Educated Carrier Educated	149	18

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[60] As noted in chapter 2, the LBN Steering Committee suggested parents would understand the word test rather than assessment. Seven of eighteen (40%) of respondents only used the term test in interviews. Sixteen of eighteen parents used the term test at least once in their interview. This is also evident in the number of times parents discussed testing (122) versus assessment (31).

English	Achieve in School	36	14
Grade	Achieve in School Passing to Next Grade Challenging Carrier Students Provincial Testing	153	18
Job	Role of School	46	15
Learn	Achieve in School Role of a School Subjects	149	17
Math	Achieve in School Subjects Passing to the next Grade	59	18
Read/ Reading	Achieve in School Subjects Behaviour after Receiving information Challenging Carrier Students Reading Group	123	16
School	Education Achieve in School Role of School	427	18
Teacher	Teacher's Methods of Assessment Behaviour after Receiving information Communication	230	18
Write/ Writing	Achieve in School Subjects	50	8

I placed text that did not fit with determined *a priori* themes at the end of the transcript and re-analyzed the information against the other transcripts to determine if there were additional themes or commonalities between interviews. I used repetition as the technique to determine additional themes looking for topics that occurred and reoccurred in the material (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This process resulted in the identification of four additional themes (*Communication, Challenging Carrier Students, Subjects, and Reading Group*) that I did not identify in the fixed set of open-ended questions. Once I determined the themes, I cut and pasted the information from each participant into a single document reflecting the theme.

Table 7. Sample Excerpt of Transcript into a Single Document

<u>**PARTICIPANT NO. 04/08/09-015**</u>:

What does education mean to you?

My son was home all week. He's not happy with the teacher that he has. He goes to [name removed] School. They have been sending my kids home every day at two o'clock and everybody else gets off at 2:30. He's tries to get there right at 2:30 to pick them up; but it's the traffic and he's always driving around. They said something about them going into a vehicle, but that only happened one time. I talked to my kids about it and they said they wouldn't do it again; but still they let them go at two. That last time they told them to go home at two, they made them walk home. When he gets angry, he has a real bad temper tantrum. Now this week they've just decided that they'll have him do his work at home. I've met with his teacher once, and I've met with the Principal. I want them to live life to the fullest. I don't want them to struggle like the way we are right now. I try to talk to them about that too. We are living on low income and you guys won't like that. Just try talk towards them, that'll help them want to keep going to school. It's just hard right now not having an education and having 7 kids.

Within the theme documents, I used additional techniques of coding including word repetition cutting and sorting, and compare and contrast (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I searched for commonly used words and analyzed word use within participants to determine if there was significance to the Lake Babine

worldview and setting. Cutting and sorting involved using a word processor to cut

and paste sections of transcripts into separate themes documents so I could

further analyze and reread them for coding, as reflected in the sample within

Table 8.

Table 8. Sample of Theme document – Code Identification

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">

PARTICIPANT NO. 261108-001
Education

The future and education what I understand is *work*. I talk to my boys and if

they ask me about it, like why they have to go to school? Tell them that

schooling is very important. Nowadays things are in computer-wise and I

believe now schools have computer classes in grade school anyways. I know

high schools have always had them. I myself don't have any experience in

computers.

PARTICIPANT NO. 11/26/08-002:

Education

To learn stuff. To learn the stuff that you need to know as adults! Like knowing

how to live on your own and knowing how to cook for yourself. Knowing how to

look for a *job* and learning how to be independent.

PARTICIPANT NO. 11/26/08-003:

Education

Education means a lot to me for my kids, because without education they will

</div>

not be able to get a *job* anywhere in this world.

Emphasis added to demonstrate the prevalence of association between education and employment

I identified quotes that appeared important and arranged them into segments that went together (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Each time I selected and coded a passage or theme I compared it with all those passages already coded in order to ensure coding was consistent. This also enabled me to determine if passages corresponded or that the conceptions in the passages would be better coded another way (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I completed coding and analysis of the data manually using thematic content analysis.

I interpreted results for theories and patterns and examined information for frequencies of responses as well as differences between respondents. I wrote short definitions for each code and assessed new information of a similar nature against the definition to determine if the information fit as reflected in Table 9.

Table 9. Example of Education Theme Coding

Codes	Number of Respondents
Employment	15
Technology	3
Knowledge/Training/ Skills	8
Improve Life	10
Graduate	15

If the information did not fit, I created a new code. I analyzed Interviews against field notes. The themes arising in each interview were reviewed in light of new interpretations in order to see if anything was omitted (Boulton, 2005). As I reviewed information, I explored patterns in successive cycles of data interpretation and analysis. I repeated the process numerous times until I deemed categories exhaustive and I had a mass of results reflecting the major findings (Booth, 1997). In keeping with the methods of qualitative research and the need to include the voice of parents, I used a number of direct quotations in the results section.

The final process of the data analysis stage was providing the information back to the LBN Steering Committee for comment. The feedback stage provided an opportunity for members of the Lake Babine Nation to analyze the information through their lens and provide additional feedback on the themes. This process fulfilled the commitment to include members of the Lake Babine Nation in all

aspects of the study and as a data analysis strategy provided verification by the LBN Steering Committee of the information presented reflecting the views of the community.

One of the questions asked of the LBN Steering Committee related to the number of quotes used. Although the literature typically suggests explaining a concept while limiting the number of quotations in favour of simplicity, the LBN Steering Committee agreed that they wanted extensive use of quotes in the results section in order to provide voice to the participants (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2009). As one LBN Steering Committee member stated, "it would be cool if we can take this [result section] and say you need to read this document. It is going to be our evidence so I want every quote, every word of this kept" (November 6, 2009). I attempted to maintain balance between including voice of the participants and not overloading the reader with quotations. As agreed to by the LBN Steering Committee, I used at least one quote from each interview participant. The LBN Steering Committee reviewed the results section and provided advice regarding some of the information supplied by parents to explain Carrier approaches to communication, residential school experience and Fort Babine School. I added some of this background information regarding Carrier history to the results and introductory chapters.

5: CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

As noted in the introduction, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide

voice to parents regarding their perception of education and assessment. The

majority of parents involved in this research noted taking an active role in the

education of their children, including working with children on homework and

meeting with teachers to discuss their child's progress. The information provided

by parents provides greater understanding of the attempts by parents to ensure

their children have improved lives and in doing so challenges stereotypes of

uninvolved First Nations parents. The results of interviews with parents

demonstrate a need to maintain culture and knowledge of Lake Babine roots as

well as recognition of the importance of Lake Babine children acquiring

knowledge in subjects such as numeracy, writing and reading in order to succeed

as members of the Lake Babine Nation within the larger society. The definition of

success as well as education and educational achievement, as outlined below

also reflects parent's divergent worldview that incorporates the need for varying

knowledge systems. Parents placed emphasis on subjects including math and English as well as culture and had a very practical view of education, indicating it is key to improved socio-economic status.

Parents noted communication is vital to understanding how their children were progressing and provided guidance to parents regarding areas for improvement and strengths so that they are able to assist their children. This chapter provides examples of positive interaction between teachers and parents including direct communication on a regular basis. Communication will also assist parents in understanding how teachers use assessment in the classroom as well as the use of other assessment methods such as large- scale assessment. More than half of parents did not know that provincial Foundation Skills Assessment would be completed in Grade 4 and many of the parents did not know how teachers assessed their children in the classroom despite feeling confident teachers knew how to assess children appropriately.

In structuring this chapter, I have attempted to utilize the natural flow of conversation within the *a priori* themes and have added the additional themes into sections of discussion that I believe fit best with the logical flow of discussion. Throughout the chapter, I have included examples of the coding for themes (Tables 13 – 13) in order to provide additional information regarding the coding process and reflect the number of participants who discussed a specific code.

5.1 Demographic Information

The study involved 18 parents of the 36 Lake Babine Grade 4 students in the 2008-2009 school year. While this study is not intended to be quantitative in nature, the demographic information does provide a reflection of important indicators that typically affect achievement of First Nations children within the education system such as geography, parental education levels and socioeconomic status. In all categories surveyed, the information for the entire Lake Babine Nation and the sample of this study are similar. The demographic information in this study corresponds to previous studies and information regarding the Lake Babine Nation education, socio-economic status and employment levels (Fiske & Patrick, 2000; Holyk & George, 2003; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009).

I completed nine of the interviews on Lake Babine First Nation reserves of Woyenne, Fort Babine and Tachet. The remaining nine interviews I completed in the communities of Prince George, Burns Lake and Smithers. Table 10 compares residency of the overall population to the sample population.[61]

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[61] In order to maintain anonymity I have not indicated how many interviews were completed specifically in each community as the populations in some of the communities is very small and may provide detail as to who was involved.

Table 10. Residency

Residency	2001 Census		Sample	
	Number	%	Number	%
On Own Reserve	1387	61%	9	50%
Off Reserve	903	39%	9	50%
Total	2290		18	

(Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010)

In terms of education levels of parents, 33%, 6 out of 18, of the parents involved in this study had completed Grade 12 or higher with a graduation certificate[62]. None of the parents had completed a university degree and two parents had completed college trade training. Table 11 reflects the similarity between the overall population and Sample population.

Table 11. Education Characteristics

Education,	2001 Census		Sample	
	Number	%	Number	%
With High School Graduation Certificate	140	26%	6	33%
Persons with some post secondary	75	14%	2	11%
Total (over 15 years of age)	535		18	

(Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010)

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[62] Two other parents completed grade twelve (Dogwood (6), Leaving Certificate (1) and GED (1). If partners of those who participated in the study are also included 31%, 9 out of 29 parents, completed Grade 12 or higher with a graduation certificate.

Although the majority of participants, 14 of 18[63], indicated they had

enough money to support their basic needs, the level of income reflects many

participants living in poverty (de Groot- Maggetti, 2002). Ten of 16 people (63%)

who responded to the question of income noted that they made less than 24,000

dollars per year. The numbers are supported by the fact that seven of 18 (39%)

of the participants indicated being currently employed[64]. Six participants (33%),

all of which are female, were single parents. The three men who participated in

the study had partners to support them in child rearing. Employment rates and

income level are similar between the sample and general population over 15

(Table 12)

Table 12. Income and Employment

Income and Employment	2001 Census		Sample	
	Number	Average	Number	
Average Income (persons over 15 with income)	485	$12,294	14 of 18	< $24,000
Employment rate	n/a	28.7%	7 of 18	39%

(Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010)

5.2 Education

In order to understand what parents believe are the important aspects of

assessment, it is important to identify their views regarding education. When

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[63] Three individuals stated sort of and one indicated no.

[64] A question was not asked whether a spouse was employed.

breaking down the a priori theme of education, codes included parents'
conception of education, including being educated in a Western system and a
Carrier system.

The parents interviewed for this study hold a very practical conception of
education. Parents voiced the knowledge gained through education in terms of
what their children would gain in the future rather than specific aspects of what is
learned. Parents recognize the importance of education as fundamental to
receiving employment and view education as the tools for a better life. When
discussing what is learned, parents spoke of math and reading as the tools
enabling their children to go out into the world.

> Education is very important to me for the kids, because, myself I am going
> back to school right now. I told them that it was a struggle, even as an
> adult going back to school. Today in this age you need education, there's
> education in everything you do. Even if they don't do well, I told my son
> you can always learn to read and write, because my son has learning
> difficulties and I try to encourage him. He knows how important education
> is (03/13/09, 009).

A number of Lake Babine parents living in poverty view education as
enabling their children to have a better life and as such placed emphasis on their
child completing Grade 12. Many parents recognized that not completing Grade
12 in their own lives has resulted in barriers to employment and financial stability
and identified that education was key to improved lives for their children.

> I really never thought much about education, but nowadays you need
> education to get a good job. That is why I try to tell my grandchildren that
> they have to go to school and they have to get their education to have a
> better job, better than what your grandma has now. I am having a real
> hard time supporting my grandchildren right now (03/11/09, 008).

Education means, I want them to live life to the fullest. I don't want them to struggle like the way we are right now. I try to talk to them about that too. We are living on low income and you guys won't like that. I just try talk to them, that'll help them want to keep going to school. It's just hard right now not having an education. I would rather them finish off school and go to college, have a better education than I did. (04/08/09, 015)

It's more important for me to teach my younger one to do it because I never actually graduated. My family is encouraging her to stay in school and I am trying to help her with it. Most of my brothers and sisters haven't graduated as well. We are trying to encourage all of them to do it because we haven't really graduated. Education means…I am trying to teach her to, staying in school is leading to jobs and everything. We are trying to encourage her to stay in school, but everything is not going good right now (05/06/09, 017)

In all interviews, parents placed emphasis on children attending school and receiving education. In addition, 61% of participants (11 of 18), when speaking of what education meant, spoke directly of the importance of their children graduating. This finding opposes stereotypes generally held at a community level that suggest parents do not care about education. Responding to the words of parents below, the LBN Steering Committee noted, "We are all stereotyped that we are all the same. We have our own language and dialects. This [research] is what helps us advocate for who we are. Sometimes people will not believe you unless it's on paper. We tell our children that they have to keep up with their education" (Steering Committee November 6, 2009).

Education is the most important thing in your life, without it you aren't going anywhere in life, period… All of the kids need their education. Every child out there should have the opportunity to express themselves through their education and go on to further their lives and better themselves in life. If they don't go to school, like right now, if they don't go to university, who's going to hire them. Nobody wants you if you don't have Grade 12. If they don't have a Grade 12 and get a job, that is pure luck (03/19/09, 011).

That's the way it is these day! Education is a number one priority for kids, especially in the village here. I want my son to definitely be better than me, and my daughter for that matter. I want them to get their Grade 12 educations and move on to college and then move on to university and do something with their life. Even here there are good jobs, but you need Grade 12 and no one has Grade 12 around here, maybe two or three (03/30/09, 012).

Like every parent, I want them to do good and have a good future. I talk to my daughter about that all of the time. I really struggled in school and sometimes she does too, a lot of the times she struggles. We just work very hard at it. I talk to her about it all of the time. I was a high school drop out because I felt like I was dumb compared to the other students. I felt like I wasn't learning the way everybody else was learning at the same pace. I would be failing tests and it would be like a big issue. It was like a big stab at your self-esteem basically. You see people around you doing awesome and you can't seem to figure it out. I talked to her about that all of the time. You've really got to work hard, listen, and pay attention because some day…jobs aren't easy to come by these days and it's only going to get harder and harder to find them. Make sure that you have an education to fall back on and you have the opportunity to go to college or university; that way you are secure in your future (05/08/09, 018).

As one example of the emphasis placed on the importance of reading and education, one parent's living room walls consisted of 8x10 flashcards with each letter of the alphabet, words associated with the letter and a picture associated with the word, similar to those seen in a school classroom, in alphabetical order stretching around two walls. School pictures of her two sons from each school year attended were placed under the alphabet on the wall, highlighting the importance of education in that family. Another observation of the researcher was that the majority of parents had computers.

Parents interviewed in this study noted that people who are educated in Western terms have higher paying jobs and money to support their needs. Parents indicated being able to tell someone's level of education by their

accomplishments including completion of Grade 12, attendance at university and material possessions they have acquired. Parents asserted being educated also means having the ability to communicate well and translates to personal conduct. Parents associated those who were educated with having higher self-esteem, caring about themselves and their appearance, and treating others with respect. Parents suggested people who are educated have increased life experiences because they are more readily able to go out into the world.

While parents stated that some of the characteristics of someone who is educated in the Western system are shared with the Lake Babine or Carrier system, there are additional characteristics of a Carrier educated person. The Western Education system is the formal education system that all children are expected to attend whereas the Lake Babine system is the learning from Elders and leaders to prepare children for their role in Lake Babine systems. As noted in Table 13, the most common responses centred on Carrier culture and practice.

Table 13. Carrier Educated Theme Coding

Codes	Number of Respondents
Speak Carrier	10
Practice Culture (hunting Fishing)	8
How to Conduct Self	3
Community focused (social responsibility)	3

In particular, those in the smaller reserve communities of Fort Babine and Tachet spoke not only of the need to maintain culture and language but also the Carrier value of respecting one another and assisting others in the community in order to maintain social harmony.[65] As noted by one member:

> An educated Carrier person is one who does things for other people around the community. Like my grandmother said, if you do right to the people, do right to the community and do right on the job, if you don't bad things happen to you (03/31/09, 013).

Another aspect of being educated in Carrier systems noted by parents as important was the ability to speak the Carrier language and participate in Carrier practices.

> They have got to speak Carrier fluently and if they know their culture and practice it, then you know they are educated (01/26/09,006).

> To be educated in Carrier is to speak the language; it teaches you your culture and it's very important to know your heritage and your culture; where you come from and where your grandparents come from, and down the line. It's important for our kids to know. It should be the elders teaching them; even some of the things that we had to do to get our kids where they are today; and slowly they are phasing that out. The kids don't know who they are dealing with anymore. They forgot their parents, their grandparents, and their roots; their grass roots, they forgot all of that. That's hard on those kids, I am sure it is (03/19/09, 011).

> It is how you conduct yourself. Carrier educated would be, that's a pretty tough question. I don't want to overstep the hereditary chiefs. You know it's, because a lot of our thing is potlatch and I respect that. Language plays a big part (03/31/09, 014).

While a number of the parents noted the importance of language and cultural practices, they also noted that they did not speak the language. Others indicated that they were unable to speak to this question because they did not

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[65] All three of the responses regarding focus on community and social responsibility were from on reserve participants. Two of the responses were from the smaller reserve communities.

grow up in their culture or participate in such activities as hunting or fishing

because they grew up off reserve. This research also supports findings in other

research indicating that grandparents who were responsible for their

grandchildren were much more likely to speak the Carrier language and speak of

Carrier practice (Holyk & George, 2003).

> As for Carrier education, I don't even speak my own language… Right now my boys are learning Carrier in school. But I don't speak it and it would be kind of hard to see if they are educated (26/11/08, 001).

> I don't really know, because I've hardly lived around my nation. I've basically just lived in Prince George all of my life. Yes, it would be great for them to learn things that I didn't learn as a Carrier person, like hunting and all of that stuff. I didn't get a chance to learn all of that stuff. I want them to have a better life, a better everything (04/08/09, 015).

5.3 Achievement in School

The goals for achievement in school flow closely from parent's perceptions

of education. The discussion of parents regarding achievement reflects the

understanding of parents that their children must know who they are as part of

the Lake Babine Nation but also have the skills to succeed in the larger society.

As noted in Table 14, graduation, completion of subjects such as reading, writing

and math as well as culture and language were all noted by a number of

participants.

Table 14. Achievement Theme Coding

Codes	Number of Respondents
Graduation	15
Completion of subjects (reading, writing, math, English, phys ed.)	13
Culture/Language	12
Attendance	5

There was also concern that Lake Babine members are losing their

Carrier beliefs and ways. Parents noted that in order to learn the language and

culture the inclusion of classes in school must be throughout the education

system and more than one hour per day. As one parent noted,

> I mean in all of the schools systems around here, I know a lot of them offer small classes for teaching Carrier language. I know the kindergarten do quite a bit of it, but then once they get into the public schools then it's really half an hour a week, which doesn't really give them much to go by. I know my daughter was really good at Carrier language and then she got into the public school and was kind of was forgetting everything, like the colours and the seasons and all of that stuff that she had learned in kindergarten, which is unfortunate because I don't speak Carrier and her grand parents do. I think it's important that she learns to speak Carrier, living here yeah for sure (05/08/09, 018).

When parents who are able to speak the Carrier language discussed how

they learned, they indicated that their parents spoke to them in Carrier until they

replied in the same manner. It was hands-on learning of language and culture

that parents suggested can be reinforced in the school but cannot be an add-on

or special day at school but rather part of regular classes. Having Carrier classes

at school was also noted as a benefit because children who do not speak can learn together in a controlled setting. Many parents suggested they were intimidated in the community when people spoke to them in Carrier and they did not understand. The fear of being ostracized by Carrier speakers resulted in not asking questions or trying to learn the language.

At times, as noted in the comments below, several of the parents seem conflicted between the importance of Carrier and Western systems in their children's lives (also seen in the responses in Table 15).

Table 15. Theme Subjects

Codes	Number of Respondents
Math	18
Reading	16
Carrier	16
English	14
Writing	8
Culture	8

Many parents viewed Carrier culture as a foundation for promoting self-awareness for citizens. In many cases, parents noted the depth of Carrier of knowledge required by children as being dependent on whether children would remain in the community and actively participate in community events. Parents

stated completion of all grades in order to graduate was important in assessing

achievement in school. Parents placed an emphasis on reading and math in

order to graduate and in many cases move on to university with the requisite

skills for enrolment. Many parents also noted the importance of learning the

Carrier language and children understanding where they come from. Another

area of importance indicated by many parents was the role of technology in

society today and their children having computer and technological skills. Various

parents suggested achievement in school included teaching their children social

skills to communicate and treat others with respect.

> Mainly that he understands everything. I want him to be up to where he
> could be and whatever grade he is in and a better understanding of what
> he is doing, math and English. As for Carrier, he wanted to take Carrier;
> he would be more than happy and that would be good. I guess they could
> introduce it more often in school, learning more about heritage and culture
> and maybe a language course of some kind for them, so that he knows
> where he comes from. If he decides to go that way in life then he will
> understand more about it, like the *Bah'lats* system and if he attends them
> or takes on a name. I would want him to learn life skills and social skills;
> like learning how to get along with other people. (01/26/09, 007).

> The big thing is learning how to write properly, like sentences and reading
> is a big thing for me, and a bit of their own culture I would like them to
> learn. But that is something that is really hard for them to do; because I
> don't know too much about my own culture like most people. I think it
> should be taught in the schools for my daughter to learn. The reading and
> writing is most important for me because everywhere you go, you see that
> and it's better for them to do their work. I realized when I got into my
> Grade 11 courses it was like oh my god! I got stuck for a good month on
> one subject. That's more important for them to know how to read and write
> (03/13/09, 009).

> As long as she knows where she came from and knows her culture and
> her history. We are at a point where we are not really considering our
> traditional ways within the *Bah'lats* system. When I look at it in 50 years, it
> either will be gone or it will all be done in English. I am not pushing Carrier
> on my daughter, because I know her plans are out there. But, if she is
> planning to stay within our community, then I would push the Carrier stuff

on her. Today and in the future, it is going to be nothing but the technology. That's how I see it. English, math, and now they have a course called "Career planning" and it wouldn't hurt for them to learn another language too. It is good for them to know Carrier. That will be good if they live around here. But, if my daughter is planning to go back to Europe, what good is Carrier to her. She will need some other language, like French is common. But, if she is planning to come back to Burns Lake to work, then she would need Carrier. My vision for my children is worldly (01/26/09, 006).

We need everything in life, calculating goes with math and English. Everywhere we go, we really need that and she really needs her Carrier. That's the main thing I want her to do is her Carrier because quite a few people know about it. I don't know I just want her to achieve in everything. That's the only thing I want her to know is math because I know down the road she will learn more about Carrier with my side of the family. I know she will succeed in that. The only thing that she always gives up is the math; that's the only thing I want her to pass in (05/06/09, 017).

Similarly, parents determined success at school to be completion of all grades in order to graduate. Parents stated graduation of children as paramount to determining success at school. Some parents built on this notion suggesting this meant graduating with a diploma in order to move on to university. Parents also reflected the Carrier view that each person has gifts to provide and affirmed that determining success was difficult because it is dependent on the skills of the child. Parents of children with special needs reflected this concept suggesting success meant enabling children to do as well as their abilities provided. Parents judged success by comprehension in a number of subjects such as English, math, and culture already noted in this analysis, but attendance also featured prominently in discussion of success in school. For some parents, they acknowledged assessment as a means for determining success as it provides information regarding how children are progressing.

I would like to see my kids graduate, to see both of my kids graduate. My niece will be graduating next year. It will be a great thing to see all of the native kids graduate from school. I thought about university for both of my daughters (11/26/08, 003).

To determine success in school should be by their marks and their grades, and grading their exams (03/19/09, 011).

For health wise, we need more physical education because a lot of our newest members are basically all obese. That means heart problems and diabetes and stuff like that. Our principal started a health program (03/31/09, 014).

Determining success in school would be hard to do because every child is different. My son can be good in English but won't be so good in math; just like my other son. It's hard to say that for other kids too, they exceed in certain things than other kids (01/26/09, 006).

5.4 Role of the School

Stemming from achievement and success at school, parents specifically described their view of the role of a school in their child's life. While parents affirmed academics as important within the role of a school noting " the role of the school in my son's life is to help him to become what he wants to be and to achieve his goals" there was recognition of the important social function that schools play in the lives of children (04/08/09, 015). As one parent suggested, schools are the caregiver for children, teaching them social values and protecting them for seven hours of the day for almost ten months of the year. In some cases, parents acknowledged that programs such as breakfast or lunch programs were the major source of nutrition for children whose parents are of limited income. For children at risk in particular, the school plays a large role in the wellbeing of a child.

Parents noted support for the wellbeing of children by teachers required having a strong understanding of the children and their specific circumstances. The cohort of this study had experiences outside of school that challenged their academic performance and behaviour in class including being a victim of sexual abuse, being transferred to care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and having close family members pass away. Without teachers understanding the children and their circumstances parents indicated they may be labelled and re-victimized.

In addition to the children's lives outside of school that affected learning, parents acknowledged wanting schools where every student felt safe and welcome to participate in all activities within the school. Parents stated bullying as a major factor in children not doing well in school or eventually dropping out. According to parents, bullying within the group of students had already impacted their attendance and willingness to go to school. The welcoming nature of a school was a theme among numerous parents.

> They are supposed to teach the kids to all get along with one another. Teach them to get along when they grow old and when they are on their own, that they know how to communicate with others. They should learn respect for each other. It starts at a very early age (03/19/09, 011).

> A successful school will try to make everyone feel welcome (05/06/09, 017)

> I've heard a lot of bullying that's happening in a lot of schools. Children should feel safe; because some of the ones that are falling behind more is due to being pushed around and put down, not by the school teachers but by other children (03/31/09, 014).

5.5 Information Received

Assisting parents in understanding how their children were progressing, parents observed that the school provided various sources of information including direct contact report cards, letters to parents, newsletters and a daily journal.

Table 16. Theme Information Received

Codes	Number of Respondents
Report Card	13
Journal	9
Direct Contact (meeting, phone)	7
Work from Student (home work)	7
Letter/paper notification Child specific	3
Newsletter	3
Information from an assessment	2

Many parents noted the journal signed by the parent and teacher that children were required to bring home daily, or in some cases weekly, as the most important tool for information exchange. A number of parents viewed the journal as a manner of daily communication and integral to knowing how their child was progressing. Parents preferred sources of information such as journals for the

balance they provided as opposed to information such as a letter from the teacher that only came home when a child had done something wrong. Other tools such as report cards parents mentioned as coming home every three months and many of the parents who discussed report cards stated that they could not remember when teachers sent the last one home. The usefulness of report cards was dependent on the specific student and the level of information provided. Some parents suggested that report cards were less useful because they only contained numbers, which did not assist in providing parents with ways to assist their children in the same manner as the journal or direct communication from the teacher. Others suggested the report card was useful because it was very detailed and specific to their child and provided sufficient information regarding areas for improvement.

> Report cards are much better now than at [her old school] because now if she can't get the help in the classroom she can get it at home. I think we get three reports cards a year and the teacher is very detailed and it's specific to her obviously. It says exactly where she's struggling with and what she is having a hard time with (05/08/09, 018).

> Report cards, all it has is numbers, the success, it's very good and very bad, that's the only thing, no notes or anything (04/08/09, 015)

Journals were effective to the extent that parents and teachers kept them up to date. In a number of instances, children no longer brought home their journal or when they did, teachers were no longer writing in it. In such situations, it appeared parents and teacher had a communication breakdown as parents recognized the journal had not been home or they had not received information and yet they had not contacted the teacher. It also appeared that teachers in

these examples no longer wrote in journals or conversely did not investigate why

parents had not written in the books for an extended period. Again, as noted

above regarding communication failure, the children who were in most need of

assistance and stated by parents as often being in trouble at school, were the

students indicated as not bringing their journal home, resulting in another

example of children who are in most need of assistance falling behind. In these

cases, parents still indicated wanting to know how their children were

progressing and the usefulness of the journals but did not contact the school.

> I'm pretty sure that they have been sending stuff home with her, but I'm pretty sure that she's been throwing them out. I'd rather for me to know who I am talking to, it's better to have it face to face. But I am pretty sure that she is doing pretty good, because the teachers haven't phoned me and told me anything. The only time that I had it was a couple of months ago. They do journals, it's a little agenda book; saying this is what they did today and I had to sign it She sends it back saying that it was okay with me. But I haven't seen that book for the past couple of weeks now, I asked her a couple of days ago where the book was and she said that she didn't know. She probably left it in her backpack at school. (05/06/09, 017).

> They actually don't tell me, like when they brought him home the other day, all he said was that he was throwing his books around and talking back to the teacher. The only thing that they leave out is why. They don't tell me why he's doing that. The Principal is always phoning me, the teacher, I haven't heard from the teacher at all. It should be the teacher phoning me and letting me know what is going on. The communication with the teacher needs to improve. That way we can put both heads together and see what's causing this trigger with [my son]. They have a student planner, but lately they said they don't use them anymore. I asked [my son] about it and he said that too. They started and then just in the middle of the school year I don't see them back. I don't know what to do. He's still in that same class, same teacher, same students. The information, it started off with what to do at home, what work needs to be done, now it's just not that way any more. I did what was written on there, reading and his math and all of the work that needed to be done. To make it easier for me to be involved in his progress would be one-on-one with all of us together (04/08/09, 015).

They have journals but she does not fill them out. Then they don't send any homework home with them, they just send them home. When they do send something home, it's one of the school's papers announcing the best student in the school and he isn't even on the list. Now why send me that if he's not even in it? The journal that he used to bring home was brought home daily. But now there is nothing in it. I send it back to school with him every day; and they don't even put the homework or what he needs to catch up on. We receive very little information about our grandson from the school, only when it is bad stuff. I'd really like to know how he is doing in school and if there is something there going wrong here that can be improved, I'd like to know. It would give us the heads up to help him out in school or help the teacher out if the teacher is having a problem (03/19/09, 011).

5.6 Behaviour of parents after receiving information

Parents responded to the information received by teachers in a various ways depending on whether the information was positive or children were in need of improvement.

Table 17. Theme Behaviour after Receiving Information

Codes	Number of Respondents
Talk to Child	8
Talk to Teacher	6
Provide Assistance	6
Review work	4
Reward	4
Praise	3
Get Extra External Help	2
Punish	1

When the results were positive parents praised their child, offered encouragement and provided rewards[66]. Rewards included gifts such as a new video game, money or IPods as well as more time on the computer or video games. When the results indicated that children were in need of improvement parents used various strategies including analyzing assignments where the child had done poorly for possible causes, inquiring with their child or contacting the teacher to determine reasons, reviewing homework and providing additional assistance, and following recommendations of the teacher.

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[66] In some cases parents used multiple methods such as talking to the teacher, talking to their child and providing rewards. Each response was coded in each response category.

Recommendations from the school included placing their child in additional reading classes or obtaining one-on-one assistance at the school. The actions of parents reflect Carrier values in communicating and allowing children to find their own way. Even when results were poor, parents indicated use of positive strategies rather than punishment. One parent indicated the use of punishment in the form of not allowing a child on her video games when a report indicated she was not listening.

> If the information is bad, then I help him out at home as much as I can and if it's good, I praise him with an hour of a game or whatever. Yes, he gets rewards for doing well in school. The teacher and I talk weekly sometimes, so if he is doing real bad or if he's doing a real good job she will phone me. I ask how he's been doing and how his attitudes been doing at school and ask if he's listening 'cause sometimes he just sits there in his own world and he'll play with the kids. I always ask how he's doing, if he's listening and everything (11/26/08, 002).

> By praising them and showing them that they are doing well. A happy child that is doing well in school and is being told by their parents they are doing well in school will go further than one who doesn't get that type of attention (03/19/09, 011).

> If she's struggling in a certain area, we try to get education into her life without her really knowing it. She's doing all of this stuff in math. Normally we try to teach her how to do that stuff without her knowing. Like if she is struggling in a certain area, if she is struggling with reading….try to make it fun. Sometimes I don't even notice myself doing it. If she wants to bake I try to get her to read me the ingredients and how much is ¾ cups. I am really just trying to help her in the area that she is struggling but try to do it in a way that she doesn't realize that she is learning something. I think the schools should make it fun. If something is fun then it is easier to learn. A learning process is something that you'll be able to have self-confidence in. If you don't have that confidence, you are not going to gain from it. I work really hard with her when it comes to doing her spelling test because I want her to go in feeling like, I know this; with that kind of attitude. If she gets one wrong its okay. If she gets two wrong it's okay, no matter how many she gets wrong it's okay to her, just as long as she had the chance to get it wrong and know the difference and learn from her mistakes (05/08/09, 018).

5.7 Agree with Results

The majority of parents agreed with the results of information sent home and felt that it accurately reflected how their children were doing in school. Some parents agreed with the information but noted wanting additional information so that they could assist their children on a regular basis. As noted above, parents had some concern that teachers should better understand what some children were going through outside of class and its impacts on behaviour. However, when teachers sent home information indicating such things as a child being easily distracted or active in class parents agreed it was correct.

> I agree with the results of school tests and feel they are pretty accurate. The report cards show what level she is reading at. I am pretty sure that the teachers are doing their job that they are supposed to be doing (11/26/08, 003).

> Yes, I agree with the results, because I know she's been struggling these last few years, but I agree with the marks she gets now. I'm happy with the marks that she's got now; there is no complaint there, because she's at a C+ average and a B average but that's where I'd like to see her and that just goes to show how much she's trying as well and how much she does want to learn. I'm happy that she does and I'm happy where she's at, the grade is good. They are not just B.S.ing saying that she's got a C+; and I agree where she's at with that. She got a B in art class; because I know she wouldn't get a B in math, maybe math but not in social studies, science or English. Especially English, I know she won't get a B (03/13/09, 009).

> Yeah I agree with how he is doing. [My son] was a good student until he came to Grade 4 and all of a sudden all of these problems came up and I got really mad and I complained. So maybe that's why I get more information from them (01/26/09, 006).

Most parents viewed teachers as professionals who have been trained in assessing children and as a result should know how to assess the work of their

children. In many cases, it appeared parents agreed to suggestions by teachers without specific explanation or understanding of rationale. According to the LBN Steering Committee, this practice is common within community members who have often been conditioned not to challenge those in authority (November 6, 2009).

5.8 Communication

Stemming from *a priori* themes of information received was discussion of communication, the most often discussed theme by parents in this research. Communication is an important component of parents obtaining, and using information received about their children, and parents viewed communication as central to them being involved in assessment. Parents wanted as much information as possible in order to know how their child was doing but also to assist them in the proper manner. Parents suggested that marks from exams or numbers on report cards were not as useful in communicating because they did not provide areas where a child could practice. Parents wanted the school to be more accessible including more scheduled visits to the school and parent teacher nights as well as teachers sending home information specific to their child that provided what some parents termed inside information. Parents indicated that increased face-to-face interaction is beneficial because it enables parents to keep informed of progress. There was varying amounts of information provided to parents depending on the teacher. In some cases, parents did receive

information such as an overview of what students completed during the week

while other parents indicated such information would be useful.

> The schools could make it easier for us to be involved in testing his
> progress by sending us inside information from throughout the year. If they
> are not working with the parents, there will always be a loophole and lots
> of kids fall through that hole. You don't want the kids to fall through the
> hole; and those that do fall through the hole wind up druggies or
> alcoholics, or suicidal (03/19/09, 010).

> I think it would be good, I know it will be a lot on the teacher, but if the
> teacher could write down how he's doing in certain subjects. The more
> often, like a letter coming home more often. More parent/teacher
> interviews maybe, I've only met with her once so far this year (01/26/09,
> 007)

Parents indicated that most often they went to the school when they were

invited including events such as parent tea and parent teacher night. For some

parents there is a perception they should only speak to the teacher, or will be

contacted by the teacher if there is an issue or concern with their child.

> I have met their teacher when they have Christmas concert and when
> some things are going on. I wish I could be there every day to check on
> him. They usually have days where we can go in and meet with them, but
> I haven't been doing that lately (03/31/09, 013).

> To make it easier in school they should have more parent/teacher nights.
> They only have those once a month. My husband always wants to talk to
> the teachers (03/30/09, 012).

Although all caregivers of children indicated they were comfortable

entering the school and had spoken to their child's teacher, grandparents in

particular also shared stories of their harsh treatment within the school system,

which provide rational for levels of mistrust. There were also events such as

parent teacher interviews that were rushed or discussion a parent tried to have

with a teacher regarding bullying that were perceived by parents as not being

deemed as important by the teacher that contributed to parents level of trust. Most of the events were specific to interactions with particular teachers with some parents indicating that the relationship was much better the year before.

The amount of communication and parent's perceptions of ability to communicate with teachers and others at the school ranged significantly between parents. The range of communication varied from daily communication through phone calls and journal entries to meetings only once during the school year. Parents who had worked for the school in various capacities indicated that they were comfortable speaking to their child's teacher, and often related that teachers treated them well because of the previous relationship suggesting other parents may not receive the same treatment. Parents who indicated their children were doing well in school were often the parents who also indicated that communication with the school was good. The weakest communication appeared to be with children who are in the most need of assistance and not doing well in school. Parents with children who were struggling or who had been in trouble at school indicated a need for improved communication so they could assist their children. They viewed themselves as advocating for their child when things had not gone well. Similarly, when parents noted their children were not doing well or continually in trouble, parents perceived racism as one of the reasons. While this may not be the intention of teachers, history and current encounters are very important in their impacts to the perceptions of parents and some of the information provided by parents is very important in framing that perception and thus noted here.

For a while there, I thought that all this time that I was doing everything wrong; with all of the punishment that I have been getting. Now that I am older, I realize that I never have done anything wrong. But I have a problem, I use my fingers to subtract or add. They come around behind you and with the tip of the ruler, they hit me on the head and told me "Use your head." So I got tired of him hitting my fingers, so I put it under the desk. Life was harsh back then, in school. I remember being thrown out of the bus in over .40° below. The bus was packed and these white kids were shoving me around and everything; so I turned around and shoved one back, and a few of them fell. The bus stopped and the bus driver kicked me off of the bus. I wasn't even dressed for winter, nothing. I walked home and by the time I got home, my fingertips were all hurting. The next day they were all hurting and they all turned black; my ears all turned black because I got frostbite. My ears were all peeling and I lost all of my nails, so my grandmother kept me away from school for six months. She kept treating me at home; she wouldn't even take me to the doctor or nothing; she didn't trust anybody. I always talk to my children and grandchildren about this. I always talk to my grandchildren and to make sure that they tell me if they have problems at school, like if somebody ever bullies them or anything. When it comes to schooling my ears are shut, because the school that I went to; I'm not really leaning towards school because they damaged me (03/11/09, 008).

We're dealing with the residential [school] thing. All they are doing is turning it over to the other schools and its still going on. It's not being dealt with at all. It has never stopped. It has gone on. It's no different than the Catholic schools. It's the same treatment I got when I was in the Catholic school. How are we going to stop this cycle? It has to stop. We have to be able to sit down and talk with the people involved. You have to treat people like you wish to be treated (03/19/09, 011).

I have met her teacher, but the meeting did not go well because when I dropped her off she didn't have much time to talk. No, I don't feel that I can go and talk to my daughter's teacher any time because when I tried that with the bullying thing I had to be real quick. I don't feel that the school is very welcoming, because they say to check in at the office. The teacher also said that we did not need a parent/teacher interview. They should let us know what is happening at school regarding testing. I would like more information such as teacher interviews (01/12/08, 005).

I've noticed with the Grade 4 teacher, there really is no communication and at the parent/teacher meeting she just kind of wanted to sit there and push us out the door. I heard her while I was outside and she said that they were falling behind, you better look through this and she called us in and didn't really introduce herself. Even at the open house it was the same, she didn't come to approach me and introduce herself. She just

stood in the corner and let me browse around with [my son] and his class. She wasn't really someone, I don't know to me it seemed like she was prejudiced. My cousin had a problem with her stating that she always had negative things to say about her son. I thought it was just because her son is active, but now that I know to witness what she is doing. We were in there less than five minutes. She quickly went through the papers and that was it. She asked if I had any questions and I said I want to see how far behind my son is in reading and if he's really accomplishing; and if things are being done about it (26/11/08, 001).

The suggestions of mistreatment contrasted with a number of parents who expressed a strong relationship with their child's teacher and school and should serve as examples of best practice. Examples of communication below demonstrate how parent and teacher can work as a team to ensure students complete assignments. Strong communication also aides parents in knowing how their child is progressing and areas where they can assist their children to improve through homework. In one example below, if not for communication, the child the teacher viewed as not grasping a concept in math and the child may have been believed to be struggling by his parent and teacher. Parent experience at school as well as education level did not appear to be a determining factor in current relationships with a child's teacher. Parents who had completed Grade 12 or college also reported negative experiences with their child's teacher.

The teacher contacts me if, if she asks him to do his science. Like last week, he was supposed to do his science work. All [my son] said was that it was too boring and did not want to do it. She phoned me up that same day saying he should stay to complete it and just stayed in school for 20 minutes more because he had to finish his science. So, they tell me everything, whatever is going on with him in school. They always have direct contact with me weekly. I just talk to his teacher to see how he's doing. If he's not doing well then I'd help him more at home. The last time that I met with [my son's] teacher she said that he was two years behind in

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his reading and it's been awhile and now he does at least an hour of reading before bed time (11/26/08, 002).

He did have some problems in math but I always participate in parent/teacher interviews. There was a case where he was doing columns adding and he had gotten a whole page wrong and I looked at it because I knew like in reading he goes left from right so what he was doing was he was adding from this side and carrying it over this way. So I explained to the teacher, this is what is he is doing and she was just like oh you're right and stuff like that. He did a whole paper but she let him redo it after I brought that up but if I didn't say anything he would have got a zero. She would not have noticed because he did the whole page, starting from the left instead of the right (11/27/08, 004).

For me, the teachers and me, we communicate regularly. We try our best to make it work for her and if we realize that it isn't working then we always get back to each other and try to figure out if we should do this for her or another program or if we should stop the program that she is in. I met my children's teacher and during the first month I met her every day. After that, probably about 40 times and I phone there regularly especially when they miss something or forget something at school. She phones me once in a while too. So the communication is very good (03/13/09, 009).

For many of the parents, particularly those whose children were having difficulty, the suggestion of having more First Nations role models in the school is important to making it easier for parents to be involved in education. This has been a long-standing concern and one that many school districts have worked to improve. The parents wanted not only Aboriginal liaisons but also teachers within the school. In some instances parents suggested that the Aboriginal liaison had the difficult task of being the communicator of bad news when their child was in trouble or suspended from school.

I think for my grandchildren they should have a Carrier person to assist with the children in school. I try to help them here. I think this has something to do with their low self-esteem. I try to let them know that they should try not to let that get in the way and to be proud of who you are; no matter what they say (03/11/09.008).

What I think that would be better for the children is if they had an Aboriginal worker or Aboriginal teacher to have a program in the school for some of the students that have learning difficulties in every area. Someone who could help them improve in those subjects and have after-school care. Something that will help them improve their interest in that subject or the course (03/13/09, 009).

I strongly believe that we should have our own teachers in school. Maybe if they were seen, present right in school where they got used to it with other youth it would be more frequent. We don't live alone in this world. That's why I was hoping maybe we can have a few of our members get their teaching certificates, whatever is necessary. I'd like to see more of them in school, not just as a T/A (03/31/09, 014).

5.9 Teacher's Methods of Assessment

Parents appeared unsure of the methods used by teachers to assess children in all aspects of education despite agreeing with information sent home. When asked what parents perceive teachers are doing in the classroom to understand how their children are doing, 11 of 18 parents had a response while the other parents indicated they were unsure or did not know. However, parents were confident that teachers were properly assessing their children. Raising the question sparked interest in the assessment process and all parents suggested they would be interested in knowing the various tools used to assess children. The most frequently suggested methods parents did indicate were being used included talking to the student, watching and listening, tests (spelling), and examining the child's work. The responses demonstrated knowledge of some of the methods used including performance based assessment and summative assessment but also reflected uncertainty.

The only way I could think of is that they talk to him and look at his homework to see if he's doing it right. Overall, I guess how his assignments are (01/26/09, 007).

I don't know about the testing. I can't say because they do test everything, so they are being checked on how they are progressing in their subjects on a weekly basis. I know that they go through a weekly testing in the school and to see where they are at completely is to do a full assessment on them; like every term I guess (03/13/09, 009).

Teachers are probably communicating with the students. There is 26 of them in one class and there's two teachers and extra helpers so they get one-on-one when they do a subject together. He always asks for help and they help him. Probably look back at his work. Ask him if he needs any help or if he's having a hard time learning in a subject (05/06/09, 016).

5.10 Strategies used to check

In addition to information provided by the school, parents used a number of strategies to check the ongoing progress of their children including talking to the child, talking to the teacher and reviewing assignments, which assisted parents in understanding and agreeing with the results of school assessment provided by their child's teacher. The most often used strategy at home, as noted in Table 18, was assisting children with homework and having them practice math or reading skills in order to see how the child was progressing.

Table 18. Strategies to check Student Progress

Codes	Number of Respondents
Assist with Homework (work with child)	18
Review assignments	11
Talk to Child	8
Talk to Teacher	5
Review Assessment (Report Cards	2

All but one of the parents participating indicated that they spend time working on homework with their children.[67] In the additional case, the parent indicated that her mom (the student's grandmother) assisted with homework and her goal was to take a more active role once her current situation had settled. I asked follow up questions to determine reliability of responses including, type of homework worked on, areas in need of improvement, how parents assessed if children had improved in areas such as reading and math that parents noted as working on. Based on the follow up questions, all but one parent was able to provide specific information in order to respond to the questions, indicating involvement in homework. Parents used a number of methods to determine student progress including seeing how many math questions their child could complete in a specific amount of time and the number of correct answers, determining how many errors a child made while reading and determining

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[67] The term "their children" is used to indicate guardianship as grandparents with responsibility for a child were also involved in the study.

comprehension of a story by asking questions after a passage was read. Parents

also noted the growing vocabulary of their child, noted in one case as the number

of five-dollar words understood.

> Every day when I get home from work, I usually ask if they had a good day
> and they usually tell me. I get them to read something to me, even if it's
> just a sentence; because one of them, his English, he's having trouble
> with his English and then I ask him questions (01/26/09, 006).

> I usually talk to him a lot and ask him some questions about different
> things, things that he's having a hard time with. I also read over his
> homework as well to see if he's actually doing it (01/26/09, 007).

> But you have to always read a lot, so he agrees with us and he grabs a
> book every now and then and reads it. I told him a book, not an NHL
> book. They want him to get into more novels and all that. We read part
> ways, and we get him to read two pages, and we get him to read silently
> on his own. If he doesn't know a word he'll either asks us or he looks it up
> on the computer (05/06/09, 016).

The level of input into homework by parents was also commensurate with

the level of education of parents. While some parents stressed the importance of

education and homework, and sat with their child and listened to them read or

practice other skills, they were not as comfortable assisting directly with

homework. While this was not as much of a concern for their children in Grade 4,

parents with children in later grades noted the progressing difficulty in providing

assistance. The high school completion rates provide a key area for need in

supporting parents. As one grandparent noted,

> I didn't get my education. I quit school in Grade 5 and I learned as I went
> on. I tell her that I will try because I am not a good person to ask what
> word is what and I told her that I dropped out and didn't finish Grade 5.
> She writes down all of her letter things. Now she's learned how to do
> hand writing. I make her practice at home with her writing. She writes
> letters and poems. One time she told me that when she grows up she
> wants to be an artist (03/11/09, 008).

5.11 Challenging Carrier Students

As noted throughout this discussion, Lake Babine parents recognized the importance of education to the future wellbeing of their children and attempted to assist them in any way possible. As part of the strategy for success, parents want high standards for their children that include equal participation in education. Parents also related equality to ensuring standards are consistent throughout the province so that children are able continue their education at the institution of their choice.

> I'd like to see the kids all be treated the same, all have the same learning standards and participate in the same subjects. Work together in class, a social network, and have the teacher chart their achievements for the day, even if it was one area. The teacher in Vancouver was very good at doing that, when he didn't bring his homework home she would call and wanted to know why. Strong communication is the key (03/19/09, 010).

> I want him to achieve top marks, I want him to be treated the same as everybody else and I want him to be prepared for later in life; like to reach post secondary and whatever training he wants to get into (11/27/08, 004)

> We would like him to achieve the highest standard of education. By that, I mean high grades, good, good grades so that he can go on and he would be accepted in any school anywhere without hesitation because you have that high standard of education and good ability to learn and that would bring him, probably open up to the world. Now everything is going computer and stuff like that, where your education is really important (03/19/09, 011).

> I hit the roof when they told me that [my son] was a special student, because it never showed and all this time there was nothing wrong with him. I believe they are doing this to other parents as well (01/26/09, 006)

The goal of parents was to ensure that their children could meet typical standards for children in Grade 4. One concern indicated by many parents was the discrepancy between the education received in the public school system and

those on reserve. Parents discussed the right of children to be educated in a manner that allowed them to continue to university and suggested that children who attended the on reserve school were denied this right based on the quality of the education provided. There was concern regarding funding levels that resulted in out of date textbooks and teaching materials.

> Carrier First Nations children are more advanced nowadays, then they were back in my day because we were all in [Reserve] Schools. They didn't try to push you or try to make scientists out of you. My children should be tested the same as anybody else. I'd like them to be tested the same way as the other students in school, because I want my kids to try to push themselves. To try to learn and if it's hard for them then they'd let me know. I would like my children to be tested the same way as anybody else and the only reason why I say that because I went to school in Burns Lake and I was going to the school down town. The schoolwork that they were giving me was the work that I did in Grade 1 and I was in Grade 4 (03/13/09, 009).

> He should have that choice, to be able to graduate Grade 12 and he should be able to go to any university. He should have that choice as well as anybody else. There is no reason he can't. But if he's going to be treated like this, through his smaller classes for Aboriginal students he's going to rebel and he's going to walk out of school and he won't make it to Grade 9 or 10, already he's frustrated (03/19/09, 010).

> Lots of kids go to school in Fort Babine; and when they come to Smithers to start into high school; they fall them all the way back to Grade 5 because they are not qualified to go to grade 7. Those kids from Babine, they put them to grade 7 and they have to fall all the way back to Grade 5. If they are in Grade 7 and get tested, if they fail, they have to go back to Grade 5 again. There is not enough education for them down there. They just need more education down there. Fort Babine goes from kindergarten to Grade 6. I have two staying with me and it's really hard for them to learn. They are really interested in the school, but they always complain the work is too hard. Most of them they put in the learning centre because they couldn't learn in a regular classroom. They didn't learn enough at Fort Babine. They just need better education and they need to learn more about it. It seems like they are not teaching them the right skills down there. That's why I have my kids up here from the beginning (05/06/09, 016).

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When I was in school in Immaculata all I learned was religion, which was it. I didn't learn anything more than that, which is probably why I didn't finish school. Subjects that are most important are math, history, and maybe science; and physical education (04/08/09, 015).

The education is not, on a scale of 1 to 10 I would give them a 4. I'd give them a 10 if they were doing all of the above. There are people here that are my age, who can't read or write and they went to this school. They are not educated like they should be in a regular school. Everyone gets the same homework. Out here I guess you're lucky to go school, but the people here don't know how to read and write (03/30/09, 012).

5.12 Extra Reading Classes

One of the most commonly mentioned issues by parents (12/18 interviews) that I did not elicit through a direct question was discussion of extra reading classes provided by the schools to Aboriginal students. The discussion of extra reading classes by parents tied to *assessment strategies, challenging Carrier students and communication*. While many parents noted the extra reading classes as beneficial, there was also concern that they were solely for Aboriginal students and parents were concerned that students may fall behind in other areas when teachers took them from class for the reading class. Reflecting assessment and a lack of communication, many parents were unsure as to how they determined their child needed extra reading classes.

In most cases the only communication to parents by the school was a letter that indicated their children would receive the extra class if parents did not respond indicating they did not want the class. Two parents did note the use of an assessment as the basis of inclusion in the class but were unsure of the indicators and had not seen further assessment that specified whether their child

had progressed or how teachers would determine if their child had achieved standards and no longer needed the classes. Other parents contested the results when teachers indicated their children needed additional classes because their child's marks did not reflect this need and these parents viewed the classes as solely based on their children being Aboriginal. One parent indicated that when she complained about the school placing her son in the extra class he was not required to attend.

British Columbia began to allocate funds in the 1980s under the English as a Second Language Policy to support Aboriginal students (Battisti, Friesen & Krauth, 2009). Between 1999 and 2004, there was a rapid expansion in schools that began accessing funding for Aboriginal students. School districts receive an operating grant English as a Second Language/Standard English as a Second Dialect supplement of $1100 per student (Battisti, Friesen & Krauth, 2009). While districts have discretion in the services provided, districts are required to conduct an annual assessment of proficiency in Standard English for each student, and design an annual instruction plan that lists services the student will receive to improve proficiency (Battisti, Friesen & Krauth, 2009). Battisti, Friesen & Krauth (2009) argue funding has been highly effective at improving the reading test score gains of Aboriginal students between Grade 4 and 7. Parents were unaware of this more global information regarding the procedures and impacts of extra reading classes (I investigated after the interviews) and were unaware of specific assessment completed on their children. Parents, who often read with their children, did not attribute reading improvement to the extra class.

He was assessed for his reading and his math but I don't know the process that they used to do it. But they did tell me that he is one of the Aboriginals that needed help in English. They had funding for it in school, so they assessed him. They said that he was eligible for extra English (11/26/08, 002).

Some letters were sent home from school and I took a bit of insult to it because she said that [my son] was recognized as needing this extra assistance. So, when I met with the teacher and asked her about it I asked her how he was recognized and it was basically based on his ancestry, the colour of his skin. They had recommended [my son] to go into these extra classes and so I went in and I asked them to show me where he needed it and they couldn't show me. So I said well he doesn't need reading and an Aboriginal support worker. I said English is his first language, because he doesn't speak Carrier. So, I never signed any consent. They said on the letter that if they didn't receive any comment back they would automatically take it as your approval. So, this year, he got the same letter, and the content was changed a little bit, and he receives this letter every year. There is not official assessment his marks are the same as everybody else, he's an A/B average and they couldn't explain to me how he was recognized as needing this extra help. No, he doesn't need that extra help. I think it's based on funding, right? I mean if he needed I would, but he doesn't need it. That is why I went in and asked how you guys recognize [my son] as needing it. It was basically because he was Aboriginal (11/27/08, 004).

She is in a special class for Aboriginals because that is one of the things that they got me to sign. This is for reading and writing. I haven't gotten anything about how she is doing in the classes (01/12/08, 005).

I know that she's taking some extra classes, like a reading group to help her with her reading because that's been her struggle ever since the beginning. I know that in those classes she also brings that kind of stuff home where she's been in this reading group and they send home flash cards with words that they think she should know or is struggling with. I don't know exactly what they've done to assess her to put her in that class, but it is helping her and is benefiting her. I never thought to ask if that class is only for Aboriginal students. They got consent for me to do a test, Peabody test I think, to see where she was and that's when she started in these classes to help her with her struggling in reading but I never thought to ask if it was only for Aboriginals. She's been in that extra class since the beginning of Grade 2. I'm not too sure when they meet the criteria. I never, every time I get her report cards it says that she is not meeting her expectations yet so I never really questioned it. Actually, I never really thought of that but now that it's being brought up. It would be

important for them to let her know how they have come to assess her for this class (05/08/09, 018).

5.13 Passing to Next Grade

Parents viewed passing to the next grade as an extension of challenging

Carrier students. The majority of parents (15/18) indicated that passing to the

next grade should be based on achieving determined skills and standards for the

grade. They often stated that they did not want their children to be pushed

through the system without learning the requisite skills. Parents suggested

assessment is an important factor in ensuring the children had completed the

standards for each. Parents also recognized that skills built on each other and if

children had not learned the information from early grades they would fall further

behind.

> Passing to the next grade should be based on everything; their attendance, their participation, their marks, their homework assignments, like their whole contribution to the class, I think. If he wasn't ready, I wouldn't want him to move on until he was ready because that is kind of setting up for failure. If he wasn't ready to move on to Grade 5 then he shouldn't (11/27/08, 004).

> Passing to the next grade should be based on her education, that she understands and learns everything. If she does not understand it, why pass her up? I am not in favour if they just push a child through to the next grade even if they don't understand. They have always done that to our children (01/12/08, 005).

> Passing to the next grade should be based on if they can do the work. They have this new thing where they don't keep students back and they just keep moving them. But they got to do it with discretion and they have to keep an eye on those, on the kids like my son. I don't want him to end up in Grade 7 and find out he can't read. We better find out right now if there is something wrong with him. That way we can work on it before

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they move him; because I know they are going to keep moving him. You see now the thing is that they keep moving them no matter what. But there should be a little string attached, saying that he is ready to move on. We might have a Grade 12 student who can only read at a Grade 7 level and that's because they move them along. I would see some sort of progress report, instead of just pushing them right into Grade 7 (01/26/09, 006).

While parents believed passing to the next grade should be based on achievement many also understood the damage being held back could cause as it was seen as punishment and in that manner did not fit with Carrier values. The education system also demonstrates a difference between Carrier and formal education learning systems. In Carrier teaching there is not the same emphasis on age as a determinant of preparedness. Parents indicated that within the Carrier system, children are watched and when they have demonstrated a skill, they are allowed to move to another skill. The Carrier system respects the ability of an individual to learn at one's own pace.

That would be hard. It would be nice if he's done better. Passing to the next grade provides something to look forward to, like he was so happy to pass to Grade 4. I'd rather have him at grade level before he moves because if he falls behind he won't know what to expect in the next grade. If he fails, it feels like I failed (26/11/08, 001).

Passing to the next grade, should be based on the children, but some of these kids are in school do not meet the actual grade level. Like for my daughter she is not a Grade 4 level and the teacher told me that she does not meet the Grade 4 level. But she is doing a whole lot better this year than the last couple of years (11/26/08, 003).

There again, a lot of people learn differently, we're not all identical. Some probably feel more comfortable staying longer than others and some are, like I said earlier, are really quick in the books and speed passed everyone else and are sitting there totally bored out of their mind waiting to graduate. That's the scale, probably be slower than others and a lot quicker than others. Passing to the next grade should be based on, you know that's like a humane question to answer. You don't want to be

pushing somebody back when they are not quite at the level that the government expects them to be at. That's a hard question to answer. Maybe a little of both, I don't want my children not knowing nothing at all and then passing into Grade 12 and graduating. I remember when I had to go to special ed., I was ashamed to go in there (03/31/09, 014)

I don't think, like thinking back to my old days they didn't say ok now you can cut fish, it just came to us. It was just presented to us and we had to do it. There is no such thing as going from stage to stage, we were just exposed to it. We just learned and we were just immersed in it (01/26/09, 006).

They taught us how to prepare our own foods, and how to sleep and eat out in the wilderness, and how to survive by ourselves, and how to live well on our own. They know you are ready because they groom you at an early age. By doing so, you proved yourself to them because they watch you pretty closely. Otherwise, they would never let you have a gun or snowshoes. There were certain things that you couldn't do until they said that you could do it. Observing a child learning tells you whether he can carry on into something higher (03/19/09, 011).

5.14 Provincial Testing

Parents viewed provincial testing as one mechanism for ensuring their children were prepared within the education system. It should be mentioned, that only seven of 18 parents knew about provincial testing or that the process would take place in Grade 4. Parents were often curious regarding provincial assessment and had a number of questions. I answered questions regarding the intention of the provincial assessment strategy but did not want to persuade parents in either a positive or a negative manner regarding the exam.[68]

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[68] As noted in Chapter 4, for those who indicated they did not know about provincial testing I provided a brief explanation regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment. The explanation consisted of a script informing parents the assessment is completed in Grade 4 and 7, it is compulsory for all students, it focuses on numeracy, reading and writing as foundational skills, it is used to evaluate how well students are achieving basic skills, and is reported at a provincial, district, school and individual level.

Specific to the topic of provincial assessment raised during the interview, one parent was very interested to hear of the provincial assessment and indicated that she was going to talk to her friend, who also has a child in Grade 4, about the provincial assessment. The interview also heightened her interest in assessment and education. Her friend's child attended another school in Burns Lake and she became curious about the type of programs her friend's child was receiving, and what type of reporting that school was sending home. Another parent wrote provincial assessment on her white board at home as a reminder to ask the school about the provincial assessment the next time she dropped her child off and saw her teacher.

There was consensus among parents (18/18) that provincial testing was a useful tool in order to ensure that no children fall through the cracks and the level of education a child receives is similar anywhere in the province. In one instance, caregivers were concerned that their grandson was reading at a Grade 1 level in preschool when living in Vancouver and after moving to Burns Lake for four years is now below averages in Grade 4. In their example, they also stated that the school suspended their child during the time of the Foundation Skills Assessment and he did not take part.

> They have got to catch them now. That's where all of the learning begins; the important learning begins in Grade 4. Primary is more for preparing them for Grade 4, but once they hit Grade 4 they have homework and the whole works; and that's where the testing begins. It would help me, at least concentrate on what they need. It would give me a better understanding, what I used to do at home. Get them to where they should be (01/26/09, 006).

> I think if they're in school, everybody should get the same education and if they're falling back there's a problem I think it's important to know how the

kids are doing at a young age, with my daughter. I find that to get at her now would help her out in the long run. I think that it's a good thing to get at them at an early age, if we can get her now, we can help her with the headaches in high school. If you can't read something, it's going to be difficult for her in high school and I don't want that for her (03/13/09, 009).

I want to know if he's on their level or what? He doesn't have to be smarter. I didn't finish school and when I tried to go back to complete my first aide level three I never realized how hard it was to go back. Staying with it would have been easier (03/19/09, 011).

Many parents viewed provincial testing as another tool in their understanding of how their child was progressing and felt it was important to know how they are doing compared to other children in Grade 4. Seventeen parents indicated they want to know their children are progressing compared to other children and provincial standards. The conception of parents was that the information would allow them to work with their child in areas that needed improvement. Parents, at times added the caveat that knowing how their children were doing compared to other children was only important so that they could assist them in a particular subject because children learn at their own pace and ability.

I think the provincial testing is a good thing. I agree with the provincial testing. All of the above is necessary for the education of a child. I want to know how he is doing compared to other kids, to see if they are learning what Grade Fours should be learning (03/30/09, 012)

The report cards are okay, but I am in favour of knowing where he ranks. That would help out even more, to see where he is at (04/08/09, 015).

I have heard about the provincial testing. I don't mind it, they want to see how the kids are progressing (05/06/09, 016).

5.15 Additional Forms of Assessment

Parents commented that tests as well as other forms of assessment are required to help children achieve in school. Similar to questioning regarding how teachers assess, parents were unsure as to assessment methods that schools should use, with ten parents having a response. Parents who did respond wanted various methods applied recognizing the importance of determining that children understand concepts. One parent indicated that hands on and oral assessment should be used to determine understanding, recognizing that some students' reading comprehension is low. Parents recognized that methods for assessing children's understanding of math, English or Carrier language may require different methods depending on the knowledge teachers assessed.

> Regular tests are also useful because like I said we don't live alone around here, because we do have to eventually leave the reserve to get employment, even special needs students. All forms of testing are important (03/31/09, 014).

> As for forms of testing, everybody is different and I feel that, I noticed in her, her personally it's seems like she learns a lot better when she has the opportunity to actually do it instead of just writing answers. She needs a good example where she can go out and produce a result then that's how she learns. Maybe they should put more of that into the classroom, where they are not just writing and thinking of everything in their head (05/08/09, 018).

Parents did agree communication was vital to assessment strategies. According to one parent, assessment must not only be summative, it must provide explanation to children and parents regarding areas they can practice and improve. Parents again noted that communication to both students and parents was vital to the process so everyone understood and could work together

in achieving goals. The majority of parents suggested the best way to communicate with children to understand how they are doing and relay instruction is one-on-one. Parents expressed concern that in bigger classes it is more difficult to determine if children are grasping concepts in the material. They noted having time to work directly with the student and assess them on a regular basis, providing opportunity for children to demonstrate they understand what teachers are teaching.

> I think the teachers have to keep contact with the parents like they do with me because we are partners in their education. That way we both know what happens and what should be done, what homework should be happening (01/26/09, 006).

> The teacher seems to understand how he's doing, I mean she collects all of his work and she goes to him one-on-one. If she sees something or if I mention something and when we discussed his math problem, she said she doesn't want to ask [my son] in front of the whole class, so that he feels bad about it. Stuff like that she will take him aside and talk to him (11/27/08, 004)

Parents advocated for one-on-one methods as important because many of the students lack the self-esteem to ask questions or indicate that they do not understand. Parents suggested confidence issues were amplified in First Nations students who often have self-esteem concerns, particularly regarding how they are perceived by non-First Nations peers, due to existing stereotypes. Parents indicated teachers should be cognisant of self-esteem as an important consideration in assessment as well as teaching styles. Parents specify that assessment must be done in a balanced manner that does not contribute to impaired self-esteem. Similarly, parents were concerned that testing may result

in labelling of a child that would impact them for life, including the damage

caused to self-esteem.

> You can build a child's self-esteem up with the report cards. Information is mostly bad, something negative and never when he does well. He should be able to complete the work that he is given and if he can't they should find out why? Maybe there is a little problem there and they should work on that little problem. Sometimes a word or those three letters on the end, does not look right to a kid that age. That could make a whole difference for that whole year. Sometimes they know it doesn't look right but they can't tell the teacher that (03/19/09, 011).

> She said she gets all stressed out and tired because there is no one-on-one for her at school. They need to be shown that they are special and they can learn just as much as any other children. My self-esteem is way low and I don't think too much about myself. There is nothing I can do about it. I couldn't even finish, I just couldn't (03/11/09, 008)

> I think that one-on-one time would be the best thing. As a teenager I remember not wanting to ask for help, because of that reason, feeling embarrassed to ask in front of peers. There are constant barriers when it comes to school. You feel embarrassed to be asking in front of your peers, especially when you are around a bunch of people who look at you thinking how did you not know that? You know that kind of attitude. Like I said, there needs to be more one-on-one. I felt like I didn't want to ask, maybe if someone asked me how I understood or something then maybe it would have been easier. It was hard for me to put my hand up and ask for help (05/08/09-018).

Parents suggested testing should inform practice and enable children to

meet expected outcomes rather than indicating to a child that they are unable to

complete a measure. Assessment should not be based on a deficit model and

should be completed with the assumption that children have skills and can

complete tasks if taught in a manner that makes sense to them. [69] In some cases

parents stated that formalized testing had a negative impact on their children

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[69] This is not to suggest that parents were unrealistic about some of the learning disabilities faced by some of the children. They indicated the difficult job of teachers in meeting the needs of all students and making sure all met their potential based on such factors.

because of the manner it was completed. Parents wanted opportunities for their children to practice prior to testing so that they were prepared. They also noted the high-pressure environment that testing created and the impairment it causes in many children when taking exams.

> If you're testing a child and they know that they are being tested, they are going to be nervous. If there was some way that they could at least practice for it so that they have more confidence going into it. They are not just sitting there completely dumb-founded at what's going on; with a book slapped in their face. As a student, all students are entitled to study for any test. Why are you putting these little, tiny children in a position where they are under so much pressure for something that they haven't had the opportunity to learn. I think it really helps with my daughter's confidence when I'm able to help her with quizzes and stuff like that. Get her knowing the word and in the morning and the test is coming up she says that she can't wait for her test, I know how to spell this and I know how to spell that, because she had to practice for the week (05/08/09-018).

Parents with knowledge of Carrier practice suggested one-on-one instruction and assessment methods are common to Carrier practice. According to parents, Carrier teaching and assessment is based on a model of exposing, instruction, and watching and listening, all of which fit well with parents' definition of methods that should be used.

> My mom would speak our language and she would say that she does not understand us until we speak the language. We can't get anything until we speak our language. Most of it was watching while I learned. She would look at what I just did to see if I did it right (01/12/08, 005).

> She just told me that I was ready, because I went out with her every day and learned everything. She wanted me to watch how she did it and I would do it. She sat there and told me. She showed me and watched me do it and then let me do it on my own. (03/11/09, 008)

Parents indicated that teachers or teaching assistants should monitor those who are struggling more often to ensure they are progressing. Parents

continued, stating that teachers should continually assess methods of teaching used in these cases to determine if they are the right methods.

> I want them to know that they can do it because with me with education, there is always a way to learn. If there is one way that they can't learn, then there is always another way. I'm sure that the teachers who teach know that (03/13/09, 009).

5.16 Final Remarks

This chapter provides a snapshot of the perceptions of parents of Grade 4 students within the Lake Babine Nation and what they deem as important indicators of their children's achievement in school. Specifically, parents link achievement in school to the preparation of children for university and employment. Parents recognize that an indicator of preparation for university and employment is completion of Grade 12 with the requisite skills in each grade. Parents want their children to be able to coexist within the Lake Babine Nation and the larger society and the practical skills required for coexistence include reading, writing, math and Carrier language and practices. Parents also view social skills as an important indicator of achievement.

Parents recognized the important care giving, socializing and preparatory role schools play in the lives of their children and wished to be partners in the process. Key to achievement of their children was partnership. Parents described the importance of communication between school and parents so that parents understood how children were progressing and the subjects taught so they could assist at home. Parents also viewed communication as important so the school

understood what is happening in the lives of children outside of school and the

impacts external issues have on their children's behaviour and ability to learn.

In terms of understanding of academic assessment, parents often did not

know how teachers were completing assessment in the classroom and few

parents knew about provincial testing taking place in Grade 4. Parents agreed to

the importance of various methods of assessment, including one-on-one time

and large-scale assessment, to determine how children are progressing. Parents

viewed assessment as a tool for determining subject knowledge. They wanted

high standards for their children and did not want their children pushed through

the system without meeting standards. One concern parents relayed regarding

assessment was doing so in a manner that does not damage children's self-

esteem. According to parents, testing should inform practice and assist children

in meeting desired outcomes rather than only providing information regarding

areas where children are not doing well.

6: CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Caveat

The sample size of this study is very specific and is meant to reflect the culture, geography and local knowledge of the Lake Babine Nation and may or may not be generalizeable to other First Nations. The schools, the First Nations parents and the students who form a portion of the school system are heterogeneous and need to be treated as such. This research recognized the lack of parent dialogue regarding assessment and intentionally sought the perspective of parents in order to bring their voice forward. The research is intended to illustrate, from the perspective of parents, the possible disconnect between policy, services and the perceptions of parents. For example, while strategies may be in place at a school and district level to improve such things as communication, the strategies were not always known by parents in this study. I provide recommendations to enhance work already being done by schools that are reflective of the views of the group of parents interviewed. Areas for further

research include looking at the specific components of effective communication for educators and Aboriginal parents; examining educator perspective on communication; and examining educator perspective on the assessment of Aboriginal students.

6.2 Discussion

In this dissertation, Lake Babine Nation parents of Grade 4 children deem communication as a primary tool that links home and school, facilitating feedback of their children's achievement in school. The two main outcomes or indicators parents noted as wanting their children to achieve from school were graduation and completion of subjects including math, English (reading, writing), and Carrier language and culture. The goal of these parents was to ensure that their children could meet typical standards for children in Grade 4. Completion of subjects and graduation should be connected because Lake Babine students may ultimately complete Grade 12, but parents believe that many have done so with a leaving certificate rather than a Dogwood diploma, limiting their post graduation options and reflecting a lack of basic skills. Parents were concerned about children being pushed through the system without the required skills in each grade and felt that passing to the next grade should be based on achieving determined skills and standards for the grade. Parents emphasized education as necessary for obtaining adequate employment and viewed education as a tool for establishing a better life. They recognize that in order for their children to improve their lives they must graduate. Many of the parents in the study who did not graduate

recognized the barrier this created to employment and financial stability in their own lives.

Parents supported measures such as provincial testing to ensure the level of education a child receives is similar anywhere in the province. Parents viewed provincial testing as another tool, along with other classroom-based measures, in their understanding of how their child was progressing. They suggested aligning of the local context with provincial or national assessments could help the district and parents understand where their children fit within the larger society.

Parents who did respond to questions about the best assessment methods wanted various methods used, recognizing the importance of multiple approaches to determine understanding. The LBN Steering Committee noted methods including hands on and oral assessment should also be used to determine understanding, recognizing that while some students' reading comprehension is low, they may understand the overall concept. Parents distinguished that assessment will vary depending on the subject (e.g. math, English or Carrier language), and that teachers must recognize the appropriate tools of measurement, engaging in various assessment methods.

Historically, as noted in Chapter 2, the role of assessment has changed. The democratization of education and employment demands have shaped assessment methods in the past and must continue to adapt to meet the needs of First Nations students. The demographic composition of the Lake Babine Nation, as with many other First Nations, is a young population representing a large group entering the school system and workforce. Parents noted they

wanted their children prepared for employment and felt that assessment methods

that do not ensure Lake Babine youth are performing as well as their peers

throughout the province can have far-reaching and damaging effects on Lake

Babine young people, their community, and Canadian society.

This research has implications for the research design of others interested

in working with marginalized groups. The research methods serve as a template

for communication, trust and understanding required for an outsider to build

relationships necessary for working with First Nations, whether in research or in

service provision. Communication included discussion with leadership regarding

the utility of the topic and inclusion of community members in research design,

question development and data analysis. Relationship building required

participation in events outside of the research project and a demonstrated

commitment to learning.

6.3 Key Findings

Communication

Parents identified communication between the school and home as an

important component of student success in school. Communication is an

important component of parents obtaining and using information received about

their children. Parents also viewed communication as central to them being

involved in the education system and the assessment of their children. Parents

wanted as much information as possible in order to know how their child was

doing but also to enable them to assist their child in an appropriate manner. One

observation based on the level of education of some of the parents and their identified difficulty in assisting children in Grade 4, is that communication to parents should be easily understandable and provide specific directions, recognizing literacy issues among some parents.

Communication Formats

Schools provided various sources of information including report cards, letters to parents, newsletters and a daily journal. Parents overwhelmingly noted the journal signed by the parent and teacher that children were required to bring home daily, or in some cases weekly, as the most important tool for consistent information exchange. Direct conversation is also useful, and in some cases was very frequent, however this may be difficult to maintain with each parent, and the journal provided up to date information on what children were doing in class. A number of parents viewed the journal as a manner of daily communication and integral to knowing how their child was progressing and what they were being taught, and thus what parents should focus on at home. For parents who discussed report cards, they noted considering report cards useful in obtaining information about their child but also noted information could be clearer and more specific. Child specific information, learning needs and tutoring strategies offer parents direction on areas where they can provide assistance at home. As noted by the LBN Steering Committee and addressed by two parents in the study, communication with the parent is vital if teachers are to understand the

circumstances of the home-lives of each child and act accordingly to meet the needs of the child in the classroom.

Communication Frequency

The range of communication varied between participants—from daily communication through phone calls and journal entries to meetings only once during the school year. As a result, communication activities may be strengthened through monitoring at the school level, or development and enforcement of a district wide policy on parental communication. The children who were in most need of assistance and stated by parents as often being in trouble at school, or having poor attendance or marks, were most often the ones who lacked a strong communication network between parents and teacher. When problems occurred and children did not bring their journal home or the teacher stopped providing information in the journal there was no mechanism for ensuring communication took place. Parents knew the communication stream was broken, but did not know how to effectively re-establish contact or did not feel empowered to act. [70] Assisting in rebuilding relationships and opening lines of communication may be an area of action for the Aboriginal support worker.

Additional sources of communication that allow direct contact with the parent, including electronic communication or regular phone calls could be examined as they might help mitigate the student responsibility for bringing home important paperwork. An observation of the researcher was that the majority of

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[70] This is the parent perspective. The teacher's perspective may be different regarding attempts to contact parents or reasons for not contacting parents.

parents had computers. Such a system may have benefited various parents in this study whose children told them that nothing was being sent home. As many mediums as possible that will help parents feel involved with what their children are doing are critical for maintaining parent-school connection.

Schools also have to ensure that communication is built into plans because despite wanting to be involved, and indicating that they were comfortable going to the school (two frequently mentioned barriers in previous studies), many parents only went to the school when invited to events. In American research, the amount of parent involvement in school-sponsored events was also linked to poverty, with parents living in poverty less likely to attend events including open houses and parent teacher meetings (Carey, Lewis & Farris, 1998). With a large portion of parents from First Nations communities living in poverty, diversity of strategies for communication must be considered.

Historical Factors impacting Communication

Due to past experience at residential school and priests and nuns being positioned as ultimate authorities, many Lake Babine parents have been trained to sit back and observe rather than being forward (Fiske, 1981; LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009). As a result, they may not go to the school unless invited. Additionally, their behaviour while at the school for meetings may be reserved, as they may feel it is disrespectful to challenge the teachers or be ill

equipped to do so.[71] Passive conduct is much more common in a situation where parents are out of their own community in a place such as a school, which parents still see as dominated by people outside of the Carrier culture (LBN Steering Committee, November 6, 2009). Passive nature can also be perceived as apathy—an assumption shown to be incorrect based on this research.

> That standing in the corner comes from residential schools. I am a survivor and you have been told to keep quiet and sit in your place and if you speak up watch out… At the meetings at the school, I wonder how many people think they are in trouble because they are called to a meeting?.. I'd rather sit in the back, it's a big challenge just to be there (LBN Steering Committee Meeting, November 6, 2009).

The classroom itself is a convergence of Carrier and non-Carrier systems in which past experience has shown the teacher as professional and someone to be listened to but also follows cultural norms where there is an expectation that the teacher is the expert. Teachers should engage parents and initiate conversation, much as a knowledge holder at a community level would be the one to engage listeners.

This does not suggest that agendas and communication be unidirectional but rather requires reciprocal decision-making. Pushor and Murphy (2004) argue typically the agenda is set by the school, and parents serve that agenda receiving information from the schools about their children and their programs but rarely asked to give information. Pushor and Murphy (2004) continue

> Given the privileging of expert professional knowledge, combined with infrequently scheduled opportunities to meet with parents, teachers often take control of the agenda at meet the teacher nights, at parent-teacher conferences, or in meetings with parents... In such moments teachers

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[71] It should be mentioned that Lake Babine parents have a variety of styles that reflect the diversity of the Nation and this information is discussed to provide suggestions reflected in the study.

review curriculum, report on student progress and share concerns about student learning or behaviour with little time provided for parent input (p.234).

As identified by participants in this research, communication with parents and First Nations communities is needed to build trust, and is important when addressing any specific student issues. Parents and First Nations community resources are a key contact for understanding children as well as allies in preventing misbehaviour and conflicts. Teachers must learn about community in order to understand how parents impart expectations of their children. Communication strategies will help parents to understand what is going on at school and to clarify doubts when there are problems. If the relationship is solidified and communication is in place early, educators and parents can be united in addressing concerns when they arise as opposed to parents feeling that they are only contacted when something goes wrong. Harris (2009) suggests that educators must ensure that children experience a learning context that is continuous between home and school. Collaborating with parents in the education of their children will ensure continuity between education emphasized at school and at home. Parental involvement in the lower grades will help children to create positive academic habits, do homework, prevent absence, promote positive attitudes toward school and help to maintain an orderly school climate.

Communication to Help Parents Assist Their Children

The results chapter reflected that Lake Babine parents want the best for their children but may not be able to provide the guidance to reach goals such as university or other post-secondary institutions. All children had at least one caregiver who worked on homework with their child or grandchild. However, the education levels of parents suggest they would benefit from partnerships with the schools[72] to help them better understand school assessments and provide specific feedback regarding areas of focus and tutoring strategies they might use to help their children. The level of input into homework by parents in this study was also commensurate with the level of education of parents. While some parents stressed the importance of education and homework, and sat with their child and listened to them read or practice other skills, they were not as comfortable assisting directly with homework. [73] While this was not as much of a concern for their children in Grade 4, parents with children in higher grades noted the progressing difficulty in providing assistance.

It is imperative that schools provide parents with the tools necessary for assisting their children in maximizing their potential, including adequate information in a format parents can understand. Inadequate preparation of parents is an obstacle to the effective use of assessment. Teachers must work with parents to ensure parents can accurately use information for encouraging

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[72] By schools I mean specific individuals in the schools (whether teachers, Aboriginal Support Workers etc.) because relationships were noted as key in parents seeking out support.

[73] Reading at home is noted by Rumberger (1995) as a positive indication of parental involvement in schooling, which has been shown to be associated with improved school performance.

their children to achieve and assisting them in areas where they require assistance.

Trust

The colonial history, as reflected in Chapter 3, has aided in the disruption of Lake Babine cultural, political and economic systems resulting in mistrust or apprehension that is magnified when parents are not involved in their children's education. The worldviews of the Western system are embedded in the education system and at times conflict with parent's views. Parents of the Lake Babine Nation live within two cultures and worldviews, and work to reconcile differences in ways of understanding. Despite historical issues, parents have a degree of faith that the current education system is a tool for an improved life.

Trust of Schools

Parents noted wanting to be involved in assessment and gain a better understanding of the methods used. Despite historical issues, parents believe educators were properly assessing their children and wanted various methods used to ensure a holistic approach to measurement. Parents noted involvement in assessment as an important support for their confidence that the schools were maintaining high standards for their children. They wish to know the specific indicators educators are using and how their children are progressing measured against those indicators. They also wanted to know how their children are progressing compared to other students in order to promote equal participation.

The negative parent reactions to the imposition of extra reading classes found in this research provide one example of the mistrust that can occur when parents are not informed of assessment methods and progression of their child. When programs seem to be tracked to First Nations specifically, parents may see them as unequal. While the literature suggests the importance of added reading classes, parents in this study did not understand or believe in the benefits of such classes, nor did they think they would lead to student improvement.

Trust of the Education System

Parents suggested passing to the next grade should be based on acquiring skills and were concerned that many Lake Babine children were being pushed through the system without an adequate skill and knowledge base. While the research on retention and promotion is complicated (and beyond the scope of this study), parents clearly expressed the need for access to data that can help them understand the progress of their children, and approved of standardized tests, such as the Foundation Skills Assessment, as one measure of assurance that their children were meeting appropriate grade-level standards. Similarly, parents see the Dogwood as an important indicator of achievement.

> Can you imagine if you thought your child was doing fine and then find out that you are actually not? It's no wonder they don't finish Grade 12. It's time that we demand that the school tests the children. We have a right to demand that. That's where we can voice stuff like that. We should not sign Learning Enhancement Agreements until we demand the proper attention for our children (LBN Steering Committee November 6, 2009).

Parents in this study expressed the importance of cultural knowledge as well as subject knowledge. As such, districts should look at ways to equalize the

treatment of cultural knowledge, and this includes consideration of assessment strategies. Parents noted wanting an education system that meets their needs in terms of curriculum that is reflective of Western and Carrier knowledge and parental involvement ensures these goals are met. Based on the comments of parents in this study, educators must work to ensure students are academically successful while maintaining and developing their First Nations identity. This perspective is strongly supported by previous research (Battiste, 2000; Helin, 2006; Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

Harmony and Social Responsibility Connected to Trust

Harmony and social responsibility were core values of learning noted as important to parents of Lake Babine Nation, particularly on reserve. Parents indicated the connection of harmony and social responsibility to issues such as bullying that impact the culture of the school and their children's academic performance. Parents felt bullying resulted in their children rejecting the school system. They suggest bullying impacted marks and, if not dealt with, eventually may lead to their child dropping out. Past treatment is still a concern for parents and parents viewed bullying as one aspect of a continuation of historical racism that reduced trust in the school and teachers who did not address the situation. Parents also deemed that if teachers did not deal with their concerns teachers were perpetuating racism and devaluing their children resulting in a loss of trust.

6.4 Recommendations

Communications Systems

To address many of the issues identified in this research, schools may wish to involve First Nations communities in developing a formal parent communication system that: 1. Defines communication; 2. Defines key components of communication; 3. Defines tools to support communication; 4. Defines appropriate venues for communication; and 5. Defines responsibilities.

Communication, as described by the parents in this study, is the manner in which they are involved in the school and relates specifically to the information received about their child and the exchange of information by parents regarding the culture their children bring to class. When dealing with parents from different social, cultural and historical backgrounds, as with First Nations, communication between parents and teachers is even more important because of the increased barriers to understanding. Teachers require information regarding the values, beliefs and practices of children and their parents in order to create learning environments that will contribute to learning. Parents require specific information regarding what teachers are doing in the classroom to assess children and provide feedback to parents so that parents can assist their children to improve.

Key components of communication may include expectations of both parent and teacher including frequency of communication, information required, and communication formats. It was clear from this research that parents viewed certain forms of communication such as journals as working and others, based on technology as areas to be enhanced to support children and parents. My

observation of the communities was that social media is playing an increasing role in parent's lives. Report cards and other tools are also important but parents noted needing specific information that they can apply.

Venues are also important so that power imbalances between schools and First Nations parents can be remedied. Venue and method are particularly important to improving communication. Parents noted that events such as parent teacher interviews felt very structured and rushed. In one case, the teacher told the parent they must move quickly because the teacher was falling behind. Parents suggested that having to sign in at the office or make an appointment prior to entering the school was not welcoming and sent both conscious and unconscious messages about the importance of communication. Parents expressed negative past experiences with the school system and perceived insensitivity or hostility and providing neutral sites for communication to occur or even meeting parents in their own community, provides a demonstration of meaningful and responsive communication.[74]

It may also be useful to hold meetings in settings that are appropriate to First Nations parents and in non-school environments. As noted by an LBN Steering Committee member:

> We invited the Principal and he came up. What an uncomfortable feeling when you are not in your own setting. They have to leave their building once in a while for meetings. Now he knows how the parents feel…We've also said that the teachers need to come to our comfort zone. We invite all of the schools here. That is where you will find out who will make an effort to get to know their child's life. If this person has enough respect to come, I will respect him/her. You don't know all of the teachers. You get

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[74] The Lake Babine Nation now holds an education night were they invite teachers to the community.

to know who the teachers are at the schools. You go to find out who was approachable and who is not (November 6, 2009).

Teachers building trust requires meeting parents in settings outside of the school and beyond specific school sanctioned events, where power imbalances are reduced and the voice of parents strengthened. The LBN Steering Committee viewed teachers who were willing to come to the community as demonstrating effort and respect for First Nations parents. The trust built by the act of a home visit improved communication for the school year. A Steering committee member continued,

> When I went to school, we had genuine teachers that liked you as an Aboriginal child. They even came to visit us on reserve. My parents could not believe the teacher wanted to come to my house. They really liked her that she was respectful enough and kind enough to visit. After that any time my dad had a concern he contacted the teacher and they sorted it out together (November 6, 2009).

Based on recommendations from the LBN Steering Committee and supported by this research, home visits and participation in other community events should be a regular part of education delivery. The reciprocal nature of these events requires that the Lake Babine Nation also take an active role in organizing and inviting school personnel to community events. This can include events specific to education and other cultural events such as *bah'lats* or food harvesting that the Lake Babine Nation feel will create greater understanding of their community, and as a result, parents. Cross-cultural understanding requires that the Lake Babine reach out as often outsiders to the Lake Babine Nation may find it difficult to extend outside of the school system without formal invitation, just as parents noted entering the school without a specific occasion.

The school districts might wish to implement monthly multiple-family group meetings, adopting an integrated approach by involving teachers and other supports such as the Aboriginal Support workers, would allow educators to consult with and inform families regarding what is taking place in school and would provide the opportunity to set up additional individual meetings regarding concerns specific to parents. Group meetings reflect traditional approaches to community planning and problem solving and may provide a less formal occasion for parents to meet with the teacher and as a result feel comfortable setting up individual meetings to discuss specific concerns related to their child. Groups could also be set up according to student need such as reading, or discipline and plans developed and monitored as a group.

Defining responsibilities is important to ensuring all parties understand their role in the communication strategy and that responsibility for monitoring of communication is assigned, and parties supported, if communication breaks down. This research indicates that while communication was excellent in some cases, communication had broken down in other examples and there was no mechanism for overseeing parent teacher communication as a core function of education. At a district level, districts may want to implement a formal communication structure, based on the definition of communication and formats, with measurable outcomes that parties could report to the Aboriginal Education Board as well as school administrators to monitor and support home and school communication. At a classroom level, it may also be useful for parents and teachers to meet and agree to expectations and define roles and responsibilities,

and formalize these agreements so that disputes in expectations can be resolved through various channels. As noted in this dissertation, parents and teachers share responsibility for the education of children and as a result, children will benefit from parents and teachers sharing similar goals and communicating with one another.

6.5 Implications

Parents were clear that they wanted access to progress reports and ability to monitor the performance of their children, and working together, parents and educators could establish common frameworks for reporting and the communication of student outcomes. Educators and parents could meet to decide upon common goals that could be reinforced and reflective of both the home and school environment. Contracts between schools and parents could include parents agreeing to support the school and their children and the school agreeing to support children in their achievement of established goals. Parents, educators and administrators could then be provided necessary training to ensure they are able to meet their commitments.

While strides have been made to increase the involvement of parents and this research provides examples of improved communication, improvement can still be made. This research showed a relationship between parent satisfaction with communication and their child's performance. Without change, we risk seeing continued low achievement rates and a gap between Lake Babine children and other citizens, particularly for the at-risk students who would most

benefit from improved communication. If achievement is to improve, parents

must be involved in and understand the system. Change is a joint responsibility.

While educators and administrators must take responsibility for working with

parents, parents must also take responsible for reaching out to the schools—

ultimately supporting improved outcomes for BC's Aboriginal students.

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7: REFERENCE LIST

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8: APPENDIX A: LBN RESEARCH PROTOCOL

LAKE BABINE NATION/RESEARCHER
ASSESSMENT RESEARCH
RESEARCH PROTOCOL AGREEMENT

BETWEEN:

Lake Babine Nation

AND:

Travis Holyk
             (hereinafter "The Researcher")

WHEREAS:

A. Travis Holyk in the fulfillment of his Doctorate of Education Degree at Simon Fraser University must complete research.

B. Travis Holyk with the assistance of the Lake Babine Nation intends to undertake research for the purposes of understanding parent's perceptions of academic assessment.

C. The Lake Babine Nation wishes to collaborate in the research project- *U'h Nook Noh Ga'nah* (in our words): Understanding of Student Assessment by Lake Babine Nation Parents- with the Researcher for the benefit of its membership.

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The parties enter into this agreement for the following purposes:

    a. To define the roles and responsibilities of each party in the research process.

    b. To ensure that the Lake Babine Nation assessment research is conducted in a respectful, professional and ethical manner.

    c. To define policy for archiving and management of research materials.

1

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. The Researcher is responsible for completing the research and employing individuals such as transcribers who may be needed in the fulfillment of the project. Wherever possible, these individuals will be members of the Lake Babine Nation.

2.2. The Researcher, with assistance from the Lake Babine Nation will establish a Steering Committee, reflecting Elected Leadership, Hereditary Leadership, and individuals involved in education at the Lake Babine Nation.

2.3. The Researcher is responsible for any costs associated with honorariums paid to interview participants. Honorariums will be paid at the Researcher's discretion in consultation with the Lake Babine Nation in order to adhere to generally accepted policies for payment of honorariums within the Nation.

2.4. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation, will ensure that at all times the researcher conducts interviews and pursues research activities in a manner that is consistent with the highest standards of ethical and scholarly social scientific practices as noted by the Research Ethics Board of Simon Fraser University.

2.5. The Lake Babine Nation will provide the Researcher with names and contact information of parents who have school-aged children as required. The Researcher will make the request to the education department at the Lake Babine Nation.

2.6. The Lake Babine Nation will provide the Researcher with space to conduct interviews if required.

3. ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. The Researcher, prior to conducting research with the Lake Babine Nation, will obtain research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board.

3.2. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation and in accordance with SFU Research Ethics guidelines, will ensure that each potential interview candidate voluntarily gives her or his informed consent to participate in the interview process. Informed consent includes a potential interview candidate freely agreeing to participate in the interview process based on information provided including, but not limited to, who is conducting the research, the purposes of the research, information use and storage and statements of confidentiality.

2

3.3. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation and in accordance with SFU Research Ethics guidelines, will ensure that potential interview participants are fully informed of potential risks and possible benefits of their participation.

3.4. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation and in accordance with SFU Research Ethics guidelines, will ensure that potential interview participants are given adequate opportunity to discuss and contemplate their participation in the interview process.

3.5. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation and in accordance with SFU Research Ethics guidelines, will ensure that potential interview participant are provided with the name and contact information for a person who may be contacted in case of concerns and/or complaints regarding the research.

3.6. The Researcher, in collaboration with the Lake Babine Nation and in accordance with SFU Research Ethics guidelines, will ensure that potential interview participants are aware that their participation is voluntary and that at any time they are entitled to withdraw their consent to participate in the interview process or decline to answer a question without sanction.

4. RESEARCH MATERIAL

4.1. The researcher will collect and house the data for the period of time necessary to complete his dissertation.

4.2. Upon completion of his dissertation, the Researcher will archive copies of the research material in facilities designated by Carrier Sekani Family Services for those purposes in trust for the Lake Babine Nation. The Researcher will have the right to access and use the Research Materials for reports and scholarly articles in perpetuity. Any new use of the Research Materials, not outlined above, will require consent of the Lake Babine Nation.

4.3. The researcher will destroy material, including lists of participant names provided by the Lake Babine Nation after the researcher completes a final report accepted by the Lake Babine Nation.

4.4. During the research process, the Researcher will restrict access to research material to only those persons whose access is necessary for the purposes of the research project. Access by any other party will require the express written consent of the participants.

4.5. The Researcher will provide copies of interview transcripts to participants for their review and comments.

3

5. FINAL REPORT

5.1. The Researcher will provide the results of the questionnaires, in the form of a report, at a Steering Committee meeting and will provide a copy of the final research report to the Lake Babine Nation.

5.2. The Researcher will be the owner of the final research report, Dissertation and any articles/publications resulting from the research and written by the researcher.

5.3. The information provided to the Researcher by the participants remains the property of the participants.

6. BREACH OF CONTRACT

6.1. Breach of the terms of this agreement by the Researcher may result in the Lake Babine Nation withdrawing their participation in the research.

AGREEMENT has been executed on behalf of the Lake Babine Nation and on behalf of the Researcher as of this _4th_ day of _Sept_ , 2008.

FOR LAKE BABINE NATION

Chief _Betty Patrick._

THE RESEARCHER

Travis Holyk

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9: APPENDIX B: LBN LETTER OF APPROVAL

Lake Babine Nation

225 SUS AVENUE,
P.O. BOX 879
BURNS LAKE, B.C. V0J 1E0

TEL: (250) 692-4700
FAX: (250) 692-4790

June 2, 2008

Simon Fraser University
Office of Research Ethics
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Multi-Tenant Facility
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6

Re: *U'H NOOK NOH GA'NAH* (IN OUR WORDS): LAKE BABINE
NATION PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL
ASSESSMENT

On behalf of the Chief and Council of the Lake Babine Nation, this letter
is in support of Travis Holyk's proposal to undertake research regarding
assessment within our nation. We recognize the connection education has
to community well being and while we have made great strides in
improving education within our nation, graduation rates continue to fall
behind the general population. Assessment has always been a challenge
for our nation as we struggle to ensure tools are fair and meet the needs of
our students.

This project represents an excellent opportunity for partnership with
Simon Fraser University in strengthening the role of Indigenous peoples in
the academic system. Ensuring a voice for parents will make the education
setting a more welcoming place for parents and students, hopefully
improving student outcomes.

We are pleased that this research respects the important role parents play
in the education of their children by engaging them in dialogue and
documenting their views.

Sincerely,

Chief Betty Patrick

10: APPENDIX C: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Information:

1. Do you live on reserve off reserve?

2. Are you currently employed?

   1. Yes
   2. No

3. If *employed,* What type of work do you do?

4. Do you feel you have enough money to support your basic needs (clothing, food, shelter)

   1. Yes
   2. No

5. What is your monthly income?

   1. 0-500
   2. 501-1000
   3. 1001-2000
   4. 2001-3000
   5. 3001-4000
   6. 4001-5000
   7. 5001+

6. What is the highest level of education you completed (Father, Mother Guardian)?

   1. Grade _____
   2. High school – Dogwood
   3. High School- Leaving School Certificate
   4. College Trade
   5. University Degree
   6. University Masters Degree

7. What is the highest Level of Education your spouse completed?
    1. Grade _____
    2. High school – Dogwood
    3. High School- Leaving School Certificate
    4. College Trade
    5. University Degree
    6. University Masters Degree

8. How many Children do you have?

9. What age are they?

10. What grade are they in?

11. Do you assist your child with home work?

12. Have you met your child's teacher?

Open Questions

1. What does education mean to you?

2. How do we know someone is educated (Cultural and/or Western)?

3. What do you want your child to achieve from school?

4. What is it you would like your child to learn at school?

5. What is the role of a school in your child's life?

6. How should we determine success in school?

7. What kinds of information do you receive about your child?

    a. How often? When?

8. How do you use this information?

9. On an ongoing basis, what strategies do you use to check how your son/daughter is progressing in school?

10. What do you think teachers are doing in the classroom to understand how your child is doing?

11. What do you feel would be the best way for teachers to find out how your child is doing in school?

12. What form of testing would help students achieve in both Carrier and Western culture?

13. How do you feel about provincial testing in Grade 4?

14. Do you want to know how your son/daughter is progressing compared to other children his/her age?

15. How could schools make it easier for you to be involved in testing your child's progress in school?

16. When you think about your child's understanding in school, do you agree with the results of school tests?

17. What should passing to the next grade be based on?

Interview Protocol

1. I began each interview by discussing and having participants sign the Informed Consent By Participants in a Research Study form (Attached as Appendix D). Parents were also informed that permission was obtained by Chief and Council to conduct the research and a Steering Committee made up of community members assisted in the project design and questions. Participants were informed that Chief and Council and the Steering Committee would not have access to who participated in the study and only aggregate information with no identifying information would be presented.

   No information was recorded until consent was obtained from the participant.

2. I requested permission to tape record interviews.

If participants spoke while recorder was off, I recorded notes and sought approval for inclusion in the project. Occasions where this happened included when a break was taken because of a phone call or other interruption and information was provided prior to being able to turn on the tape recorder. Or, when an interview had been concluded and a person then added information as I was leaving the tape recorded was no longer available. Notes were included at the end of transcripts sent to each participant in order to ensure accuracy of information.

3. I used same questions at each site. Prompts were used if required. Prompts included repetition of parts of answers and asking if the participant had anything else add or clarifying the response by asking did you mean?... Examples of additional Prompts included:
    1. Would it be important to you that your child learned her traditions?
    2. How often does this happen?
    3. So that would be helpful… can you explain
    4. Any other things that you can think of?
    5. Can you think of a better way they could do it [assessment]?

4. At times participants did not understand a question and explanation was provided. Further explanation was only provided if parents did not understand and either did not respond, clearly indicating they did not understand or asked directly what was meant.

    1. How do we know someone is educated (Cultural and/or Western)? By cultural it was explained as If you looked at a person from the community what would make you say they were educated in LBN or Carrier traditions. Western was defined as Nedo or White education if the term was not understood.
    2. What is the role of a school in your child's life? Thinking of the roles people play in the lives of a child, children are at school for quite a few hours per day, what do you see as the role of the school in your son's life?
    3. How do you feel about provincial testing in Grade 4? Many parents were unaware of provincial testing. I first asked if parents knew about provincial testing or had heard about the Foundation Skills Assessment. If they were unsure, they were informed of the Foundation Skills Assessment through the following script: Assessment is completed in grade 4 and 7. Every child in public school must participate. The assessment focuses on numbers, reading and writing which the Ministry of Education has determined are the foundational skills that each child needs in order to be successful in the school system. It is used to evaluate how well students are achieving basic skills, and is reported at a provincial,

district, school and individual level (which means you will receive results). Parents were encouraged to contact their school if they wanted more information.

4. When you think about your child's understanding in school, do you agree with the results of school tests? When you read with or help your daughter with her homework, when you think about how she is doing, is it similar to the information sent home?

5. What is your monthly income?
   1. 0-500
   2. 501-1000
   3. 1001-2000
   4. 2001-3000
   5. 3001-4000
   6. 4001-5000
   7. 5001+

Some Participants were uncomfortable stating their income. When this happened I gave them the option of circling a category themselves on the question sheet.

11: APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT BY PARTICIPANTS IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Form 2- Informed Consent By Participants In a Research Study

The University and those conducting this research study subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of participants. This research is being conducted under permission of the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board. The chief concern of the Board is for the health, safety and psychological well-being of research participants.

Should you wish to obtain information about your rights as a participant in research, or about the responsibilities of researchers, or if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the manner in which you were treated in this study, please contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics by email at hweinber@sfu.ca or phone at 778-782-6593.

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document which describes the procedures, whether there are possible risks, and benefits of this research study, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the documents describing the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Title: U'H NOOK NOH GA'NAH (IN OUR WORDS): LAKE BABINE NATION PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Investigator Name: Travis Holyk

Investigator Department: Education

Having been asked to participate in the research study named above, I certify that I have read the procedures specified in the Study Information Document describing the study. I understand the procedures to be used in this study and the personal risks to me in taking part in the study as described below:

Purpose and goals of this study:

The goal of this research is to analyze Lake Babine Nation parents' perceptions of assessment in primary school. The analysis includes definitions of student achievement and the concept of education from a Lake Babine Nation perspective.

 What the participants will be required to do:

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will take roughly one to two hours to complete, during which time you will be asked to respond to questions asked by the researcher.

Risks to the participant, third parties or society:

There are no perceived risks to participating in this study.

Benefits of study to the development of new knowledge:

This project will allow parents direct involvement in the development and maintenance of their children's education through discussion and awareness of assessment. The knowledge created can build reference to First Nation perspectives regarding assessment and may inform policy and practice for all stakeholders working with First Nations. The overall goal is to improve First Nation children's outcomes in school by improving the school system. Assessment plays a large role in the school system and as a result should involve parents.

Statement of confidentiality: The data of this study will maintain confidentiality of your name and the contributions you have made to the extent allowed by the law.

All the information the researcher collects from you (Your Research Material) will be kept confidential and your anonymity will be protected. Interviews will be tape recorded (with consent), and transcribed as soon after the interview as possible. Transcripts will be identified by code only, with identifying information kept in a locked cabinet separate from tapes and transcripts. The researcher will provide you with full transcripts of your interview so that you have the opportunity to reply with comments or changes.

Interview of employees about their company or agency:

Permission has been obtained from Chief and Council of the Lake Babine Nation to conduct this study.

Inclusion of names of participants in reports of the study:

Names will not be used in the final report. Your perspective and knowledge will be included in the dissertation without identifying information.

Contact of participants at a future time or use of the data in other studies:

Upon completion of his dissertation, the Researcher will archive copies of the research material in facilities designated by Carrier Sekani Family Services for those purposes in trust for the Lake Babine Nation. The Researcher will have the right to access and use the Research Materials for reports and scholarly articles. Any new use of the Research Materials (beyond reports and scholarly articles of the researcher) will require you and the Lake Babine Nation to provide consent.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time. I also understand that I may register any complaint with the Director of the Office of Research Ethics.

Dr. Hal Weinberg
Director, Office of Research Ethics
Office of Research Ethics
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Multi-Tenant Facility
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6
hal_weinberg@sfu.ca

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion by contacting:

Travis Holyk Carrier Sekani Family Service 987 4th Ave Prince George BC V2L 3H7
Via written request

I understand the risks and contributions of my participation in this study and agree to participate:

The participant and witness shall fill in this area. Please print legibly

Participant Last Name:

Participant First Name:

Participant Contact Information:

Participant Signature (for adults):

Witness (if required by the Office of Research Ethics):

Date (use format MM/DD/YYYY)

Contact at a future time / use of data in other studies