

**JUST EVALUATION:
USING HOLISTIC AND QUALITATIVE METHODS WITHIN
A FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSE**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ADULT EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

Based on a personal belief that justice and freedom of humankind is predicated on the ability of individuals of all cultures to learn and seek truth for themselves, this study focuses on the need for individuals to evaluate what they know, what they want to learn, and their ability to think critically and learn. This study seeks credible ways of documenting individual learning beyond the set criteria of success for a course.

The context of this study is a university/college preparation program at a First Nation adult college. A set of qualitative evaluative processes are explored for their potential to form a holistic overview of group learning, strengths, weaknesses, and needs; to assess individual student learning needs and accomplishments; to manifest use of cognition and transfer of learning; to reveal cultural orientation; to foster self-confidence and independence; and to produce usable documentation. The criterion for each of the methods used is that they are compatible with First Nation values with respect to evaluation and human interaction.

The outcome of the study supports the use of qualitative evaluative processes in a formal adult learning context to explore and reveal individual needs and meaning from the perspective of the students.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to

- the students who have taught me so much,
- colleagues that have been patient,
- my advisors who have offered eternal encouragement and support along this path,
- my family that has been neglected,
- my Aunt and Uncle who have been a source of encouragement and support throughout this venture,
- those in the future with whom I will share my learning,
- aspects of my self that have been neglected during this journey, and
- all the spiritual realities that have guided this search.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Learning is a lifelong process in any culture. Humans are driven internally to grow and to know. As the pace of global learning escalates, many individuals find themselves in the position of forced assimilation into a new culture of knowledge in order to adapt to an ever-changing way of life. As a Baha'i serving as an adult educator in a Cree cultural college, I have been internally guided by belief in the oneness of humankind and a destined role of the Native peoples in a global society; when educated, they will be able to illumine all of humankind ('Abdu'l-Baha, 1977). A statement by the Baha'i International Community (1995) illustrates the Baha'i perspective on learning:

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Baha'u'llah avers, "Justice is 'the best beloved of all things'" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbour or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgements, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life. . . . The activity most intimately linked to the consciousness that distinguishes human nature is the individual's exploration of reality for himself or herself. The freedom to investigate the purpose of existence and to develop the endowments of human nature that make it achievable requires protection. Human beings must be free to know. (pp. 8-9)

As Native peoples struggle to maintain and adapt their own cultures to a modern world without total assimilation, their right to learn and know in ways true to themselves must be justly protected. Within this context, it is the role of educators to evaluate learning in a way that protects the freedom of the individuals to learn and to seek truth for themselves, as well as to facilitate the development of the individuals as holistic/global learners capable of critical thinking, perspective transformation, and adaptability to cultures and situations of their choice.

Background Information

Evaluation within a First Nations learning context has been examined by several First Nations adult educators. Lightning (1992) calls for a unification of evaluation of learning with a philosophy of educating for balance, harmony, and well-being for the human condition. How do educators evaluate achievement of the goals of harmony, balance and well-being? Aboriginal peoples do not set time lines on specific learning; “All people learn according to their specific needs at a particular time. . . . If a learning experience is not successful it is not considered a failure” (Charter, 1994, p. 30). The teacher does not judge the outcome of learning; the learner compares the outcome to the model and assesses whether more learning is necessary. When success is achieved, it is known to the learner. The Cree culture has always emphasized the right of the individual to make choices at every step of life with very little interference or judgement by others. Charter refers to the four stages of life that people are guided through by those who have gone before, but based on the “cultural imperatives of non-interference, non-competitiveness, sharing, and the valuing of experiential learning” (p. 39). If it is to be the students who judge their own learning, and make choices for further learning based on knowledge of their own performance compared to a standard of expectation, they need a broad range of learning and evaluative skills. They need to be able to set goals, learn by modelling, choose their methods of learning and resources, gain skill in learning, and be able to assess their performance in comparison to a standard. As independent learners, they must become proficient in learning skills such as goal setting, needs assessment, seeking information, reading comprehension, oral and written communication, critical thinking, and personal assessment.

Since 1992, I have been employed at a private First Nations college offering programming from literacy training through to university diplomas. The aim of this college is to provide cultural and academic education within a Cree cultural environment.

Great care is taken to ensure that all aspects of student life are in keeping with cultural values; yet the right of individuals to define their own biculturalism is respected. Each student emerges from any formal learning program as bicultural on his or her unique path between the western and Cree culture. Nonetheless, cultural orientation is mandatory for all students in all programs. Expectations of students in terms of performance are tempered by cultural principles, but without minimizing standards of excellence. From September 1993 until June 1995, I was program head of the University/College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) program. As such, I had primary responsibility for evaluation of student learning and progress through the program, as well as evaluation and modification of the program. This oriented my educational focus onto evaluation within a First Nations cultural perspective.

However, the UCEP program that I administered, and the cultural college in general, provide educational services within an even broader context than the students' lives and their community. The learning paths of the students converge with a few employment and educational trends: (a) an increasing call by employers for teachable, adaptable employees; (b) the trend to recognize and formalize self-directed learning as a lifelong endeavour; (c) a need to recognize learning that has occurred even when course standards for credit are not met; (d) awareness that Aboriginal control of their own education necessitates use of evaluative methods in keeping with cultural values; and (e) recognition that educational programs must be developed and evaluated with consideration for student input and all aspects of learning. These trends, along with my personal convictions, became the impetus for my search for a better understanding of the adult learning process, as suited to an aboriginal context, as well as assessment tools with which to evaluate needs and learning outcomes in that context.

The Problem Situation

Within the First Nations college educational context, I recognized two things: that individuals must be able to determine whether and when progress and outcomes have been achieved, and that the evaluation criteria need to be holistic. That is, the individual learners must be able to assess what they need to know, what they already know, and what they then need to learn. They must be able to determine their most effective way of learning and choose learning experiences in keeping with their learning style. Furthermore, to facilitate individual learning as a path to knowing, it is necessary for them to recognize and adequately assess holistic learning in light of personal needs and goals. There must be credible ways of documenting individual learning beyond the set criteria of success for a course.

Pragmatically, institutions determine requirements for and outcomes of programs; the assumption is that individuals should select those arbitrary criteria as personal goals. Nonetheless, these criteria need not supersede personal learning goals; the learners should be able to assess their own growth, according to their own standards, from a holistic perspective of their own life journey. But all too often, learning by adults is cut short if they do not meet quantitative standards according to system-driven criteria. Acceptability to the world of formal learning is often judged by strangers, and based on their standing in relation to other students.

Many adult students seek education as a means to employment. They wish to leave a formal educational program with a certificate or diploma that is desirable to employers. Increasingly, employers are looking not only for the diploma, but indicators of a person's ability to learn, and adapt to new expectations. The reality is that, whatever knowledge and skill a person has when hired, he or she will continually have to upgrade and retrain. Students need to know that they have the skill to learn, to solve problems,

and to adapt to change; evaluation results should reflect the students' ability to apply these skills to varied learning applications, not just to specialized content.

At the time this study was envisioned, evaluation of students implied grades that compared one student to another (especially if graded on the curve) and did not give a true picture of learning. This was most evident when course requirements were not being met by the student, however after he or she had learned skills and attitudes that could generalize to other courses. Colleagues would convey anecdotally that a particular student had strengths or weaknesses that were not indicated by the grade received for a course. Thus, I pondered over ways to evaluate the holistic quality of learning without reducing indicators of success to a matter of grades. This evaluation needed to serve the needs of the institution, as well as act as a guide to the students themselves in order to facilitate the planning of their self-directed learning and to encourage confidence in their ability as adaptable learners. Yet, the methods of evaluation needed to be in keeping with cultural values.

At the time that I took on the responsibility as program head of the UCEP program, I felt unable to assess and evaluate students holistically beyond the use of examinations to grade retention and application of course content. A course on cognitive skills had been part of the UCEP program for some time, but questions were being raised regarding the transfer of learning from this course to learning of content in other courses. Furthermore, although cultural content was incorporated into all courses at the college, little had been done to document the validity of doing so. From a personal, professional perspective I needed to improve my practice of assessing individual and group needs, and learning with respect to cognition, cultural orientation, personal growth, and academic skills. Thus, I decided to seek out methods by which the students could assess and evaluate themselves in light of internal, as well as external expectations and goals. I also

decided to document my process of seeking out and trying the evaluation methods within my UCEP courses.

Purpose of the Study

In response to this problem situation, I chose to study ways by which I might improve my practice as an educator of facilitating students, individually and collectively. To achieve this, I sought four broad goals: (a) to assess students' learning needs; (b) to help them learn in keeping with their cultural learning styles; (c) to evaluate what skills and content they have learned; and (d) to determine their subsequent learning needs. I recognized that, within a holistic learning context, qualitative evaluation might be most useful to examine the properties of an experience and explore its meaning from a broad perspective. Qualitative evaluation can be used in a formative fashion with the intent of improving the experience (see Vella, Berardinelli, & Burrow, 1998). For these reasons, I chose to explore qualitative methods of evaluation that could be used in conjunction with quantitative grading. I also decided to examine the usefulness of introducing the students in my course to using these evaluation methods. In this, I had six more specific objectives as learning outcomes. These were: (a) Students and facilitator would be able to form an holistic overview of the group situation, and identify group learning, strengths, weaknesses, and needs. (b) Students would be able to express and assess their needs, compatibility of learning style, and accomplishments in relation to personal goals or in comparison to other students or course standards. (c) Students would exercise cognitive skills and transfer of learning, which are identifiable by student and facilitator. (d) Students would have the opportunity to express their cultural orientation. (e) Students would enhance their self-confidence and independence as learners as a result of the method. (f) Students and/or the facilitator would produce usable data. The focus of my

study is on effective evaluation methods that can guide learners, and protect their freedom to continue learning in ways compatible with First Nations culture.

Scope and Limitations

This study is in the area of Community College Education. It deals with the aspect of a combination of qualitative and participatory evaluation of learning needs and outcomes. The specific context of my study is university and college preparation of adult students within a First Nations cultural college; therefore, it concentrates on theories and the philosophies and practices of evaluation that are compatible with First Nations' cultural values and practices. It is intended that the outcome of this study may be useful in its application with any students having values and attitudes similar to those of First Nations people.

Three specific cultural guidelines influenced me as I planned student evaluations for First Nations students: One person cannot be set above or below another in value; cooperation, as opposed to competition, should be fostered; and the integrity of the whole of anything is to be maintained, so it is not appropriate to focus on any one part or trait of an individual or to categorize people according to one trait. These guidelines influenced me to seek evaluation methods which could foster an organic view where the individual functions as a whole within the greater whole of community, nature, and universe.

The study involved facilitative and evaluative methods that could be used within the programming of a 10-month UCEP program. The subjects for my study were the class of students admitted to the UCEP program for the 1994-1995 academic term. I tried the selected methods during the orientation week, and with the classes for which I was the instructor. These classes were to develop study skills and life management skills. There were two sections of this course, each involving half (13) of the UCEP students. A few of the methods were used within the group meeting sessions that had been instituted

to develop a sense of cohort and peer support. It was not in the best interests of the students to split the group so that one would serve as a control group; all participants had the same experiences with the methods used. In keeping with the college stand against subjecting aboriginal people to study by non-Native researchers, I informed students that I was trying methods as part of my personal study for my Master's. I took care to not report on specific individuals. I was intent on engaging *with* participants in the learning process, rather than doing research *on* subjects. The data I collected was in the form of personal observations of discussions and journal entries, murals that were generated by the class, questionnaires completed during interviews, and written problem resolutions. No follow-up study was built into the plans for this research as the intent was to have the work concluded within a year.

Assumptions

My own background is as a non-Native woman; living and working within Aboriginal communities has afforded me the opportunity to dispense with many stereotypical assumptions of Aboriginal people, and has led me to develop new assumptions about First Nations adults as learners. My previously held assumptions that influenced this study include: (a) First Nations students do not like the competitive aspect of grading; (b) First Nations students do not like to have their work judged; (c) all students are interested in how they learn; (d) most First Nations students are holistic thinkers who prefer to form a concept of the big picture first, before focussing on any one aspect of a topic; (e) adult students want to have a voice in what they are to learn and how they are to learn; (f) Adult First Nations students feel comfortable addressing a problem by discussion as a group; (g) it is natural for First Nations students to hold cultural values. Most of these assumptions became challenged during this study.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, “evaluation” is refers to a means to create a goal-free holistic picture of what is experienced by the learner (Brookfield, 1986). Evaluation is a way to foster change, as well as observe change. “Qualitative evaluation” attends to the personal experience primarily and is used to describe the quality of experience (Eisenr, 1991). In reference to a program, qualitative evaluation, according to Greene (2000) is a way of collecting information as to how various stakeholders perceive a program and find it meaningful.

“Metacognition” is used in this study to refer to individual awareness of thought process. According to de Bono (1982), metacognition is a process whereby thinkers are able turn on their thinking at will, focus their thinking, be confident in thought, enjoy thinking, have a self-image of being a thinker, and be able to think about thinking.

For the purpose of this study, the term “First Nation” has been selected to refer collectively to Aboriginal peoples of North America, but primarily to the Plains and Woodlands Cree. While unique cultural variations between First Nations are acknowledged, this study does not distinguish between First Nations’ attitudes and values with respect to learning and knowledge.

Plan of Presentation

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the thesis, and a background to the study from a cultural perspective, as well as from the perspective of the educational situation presenting the problem. This chapter identifies the purpose, scope, limitations, and assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews literature related to: (a) philosophical foundations of adult education; (b) cultural, social and economic influences on adult education; (c) the process of adult learning; (d) instructional strategies to promote adult learning; and (e) qualitative

evaluation of adult learning. Each is addressed in terms of its congruence to Cree cultural values related to learning.

Chapter 3 describes the learning project I used with a group of Cree university/college preparation students, specifically introducing groups and individuals to qualitative evaluation methods. This chapter depicts the situation, outlines the planning, details the process, and reviews the results of the project.

Chapter 4 is the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the learning project presented in Chapter 3 as it relates to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter focuses on my learning related to qualitative evaluation of students' learning as well as a qualitative evaluation of my own learning. This chapter concludes with my conclusions as a result of this study and my recommendations for future inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review presents my survey of the literature on: (a) First Nations approaches to life and learning; (b) western philosophical orientation to adult education; (c) cultural, social, and economic influences on adult education; (d) aspects of learning from the adult learners' perspective; (e) instructional strategies to promote adult learning; and (f) qualitative evaluation of adult learning.

First Nations Approaches to Life and Learning

First Nations cultures and philosophy predate modern written philosophies; nonetheless, it is interesting to compare the basic ideologies of First Nations culture to western society's emerging concepts of life and learning. As I set out to learn about the evaluation of learning in the First Nations context, I choose to review the philosophical approaches to learning handed down by First Nations culture as a first step toward my understanding of the purpose of adult education in the modern First Nations setting. For knowledge of the approach to learning from a First Nations perspective, I turned to elders who have spoken to me and I sought the oral tradition through the writings of others. I reference this material not as a First Nations person, but as a student of the culture with the privilege of access to knowledgeable First Nations educators. I also examine some of the literature published recently by First Nations adult educators to gain insight into their approaches toward the education and learning roles in this context.

Oral Cultural Traditions

First Nations peoples have been handing down their cultures by oral tradition for thousands of years. As a result, there are no written philosophies but there is considerable knowledge within the First Nations cultures of reality, mind, and learning. The

knowledge of First Nations culture cited here is based largely on what I have learned from elders, cultural speakers, and knowledge shared with me personally by co-workers during my employment at a cultural college. The information given here is referenced to the extent that it is written down and assigned authorship.

Although cautioning against stereotyping, Charter (1994) does generalize the First Nations philosophy of education to be a “whole-life experience. . . [that] should prepare people for total living and the advancement, development, and improvement of individual and community life” (p. 27). Nature and spirit are seen as one. The elders spoke of the totality of all things and the connectedness of things; there are no separate domains that exist independently. All life becomes part of community, and the sense of time is part of the cyclical flow of natural life (Wayne, 1996). The belief is that there are cycles that must remain in balance throughout time (Lightning, 1992; Orr, 2000). The life cycle is a spiritual journey. First Nations people revere all that has been made by the Creator and recognize that nature is not dependent on them to function, but consider themselves blessed to be part of their environment (Thomas, 1997).

Elder Gordon Rain echoes this understanding when he refers to the entire Cree language as descriptive and holistic in that it encompasses the relationship to spirit and nature in all things; the language “connects to all life” (personal communication, March 19, 1999). Words are powerful in that they create reality rather than just symbolize reality. There is no separation between word and what it represents. The utterance of words has consequences by giving life to what is spoken; the telling of myths recreates the events (Wayne, 1996). The power of words can be seen as coming from the centre of a circle and diffusing outward to those who hear them. Those who hear are to take the power of those words in and find their meaning. One must be very careful about choosing words as they can have a positive power or a negative power (White & Archibald, 1992).

The medicine wheel that is used by some nations, including the Plains Indians, symbolizes balance between many sets of four, including the set of the mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of life. This is similar in concept to the humanistic concern for the whole person (Charter, 1994; Orr, 2000; Thomas, 1997). Spirit is always at the centre of the circle: “When one sits in a circle, no one is ahead or behind; everyone is together” (Orr, p. 60).

To fully understand one’s inherent spirituality is the goal of First Nations learning. Auger (1995) explains that humans are to learn from the spirit world through nature using all of the senses and through ceremonies: “Knowledge was the main commodity in the traditional world” (Auger, 1995, p. 8) of First Nations culture. Auger states that elders serve as messengers between the world of spirit and the people. It is the knowledge of the elders that one seeks for a lifetime. Teachings are integrated with life as the learner is seen to be ready for the lessons, or asks using the proper protocol (Auger, 1995; Charter, 1994; Lightning, 1992; Thomas, 1997). Akan (1992) explains that “education as the Elders understood it contains a spiritual message. It is about giving and taking the good, without apology or expectation. Essentially, it is about knowing the Creator’s will for us; this is a necessary part of living” (p. 194).

Much teaching is done by modeling in that skills are learned by observation rather than direct instruction or persuasion; this eliminates competition among the learners. Knowledge is gained by experience. It is accepted that one cannot teach what one has not experienced, so many teachers are necessary. In the First Nations culture, everyone, including children, are considered as potential teachers. Knowledge is to be shared without ownership or competition (Charter, 1994; Tafoya, cited in Thomas, 1997). Charter explains that “advice is not normally offered unless it is requested because this would conflict with the value of non-interference and the individual’s life choices and independence” (p. 29). Teaching is done individually or in groups such as sharing circles.

Family relationship protocols and respect for age is naturally upheld amongst the Cree people, often determining the lines of participation in group learning situations. For example, a mother-in-law and her son-in-law will not speak directly, and younger people will not speak up in a group until and unless the older people speak (Linda Oldpan, March 8,1999).

Lightning (1992) shares the wisdom of the late Elder Louis Sunchild who stressed the need for people to understand the mind as it is directly associated with the source of existence. Sunchild says, “The achievement of balance and harmony, happiness and love, can be realized through the attainment of compassionate mind” (p. 218). The elders were concerned with the totality and connectedness of everything in life. Life is a difficult path to be followed through a training ground. When asked for a general rule by which one can move forward on the right path, Elder Sunchild is quoted to have said, “Live for the spirit, not for the flesh” (p. 245). He also advises, ““Close your eyes so that you can see further”” (p. 253). Akan (1992) explains that the talks of elders refer to four levels of experience: “ceremony, reality, meta-realities, and those aspects of personality that are located within us” (p. 193). Lightning advocates a “philosophy of educating for balance, harmony, and a well-being for the human condition” (p. 253) as the way to meaningful lives.

Recent First Nations Adult Educators’ Approaches

First Nations peoples’ ways of knowing are gradually being addressed by educators and incorporated into formal learning situations. O’Sullivan (1999) points out that modern scientists are beginning now to understand traditional First Nations wisdom with respect to man’s relationship to nature as a continuous dialogue with all forms of life. Many writers dealing with education of First Nations peoples emphasize the spiritual element of learning. Akan (1992) refers to the high esteem of education as a practice that

draws “verbal spirals of existence for learners to see, read, hear, and think about. . . drawing a cognitive map so students can mentally walk around in life” (p. 211).

In contrast to mainstream education that typically usurped First Nations cultural values, Orr (2000) points to recent initiatives in First Nations education that fosters Native identity by focusing on cultural knowledge and spirituality. Orr cites educational approaches that are centered in the principles of the medicine wheel and relationship with nature. Through a renewed balance with life, it is hoped that the failings of the past can be redressed. Respect for the human interconnectedness with nature teaches the First Nations values of sharing, respect, caring, honesty and sense of self as an inseparable part of community.

Thomas (1997) highlights that the spiritual aspect of the educational process is something that comes from within the Native student. Charter (1994) points out that ceremony has always been a fundamental source of learning and transformation for Native people. It encompasses prayer, meditation, chanting, and dancing, all of which release the full range of emotions. According to Charter, Phil Lane, founder of the Four Worlds Development Institute, sees ceremony as a way to infuse spirit and the order of the universe into thought and to incorporate ceremony into the whole-life learning experience. The findings of Orr (2000) demonstrate that the knowledge of elders can be respected through storytelling and inclusion of elders in an educational program. Education can be the balancing bridge between the wisdom of the elders and the knowledge of the dominant society.

Orr (2000) addresses the importance of the physical space in which learning takes place as part of the interconnectedness. Rooms and the overall environment should be esthetically in keeping with the natural world. For example, rooms can be round and seating can be in circles. Locke (Andrews & Lenz, 1990) affirms this by his observation

that western education is square rather than round; classes are in square rooms in square buildings and we use square books and paper. The sacred circle is missing from the traditional western learning environment.

Charter (1994) points to humour as a vital aspect of all First Nation teaching situations. As she says, "Laughter and appropriate joking among the teachers and learners are encouraged. Laughter is believed to aid new learning. It is one of the methods by which theoretical information is made concrete" (p. 34). Experiential learning also ensures that learning becomes concrete.

In keeping with First Nations holistic thinking, many western theorists and practitioners now recognize how essential it is to consider the whole student, particularly when working with First Nations students. Daloz (1986) contends that it is "simply better to see human beings as wholes rather than isolated minds, bodies, or souls." By so doing, we recognize that "the world is intrinsically connected and [respect] those connections before sundering them for purposes of analysis, not after" (p. 114). Ethically this view is "better because it represents a stance at least approaching a loving, caring respect for the inherent worth of the other person" (p. 114). By "knowing what is important to our students as individuals, we can more readily help them find connections between the lives they live and the subjects we teach" (p. 114).

The recent history of educational practices aimed at assimilation of First Nations peoples has impacted negatively on their identities (Charter, 1994). Many First Nations students have missed components of the learning process which must be addressed when they return to learning. Crehan (1996) believes that remedial programs must be individualized to the student rather than fitting students into remedial programs. King (1998) indicates that popular theory now assumes that adults should be educated in their

own language and by using their own linguistic expression, both of which come from their own experience. She does caution, however, that focusing only on the learners' past experience can limit learning and world view.

Knox (1987) considers it a challenge for educators to respond to situations that may contribute to barriers to education. Levin and Levin (1991) reference the lack of academic preparedness and social dissatisfaction that often exists among minority students. They contest that the loss of even one viable productive individual in our society is unacceptable. As educators, our job is to provide learning. Learning is a life-long process. If one step is missing then, as a profession, we must ensure that step is taught.

Western Philosophical Approaches to Adult Education

Each culture represents a collective adaptation to nature. In contrast to the First Nations perspective of learning to live in balance with nature, western educational philosophy reflects the European stance of overcoming nature. Educational philosophy as a separate discipline began to develop in the 20th century; with some prelude in the 19th century, the roots of philosophy extend back to the time of ancient Greek philosophy (Elias & Merriam, 1980). The educational philosophies that I review contribute to the comparison of approaches to learning in First Nations and western cultures. This overview of educational philosophies emphasizes the ideologies that have helped shape adult educational theories and social practice of the western nations.

When Western education emerged as a discipline separate from philosophy, liberal philosophy dominated with the goals of "acquisition of knowledge, the development of a rational perspective, and the ability to analyze critically" (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 33). Attaining these goals required reading classic works, attending lectures, and participating in study groups. Such an education was seen to result in

wisdom, morality, and spiritual dimensions of thought, all of which develop an awareness of citizenship, improved self-concept, and a greater feeling of human dignity. This was considered to be the way to develop moral citizens of action. Liberal education is also upheld as a never-ending search as opposed to a state of being learned (Elias & Merriam, 1980). According to Merriam and Brockett (1997), while many of the goals of liberal education remain valid today, the content and methodology of acquiring knowledge was challenged during the 19th century with a new focus on the scientific method and pragmatic learning through direct experience. This was precipitated by the growing demands of rapid industrialization and urbanization.

"Reason, experience, and feeling began to replace tradition and authority as the chief ways of arriving at truth" (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 46). John Dewey, with others, such as Darwin and Spencer, developed a progressive philosophy of education which incorporated: (a) the extension of education beyond liberal education; (b) a focus on the individual learner's needs and experiences; (c) use of scientific methodology involving problem solving ; (d) a facilitative role, as opposed to an authoritative role for the teacher; and, (e) the view of education as and instrument of social action and change (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Dewey calls for educators to view teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. His "reconstruction of experience" resonates with the view of his contemporary, Eduard Lindeman, who links meaning-making to social change. Lindeman (1984) not only sees life experience as the living textbook but also he sees learning as a life-long quest for meaning. He sees adult education beginning where vocational education leaves off: "it's purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life" (p. 19). As individuals seek meaning and improvement of their own lives, they will want to change society to create an environment in which they can express the meaning they find. Bergevin (1967) believes that it is for humanity's

sake that learning should take place, so that we can cope with the conflicts and ambivalences that are part of the natural order.

John Watson was strongly committed to the scientific process and founded behaviorism—an approach that focuses primarily on overt, observable behavior. Behaviorists believe that human actions are conditioned responses to their environment (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). The role of the educator is to control the environmental factors that determine behavior. Society’s task is “not to free man from control but to analyze and change the kinds of control to which they are exposed” (Skinner, 1971, p. 43). Skinner (1974) sounds very much like Darwin when he elevates “survival” to the highest-ranking value for the individual and society. Learning is defined as a change of behaviour, and learning how to learn is seen as an important skill for survival and adaptation to a changing environment. Many existing models of adult education, particularly in the areas of industrial training, urge learning outcomes based on behaviorism: behavioral objectives, needs assessments and competency-based instruction all identify specific behaviors as the training objective and measure mastery (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). In behaviourism, emphasis is placed on measurable outcomes rather than the process of learning.

Recent Influence of Humanist and Radical Ideas

Humanistic education perspectives, as established in humanistic psychology, rose during the mid-1900's in reaction to the deterministic view of human behavior purported by behaviorism and psychoanalytic theory (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Rousseau believed that the human being was naturally good and suffered from the corrupting influences of society. He saw the objective of a compassionate educator being the preservation of the individual goodness and the development of a person “who was emotionally secure, intellectually alive, and socially active” (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p.

113). Following from this view, humanism views human nature as intrinsically good and sees people as free and autonomous in their choice of action. There is a strong emphasis on the concept and development of a self, for which the ultimate goal is self-actualization. The development of self is not seen as being self-centred but rather a means to contribute to the good of society (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Humanists focus on the goal rather than the process; they consider subjective experiences such as intuition and understanding rather than relying on objective behavior; they strive for insight rather than a change in behavior and they attempt to awaken people to their “humanness” rather than control their behavior. Faith is placed in the forces within the individual rather than external forces (Patterson, 1973). A contemporary form of humanistic thought is “existentialism” which stresses the integrity, responsibility and freedom of the individual for whom human relationships give meaning to life. The goal of humanism is a world community.

Freire (1984), considered by some to be a radical philosopher of education, extends humanism by challenging existing models of “banking” education where people are fed knowledge and told what to think. Freire contends that “man is not immersed in reality in some determined manner. Human persons know that they know and know that they are able to change their situation and environments” (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p.148). Freire’s writings contest that true humanization takes place in the world only when each person becomes conscious of the social forces working upon him or her, reflects upon these forces, and becomes capable of transforming the world. To be human is to be an actor in the world and to seek to guide one’s own destiny. To be free means knowing one’s identity and realizing how one has been shaped in one’s social world and environment (p. 149). As Elias and Merriam put it: “The condition of oppression is what Freire calls the culture of silence. The culture of silence can come from either ignorance or education” (p. 149). Illich (1984), another radical educator, goes so far as to call for

deschooling because schools protect the status quo of the dominant assumptions of society and subvert real learning. Freire is concerned with the human capacity for reflection and action which is achieved through conscientization, which is a social process of interpretation of problems, denunciation of dehumanizing conditions and establishment of a new reality through dialogue and praxis. For Freire, the “highest human goal is humanization through a process of liberation” (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 154).

The connection between First Nations philosophy and western philosophy emerges in current writings that connect spirituality and adult learning (see English & Gillen, 2000) rather than in any particular western philosophical tradition. English (1999) points out that “each of us needs to develop a strong sense of self in order to know, deeply understand, and actively respond to our interconnections and ultimately to our responsibility to other people and the natural world” (p. 3). She affirms that adult learning is indeed a “communal activity that occurs in relationship to others” (p. 3.). This ties the philosophical strands of adult education together. English shows the way to a philosophy in line with First Nations’ attitude to knowledge when she calls for a change in direction for adult education, from a preoccupation with self, to a “more outward-looking spirituality which embraces a greater sense of the other, and the inter-relatedness of humans with the natural world” (p. 1).

Cultural, Social, and Economic Influences on Adult Education

The reality that adult learning occurs in relationship with other people implies that culture influences learning. One critical social relationship is that of economics which drives the need for learning. As the world moves into the information age technologically, the need for new learning escalates in order to keep pace with

communication. The relationship of adult learning to these influences is discussed in the following sub-sections.

Cultural Influences

The culture in which a person develops is an all-encompassing social force that shapes the person's reality, purpose, thinking and attitude toward learning. Smith (1982) refers to culture as "patterns of behavior . . . [which] constitut[e] the distinct achievement of human groups. . . ; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action" (p. 23). He cites The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's description of culture as a "dynamic learned system of values, assumptions, conventions, beliefs and rules that permit members of a group to interact and develop their creative potential" (p. 23). Similarly, the Baha'i International Community (1995) points out that the role of culture is,

Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming of age. (p. 7)

Brookfield (1987) stresses that the context of culture within which people learn and function is important because "central to thinking critically is placing one's own situation in a broader context, so that aspects of one's problems are seen as connected to broader social forces" (p. 62). Similarly, Mezirow's (1991) focus on the transformative potential of thought and learning relies on "culture [that] can encourage or discourage transformative thought" (p. 3). As he explains:

Cultures vary in developing the self-awareness necessary for decentration, decontextualization, and development of identity, all of which are necessary for one to understand or "take" the perspective of another or understand how one's own perspective interacts with another's in the eyes of a third party. These

qualities, as well as the ability to think abstractly (and thus distance oneself from one's own beliefs and ideas), are associated with education, particularly reading and writing. (p. 192)

Western culture, as depicted by Zohar and Marshall (2000), with its concentration on the “immediate, the material, the selfish manipulation of things and experiences and others” (p. 16) by the use of rational intelligence has left a dire poverty of symbolic imagination and human spiritual qualities.

With respect to the merging of cultures that North America experiences, Mezirow (1991) highlights the “contradictions generated by rapid, dramatic change and diversity of beliefs, values, and social practices [that] are a hallmark of modern society” (p. 2). Brookfield (1990) points out that, for some, the price of the personal transformation necessary to become part of the change is too great when “faced with the psychologically devastating prospect of losing cultural identities and supports . . . [and the fear] that if they go past a certain point they will be committing cultural suicide” (p. 153). This reminds me of the comment made to me by Elder Gordon Rain. that Cree people need to know the Cree language from childhood, otherwise there is always something missing – who you are. He said that you must be true with who you are (personal communication, March 19, 1999).

This view of language as pivotal to cultural and self-knowledge parallels Skinner's (1984) view that a rather advanced level of language is necessary for self-knowledge. Western society seems to subscribe to a common ground of materialistic values as a way to make a better life. However, Lerner (1995) points out that, for many, the “disparity that exists is the incredible potential that we have created by our progress, and our inability to participate in that potential (p. 3). She comments that most people

have been socialized to “ignore danger or violence, ‘damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!’ . . . we push ourselves beyond our limits, until we lose our way home” (p. 7). Akin to Elder Gordon Rain’s comments, Lerner refers to “something missing” that we feel—a feeling which she considers to be a “spiritual deficiency” (p. 7). We search outside ourselves for happiness, security and peace. There is no question that “American [and thus, Canadian] culture places great emphasis on the confident extrovert, and the glib, articulate group member” (Brookfield, 1990, p. 88). The culture of Western progress challenges not only the First Nations cultures, but the culture of humanity.

Economic Influences

Similar to the early movements in adult education that responded to the demands of industrialization, the current movements in the field reflect the changing economical realities of our societies. According to Grosjean (1996), the future of the West’s economy only promises chronic underemployment with fewer permanent full-time positions and an increase in contingent work (e.g., contract work, work outsourced to smaller businesses, and self-employment). The only permanent employment, according to Boyett and Snyder (1998), will be for small cores of highly skilled workers who will envision, organize, manage, research and socialize. “The shelf life of skills today is approximately equal to that of fresh fish,” as Grosjean (p.155) puts it. In the future, people will have to be frequently and constantly retrained and re-educated. Roueche and Roueche (1993) point to the trend in society's increasing demand for economic stability—a stability sought through educational success. However, the individual's declining ability to meet such educational demands is creating a gap that is widening daily. In the 1990s, the trend for young people was to stay in school because there were not enough jobs waiting for

graduates (Grosjean). Brookfield (1987) points out the necessity of developing a flexible and adaptable labor force in order to meet the changes to employer needs brought about by rapid advancements in technology and communication.

Current Social Influences on Adult Education

The rapid growth of information, mixing of cultures, advances in communication and technology, and economic trends have resulted in combined social pressures on individuals and education systems. Brookfield (1987) believes that the 1970s and 1980s witnessed an increased absorption in self, as opposed to increased social involvement. de Bono (1982) points out that Western culture has separated thinkers (the educated) from doers (the workers). Mezirow (1991) observes that such a separation is just one of the many contradictions evident in society, marked by rapid change and increasing diversity of cultures with their different beliefs, values, and social practices. Dryden and Vos (1994) believe “we are living in a revolution that is changing the way we live, think, communicate and prosper” (p. 23). This calls for another revolution in life-long learning. Knowles, in 1975, saw us “entering into a strange new world in which rapid change will be the only stable characteristic” (p. 14).

Looking to where this revolution might take us, Dryden and Vos (1994) quote Kiyosaki who predicts that “the first country or culture that truly blends men's and women's strengths will be the next world power” (p. 64). Friedrich (1993) points out that our Western culture presently fears aging, but Knowles says that it “is no longer appropriate to equate education with youth” (p. 16). Dryden and Vos see people over 60 as one “of the greatest untapped resources for the future of education” (p. 72).

There is no question that the current social, cultural and economic trends are placing new demands on adult educators. Crehan (1996) indicates that adult college educators are meeting “a more diverse student population” (p. 1); that is, older students with a greater variety of educational objectives. However, many of them are lacking college-level skills in reading, math, and English. King (1998) points to the revalidation of indigenous cultures and the wave to teach literacy of the indigenous languages. She points to the work of Paulo Freire, who challenges the “culture of silence” (illiteracy). She believes illiteracy is viewed less as a “disease” than in the past. Knowles (1975) suggests that “we must come to think of learning as being the same as living. We must learn from everything we do; we must exploit every experience as a ‘learning experience’” (p. 16).

Aspects of Learning from the Adult Learners’ Perspective

Adults have many reasons for learning, including personal goals. Goals may be externally motivated, and adult students may come to formal learning environments to achieve these goals. Such environments often have set curricula. However, the actual process by which learning takes place, and behavior is changed, is largely internal. What goes on in the mind of adults as they acquire new information, alter their perception of their environment and acquire new behaviors? Many theorists, educators and researchers have addressed the question and many advocate particular thought processes that should be developed in the interest of competent learning, while recognizing individual differences.

First Nations cultures articulate a life-long thought process inseparable from their participation in nature. Smith (1982) views learning as the interaction between needs,

learning style and training that is, a combination of goals along with internal and external factors. In many ways for Smith, the learning process is similar throughout life; however, there are some aspects of learning unique to adulthood. The next section of the literature is related to the process of adult learning from the learner's perspective. It considers: (a) adult goals in learning, (b) cognitive transformation, (c) cognitive skills, (d) emotional transformations, (e) learning styles, and (f) differences between adults' and children's perspectives of learning.

Adults' Goals in Learning

Philosophers and theorists have much to say regarding the ultimate goal of education. The early philosophers (e.g., Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) considered knowledge the path to morality, truthful action, happiness, liberation, wisdom, a sense of the aesthetic, as well as spirituality (Elias & Merriam, 1980). A humanist goal for education would be "a man who was emotionally secure, intellectually alive and socially active" (p. 113). Daloz (1986) refers to Carl Jung's dynamic of individuation as being the goal by which we differentiate "ourselves from our surrounding culture in a way that leads not to isolation but, paradoxically, to a greater sense of membership in the whole" (p. 57). Daloz (1986) refers to Piaget's tenet that equilibrium is the ultimate state to be achieved between the individual and his/her environment. Perry's description of the educational process is a movement from reliance on externally validated truth to internally coherent explanations. For Viktor Frankl (1969), the challenge is to find meaning in our existence. Smith (1982) references both Carl Rogers and Peter Ustinov as believing the goal of education is "learning how to learn" and adaptation to change. These goals describe outcomes of education, but are seldom the motivating force driving adults to learn.

Davis and Davis (2000) observe that the world we grew up in does not exist anymore. Rapid change is a fact of life for everyone. Whatever we knew before is not enough. Today, learning has a very short shelf life. Adults are motivated to learn in order

to improve employability and cope with change. Apps (1991) points out that much adult learning is undertaken in pursuit of practical ends related to vocation, and is often motivated by trigger events in life, such as divorce, moving, loss of a spouse, or loss of a job. Some learning is incidental to goals related to individual or social projects; adults will learn new knowledge or skills in order to accomplish a joint goal, whereas they would not engage in formal learning simply for the sake of learning. Apps also suggests that adults often seek an understanding of their own developmental phases and will undertake learning to enhance the various phases of their lives.

Cognitive Transformation

A number of theorists identify a process of cognitive transformation associated with learning. Taylor (1987) identifies four phases with associated transition points that happen in a consistent order around a particular learning task or problem encountered. These are: (a) “disconfirmation” which is a “major discrepancy between expectations and experience” (p. 183); (b) disorientation and confusion “accompanied by crisis of confidence and withdrawal” (p. 183); (c) naming the problem; (d) exploration; (e) reflection; (f) reorientation which involves a major insight or synthesis experience; (f) sharing of the discovery; and (g) equilibrium. Daloz (1986) outlines Kegan’s model of cognitive growth that describes life-long developmental cycles by which adults evolve toward increasingly integrated and differentiated ways of making sense of the world. Transformation involves both breaking down and rebuilding. Daloz also cites the model developed by William Perry, in which intellectual and ethical development of adult students moves through stages of conviction of personal “rightness,” perception of diversity, acceptance of diversity, uncertainty, acceptance of relativism, commitment, and affirmation. Daloz elaborates on Piaget’s processes of accommodation and assimilation in which people adapt to their environment to achieve equilibrium. These processes can

occur internally as concepts, or are developed in response to a perception of imbalance or deficiency of understanding.

According to Mezirow (1991), "it is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their action, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance" (p. xiii). He states that "as adult learners, we are caught in our own histories. . . . Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning" (p. 1). Mezirow defines learning as "the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 12). He also makes reference to reflection as the "central dynamic in intentional learning, problem solving, and validity testing through rational discourse" (p. 99).

de Bono (1982) describes thinking as a set of tools that can be sharpened with use and practice. He identifies specific thinking skills and offers exercises related to perception, patterns, communication, decision-making, information seeking, deliberate focusing, and "lateral thinking." Lateral thinking is the process whereby people seek to achieve the pattern switching that occurs in insight. This is the ability to change perception and keep on changing. He says another example of lateral thinking is humor, "which involves the escape from one pattern and the switching into another" (p. 52).

Critical thinking is necessary for the process of transformation of perception. Critical thinking is described by Brookfield (1987) as thinking that "involves calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning" (p. 1). The context of the practices and structures under question must be considered and alternatives must be explored with an attitude of "reflective skepticism" (p. 9). Not all

assumptions are discarded; many are justifiable but adult educators must be able to provide a rationale for them.

Reflective skepticism implies a readiness to test the validity of claims made by others against one's own experience of the world: One can be skeptical without being resistant to change. Brookfield (1990) labels the time necessary for this reflection as "praxis." There is a similarity between critical thinking and transformative thinking in that both involve a change of perception. Both can be initiated by a trigger event and culminate in a re-integration with a new understanding.

Cognitive Skills

Feuerstein (Feuerstein, Rand & Hoffman, 1980) believes that adults approach education with a set of cognitive skills that they have developed since childhood. These processes of cognition by which individuals perceive and organize input from their environment have been affected by the mediation of "significant others" who have interpreted the world to them. During the "input" phase of these conveyed interpretations the receivers' cognition is influenced by: clear perception, labeling, systematic exploration, time and space ordering, object permanence, gathering two or more pieces of information, and being precise and accurate in information gathering. The "elaboration" phase involves: defining the problem, using only relevant information, interiorization, planning, use of multiple pieces of information, comparing, and projecting. "Output" requires: overcoming trial-and-error responding, restraining impulsive behavior, overcoming blocking, and accurate visual transport.

According to Dryden and Vos (1994), "We all learn fastest when we link together many of our brain's great abilities" including storage and retrieval of information, problem solving and creation of new ideas (p. 127). This is consistent with what Auger (1995) reports of the First Nations way of learning: "In the Indian way there are no short

cuts to learning the right way. Learning is done with all senses first” (p. 16) by observing what is around.

Mezirow (1991) believes that “imagination is indispensable to understanding the unknown” (p. 83). He states that “metaphors are the tools of communicative learning” (p. 80) with which adult educators are able to confront the unknown by making associations with what we know. We begin with partial insights to direct the way we collect additional data. We compare incidents, key concepts, or words and relate them to our meaning schemes. Often understanding comes from finding the right metaphor to fit the experience analogically into our meaning schemes, theories, belief systems, or self-concept (p. 80).

Memory is a cognitive skill of great concern to most adult learners. For adults to remember something, it must be linked or associated with some known or fixed item. Dryden and Vos (1994) advocate mind mapping because the brain “stores information on its tree-like dendrites. It stores information by pattern and association. So the more you can work in with the brain’s own memory-method, the easier and faster you’ll learn” (p. 159). Similarly, Mezirow (1991) explains:

Remembering involves an object or event that usually has been associated with an emotion influential in our initial learning. How well we remember depends upon the strength of this emotion, the degree to which the originally learned event was differentiated from and integrated with past experience in the first place, the context of other events in which the object or event was embedded, and the impact of events that followed the initial learning. (p. 29)

Such emotional events occur in traditional Native learning as children hear stories and legends (Thomas, 1997). Charter (1994) states that “cognitive and memory skills can be developed by listening to stories, myths, or experiences of others” (p. 30); such experiences stir up images, trigger thinking, and stimulate all five senses and the emotions.

According to de Bono (1982), metacognition is a process whereby thinkers should be able turn on their thinking at will, be able to focus their thinking, be confident in thought, enjoy thinking, have a self-image of being a thinker, and be able to think about thinking. Pankiw's (1993) study supports this metacognitive advocacy. She found that students' self image was positively affected by emphasizing their strengths. The students developed the ability to think of strategies using their preferred learning styles to approach new learning. They developed the skill of self-questioning as a learning strategy. Similarly, ANBAR (1998) advocates that learning to learn should form the process of a program rather than a segment of content within a program; otherwise the most powerful potential benefits are lost.

Emotional Transformation During Learning

Emotion is both a necessary component of learning as well as an effect of personal transformation. Learning transformation is not experienced as all joy. When learning causes students to question assumptions, the "world becomes malleable rather than set in place, as humanly constructed rather than divinely ordained" (Brookfield, 1990, p. 47). Brookfield refers to incremental fluctuation of emotions during the learning process that involves an initial sense of release from old ideas, followed by exhilaration and anxiety. Often there is a retreat to discarded assumptions and habits but "the ideas and behaviors that previously gave comfort [are] . . . curiously unsatisfying" (p. 53). An important point that de Bono (1982) notes is that although logical argument is very unlikely to change emotions, changes in perception can change emotions.

Brookfield (1990) refers to the impostor syndrome when adult students return to education after a long absence. He explains that "students' egos are fragile creations .

[and] resistance to learning may occur because of a feeling that it is occurring in an overly public forum rather than their dislike for the focus of the learning itself” (p. 153). Dryden and Vos (1994) indicate that negative emotions are often rooted in criticism experienced long ago as if learners had been hypnotized to accept their nonexistent limitations. They refer to the vital importance of self-esteem, which they have found ranks ahead of course content “in every successful system [they] have studied around the world” (p. 101).

Daloz (1986) discusses the transition once adult students realize the lack of authority and rules they have come to expect. They often go through a stage of anger, cynicism, and bitterness at what is seen as emptiness of structure. Rain, Crier, and Carnew (1996) stress that students must use commitment, tolerance, perseverance and will power to be successful in their learning. Dryden and Vos (1994) give research findings that indicate that 80% of learning difficulties are related to stress. If the stress is relieved, the difficulties diminish.

Learning Styles

Learning style refers to each individual’s preferred learning patterns. Gardner (1983) explains the differences in learning styles on the basis of seven different intelligence centres in the brain: (a) linguistic intelligence, (b) logical-mathematic, (c) visual-spatial, (d) bodily-kinesthetic, (e) musical, (f) interpersonal and (g) intrapersonal (p. 343). Gardner believes that strength in each of these intelligences results in preferred learning activities. Preferred learning patterns can be grouped into categories. Dryden and Vos (1994) note that every person has a preferred learning style, though few people restrict their efforts to a single pattern. No learning style is particularly better than another, and none predominate in any cultural and socioeconomic groups. Kolb (1984) identifies two learning activities: perception (use of concrete experience of the senses, or

abstract mental or visual conceptualization) and processing (active experimentation or reflective observation). From these, he extrapolates four learning style dimensions: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb assigns a person a dominant learning style on the basis of a his or her preference for each of these dimensions. Hunt (1987) believes that people cycle through all of Kolb's dimension in the same direction. They first experience the problem, then reflect on it, then analyze it and then act on it. Some modes may be easier, but rather than using one predominately, the cycle should be completed. He identifies specific learning difficulties experienced by learners who do not complete the cycle.

Gregorc (1982) distinguishes between "top-down" learners who look at the whole task randomly and "bottom-up" learners who proceed one-step-at-a-time sequentially. Lightning (1992) indicates that, on the path of training for life, "it is important to only go one step at a time. . . (with) sufficient light to take us to the next step, rather than seeing the whole road as it goes along. . . We are not yet equipped to deal with the knowledge of the whole path" (p. 248). This, however, refers to knowledge of life and may explain why this statement differs from the indication by other researchers, including Thomas (1997), that, in keeping with holistic thinking, most First Nations people are inclined to be top-down learners in that they prefer to have the "big picture" presented first.

Following from the work of Jung, Briggs-Meyers (1985) identifies 16 specific personality types as tested by the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This evaluates individuals on four axes: (a) introvert/extrovert, (b) sensing/intuition, (c) thinking/feeling and (d) judgement/perception. Each type has common learning styles and temperaments. Introverted learners are reflective and want information to be integrated into frameworks, whereas extroverted learners who are action-oriented come to understand by being able to teach others. Sensing learners rely on their senses for input, so they prefer facts that they can trust and prefer to have them presented in an organized manner. Intuitive people tend

to look for patterns in knowledge that they have gathered, seeking the big picture and often relying on hunches. Thinking learners focus on logic and objective criteria when making a decision, as opposed to feeling learners who seek harmony and focus on human values and needs when choosing a direction. Judging people tend to be decisive and adhere tenaciously to a plan of action with deadlines that must be met. They appreciate direction and ways to improve their independent abilities to learn. Perceptive learners are curious, spontaneous, and adaptable; they often find it difficult to meet deadlines. They may postpone completion of a task while seeking more information.

Attention has also been given to the intuitive processes: “Intuition refers to immediate recognition of the experience's meaning or significance without going through the process of intentional analysis” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 83). Denis and Richter (1987) describe the intuitive learner as one who trusts in his/her own intuition; is honest in action and reflection; has an awareness of unconscious dynamics and energies outside of self, personal feelings and proper timing; is reflective; is aware of multiple realities and the nature of synchronicity; and is open to the unexpected. Intuition can be relied upon as a dominant style, but more often works in conjunction with other learning styles.

As recently discussed by Zohar and Marshall (2000), both the perceptive and intuitive learning styles would appear to draw on one's spiritual intelligence to be an “internal, innate ability of the human brain and psyche, drawing its deepest resources from the heart of the universe . . . with which we heal ourselves and with which we make ourselves whole” (p. 9). The spiritual intelligence allows people to “recognize existing values . . . and creatively discover new values” (p. 9). Zohar and Marshall believe it is the use of spiritual intelligence that allows us to “solve problems of meaning and value” (p. 3), to ask “Why?”, and find meaning to our lives. It is spiritual intelligence that allows us to question boundaries, rules, values, and draw upon an inner energy to transform our realities.

General consensus among authors concerned with learning styles and different types of intelligence is that educators should take into consideration the preferred learning style of the learner when selecting learning activities; however, the individual learner should also strive to develop the weaker styles of learning (Brookfield, 1987; de Bono, 1982; Dryden & Vos, 1994; Smith, 1982).

Differences Between Adults' and Children's Perception of Learning

One of the principal differences between the learning process of children and the learning process of adults is that adults bring a rich repertoire of life experience and responsibilities. Brookfield (1987) emphasizes that humans are not *tabulae rasae*, but creatures who are continually trying to find meaning in their lives and to make sense of the things that happen to them. Brookfield (1990) also points out that adults come to education fully enculturated. If they are faced with the possibility of losing their cultural identities and supports, they may choose not to experience new learning. When individuals are fearful, it is natural to turn to a trusted person for security; adults often seek out a mentor. Daloz (1986) suggests that mentors can meet an imaginary need close to that of a lover or a parent. He notes that mentors "may be seen as gatekeepers as well as guides, they stand at the boundary of the old and new worlds" (p. 96).

Lindeman (1984) states that adult education must involve all aspects of life as one searches for meaning through experience. Knowles (1975) points out that adults learn throughout life from all experience in order to keep up with change. He sees adults as tending toward self-direction and competency as they satisfy their need to adapt by applying new learning to immediate circumstances. Brookfield (1986) reminds adult educators that self-directedness, although a premise of andragogy, is not prevalent in the lives of many adults, especially in cultural communities outside the dominant culture. Many adults are quite dependent on the direction of the learning facilitator in the

beginning. Self-directed learning capability becomes a goal that instructors may facilitate for their students.

Instructional Strategies to Promote Adult Learning

In recognition of the characteristics and goals of adult learning, it is necessary to select instructional strategies that respect these conditions. Brookfield (1986) identifies six principles of effective practice for facilitating learning: (a) voluntary participation; (b) respect for participants' self-worth; (c) sense of collaboration between facilitator and learners; (d) continual cycle of praxis involving activity, reflection, and analysis; (e) fostering of a spirit of critical reflection; and (f) nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults. These principles support the First Nations "cultural imperatives of non-interference, non-competitiveness, sharing, and the valuing of experiential learning" (Charter, 1994, p. 39) and so I have used these principles in the selection of instructional strategies that I review. The strategies include: (a) promotion of trust, (b) development of relationship, (c) use of group process (d) promotion of mentor relationships, and (e) development of new patterns of thinking. These strategies can be applied to a variety of instructional methods and primarily focus on the nature of human interaction rather than on specific instructional tasks.

Promotion of Trust

Trust is considered a key factor in not only knowing one's students but in encouraging them to consider us worthy of their respect and attention. Thomas (1997) indicates that mutual respect between teacher and student is the most important motivator. Daloz (1986) claims that the primary task of teachers and advisors is to engender trust: "One of the best ways to do this is to listen well. This means suspending our own agenda for the moment and attempting to enter the student's world" (p. 125). Daloz emphasizes that instructors must see the student's learning, give the student voice,

and (once trust is established) introduce occasional conflict to aid in the breakup of calcified thought. It is important to emphasize and praise positive movement. He also advocates keeping one eye on the student/teacher relationship itself; as the trust gap narrows intimacy increases and this can have profound implications for the growth of both parties.

Use of Group Process

Trust is a key factor in group relationships as well as in the one-to-one student/teacher relationship. MacKeracher (1996) stresses the need of adult learners for an adult version of attachment which is “experienced metaphorically as a sort of togetherness despite the space between us, a space bridged by the eyes and the voice, by someone using our name and recognizing the value of our past experience, knowledge and skills” (p. 146). Validation occurs by being recognized and approved by others. As learners feel validated by others, they experience a sense of attachment and value themselves and this empowers them to cope and learn. MacKeracher attests to the mutuality that occurs when learners experience companionship by working collaboratively with others in harmony. Embeddedness occurs when learners choose to identify and feel connected to a group. A facilitator’s role is to create an environment into which students wish to become embedded. Mezirow (1991) indicates the necessity of trust in collective transformative learning experiences; for example, within consciousness-raising groups, homogeneity of power amongst group members is essential if trust is to be established. Another example is Freire’s (1984) problem posing method where the facilitator and participants collaborate to articulate the reality of their social situation and devise solutions.

Group process can also be used within the learning experience to impart information between group members, acquire skills, actualize group members, set plans, or perform tasks (Auvine, Densmore, Extrom, Poole, & Shanklin, 1977). Apps (1991)

recommends various applications of group process: the forum which allows students to interact with a presenter; quiet meetings in which participants do not discuss, but share personal experiences or feelings about a given topic; group discussions; simulation games involving problems similar to those in the learners' real lives; role playing to experience situations in a safe environment; group projects for learning and working together; and seminars to share group learning with a larger group.

Promoting Mentoring Relationships

A special relationship that can be especially powerful for adult learning is mentoring. Daloz (1986) describes the qualities and functions of effective mentors: (a) to support, listen and mirror the student's language and movements; (b) to provide structure and express high positive expectations; (c) to advocate for the student; (d) to share oneself openly and honestly; (e) to make the student feel special and unique; (f) to provide vision of the possible for the student; (g) to keep traditions; (h) to offer a road map; (i) to discuss and suggest new language, "nurture . . . into new metaphors" (p. 233), cajole, challenge ideas, entertain hypotheses; and, (j) to extend the student's self-awareness by providing a mirror. The mentor relationship is one instructional opportunity that can be offered to First Nations students as a way they can learn by the traditional modeling. Candy (1991) elaborates on Ruth and Frey's notion of mentorship: rather than an authority role, a mentor "provides a learning environment . . . and relationship for the protege to expand his or her learning potentials and goals for himself or herself" (p. 184).

Bova and Phillips identify 6 stages of the mentor relationship: (a) entry, (b) mutual trust building, (c) risk taking, (d) teaching of skills, (e) professional standards, and (f) dissolution (Candy, 1991, p. 185). Daloz (1986) cautions that the potential power of a mentor relationship is frightening and handling it is delicate work. If the relationship is disassembled too soon, it can "lead to confusion and even resentment," but if the mentor holds on too long it "denies the student his or her own power" (p. 97).

Development and Expansion of Relationships

The term relationship can refer to relationship with ideas and knowledge, as well as relationship with people. Relationship is closely tied to self-esteem. Dryden and Vos (1994) point out that every successful system of education that they have studied throughout the world places more emphasis on development of self-esteem than on course content. They propose a four-pronged curriculum that stresses (a) self-esteem, (b) life-skills training, (c) learning how to learn, and (d) building academic, physical, and artistic abilities. Dryden and Vos believe that schools should use the total community as the learning environment and that the learning process should “be integrated with the everyday commerce and community affairs” (p. 105).

Wolfson and Willinsky (1997) suggest that situated and service learning offer positive peer interaction and mentoring as well as the natural opportunity for problem solving and the externalization of learning. Service learning takes the student from the specific to the general, requiring time for internalization, transfer and reflection of general principles that are derived from practical experience.

Development of New Patterns of Thought

Growth often involves new patterns of thought. de Bono (1982) contends that many intelligent people are not good thinkers and that thinking is a skill that can be improved by training. He believes that just teaching critical thinking is not good enough; educators must pay attention to the creative, constructive, and design aspects of thinking as well. de Bono offers methods by which each of these may be developed.

Brookfield (1987) offers many practical methods for developing adults’ capacity for critical thinking; however, he cautions educators as to the risks associated with unleashing these thought processes and stresses that the “right to challenge someone must be earned” by development of trust “over a reasonably long period [during which the] person’s behaviors match his or her words” (p. 91). For example, whereas First Nations

people will practice non-interference and respect of individual choices with each other, elders, who have earned respect and trust over a lifetime, may choose to challenge a younger person. As well, elders are usually the storytellers who use the stories and legends to teach lessons that are to be discovered through thought and imagination.

Imagination is a powerful capacity for divergent thinking and creativity that Brookfield (1987) notes is often discouraged in the school systems that reward “institutional norms and predefined patterns of reasoning and expression” (p. 111). Brookfield offers some tools for development of critical thought: (a) story telling of critical incidents as a means to focus on personal values and issues; (b) criteria analysis to assess standards by which individuals judge their own success; (c) critical questioning to promote reflective analysis; (d) critical decision simulations; and (e) role playing or critical debate by which people can take on the perspectives of others to promote understanding (pp. 71-110).

Daloz (1986) also advocates that teachers “encourage students to immerse themselves in differing perspectives” (p. 150) and suggests that liberal studies is one way of achieving this. Brookfield (1987) offers suggestions for thinking of alternatives (e.g. brainstorming, envisioning futures, developing preferred scenarios, and aesthetic triggers). Brookfield believes the most crucial factor for adult learning is a supportive learning community where the instructors adjust their teaching to the learning rhythms of students. Daloz concurs that teachers must support “students in their dismantling of old structures and construction of new” (p. 150). Teachers must offer them the “tools of our methodology” and “model for them new ways of making meaning” (p. 150). Thomas (1997) refers to the belief that educators must expose students to different world views so that they may become better equipped to pursue the fundamental human quest for meaning.

Learning should appeal to the aesthetic nature as well as the cognitive. Dryden and Vos (1994) suggest that educators take a lesson from business people who provide such things as flowers, soothing music, gifts, and welcoming atmospheres for their customers. Music has been shown to speed up learning. Colorful posters definitely affect long-term memory. If learning is fun, people are motivated. Meyers (1986) believes that educators should be able to expose learners to the caring side of knowledge, incorporating elements of wonder, beauty, and passion into courses. Dryden and Vos offer six steps to ensure a successful learning experience: (a) create the right state of mind; (b) prepare the right presentation including the big picture, varied learning approaches and music; (c) have students think about the lesson using creative and critical thinking, problem solving, memory techniques, and metacognition; (d) activate learning by games, discussion, plays, and so forth; (e) apply the learning, mind map it, and combine it with what is already known; and (f) review and evaluate (p. 294).

Use of Dialogue Journals

Dialogue and reflective journals can stimulate many learning processes and can allow the student to synthesize learning experiences. Kerka (1996) references the use of journals as tangible evidence and development of cognition including observation, problem definition, self-reflection, speculation, and questioning. Journal entries can demonstrate experiential learning involving the stages identified earlier by Kolb (1984) of tangible experience, reflection, integration of abstract concepts, development of theories, and use of theories to make decisions. Journals provide the opportunity for students to reflect critically, make meaning out of experience, and articulate connections between what they did know and what they now know (p.p. 2-3).

Qualitative Evaluation of Adult Learning

Educators' anticipated outcomes of learning are derived from their philosophy. Lightning (1992) challenges that "perhaps if we as educators, administrators, leaders, and parents were to begin seriously to consider and then to introduce a philosophy of educating for balance, harmony, and well-being for the human condition, we would be doing something that would truly have meaning in our lives" (p. 253). Lightning's statement can be used to unite evaluation of learning with philosophy. How do we evaluate achievement of the goals of harmony, balance and well-being? In an attempt to respond to this question, I review selections of what educators have put forth regarding (a) evaluation within a First Nations context, (b) the nature of qualitative evaluation, (c) the use of formative student assessment, and (d) methodologies and techniques for qualitative evaluation and assessment.

Evaluation Within a First Nations Context

Charter (1994) points out that First Nations peoples do not judge the outcome of learning: "If a learning experience is not successful it is not considered a failure" (p. 30). The learner compares the outcome to the model and assesses whether more learning is necessary. When success is achieved, it is known to the learner. Competition is generally restricted to games. Praise and rewards are not dwelt upon (Linda Oldpan, personal communication, February, 1999). Bordeaux (1995) contends that performance-based evaluations were common practice in traditional First Nations as members strove to demonstrate how they could contribute to the survival of the nation. Children who exhibited superior performance were selected for more concentrated mentorships toward hunting skill, spiritual knowledge, or oration.

The Nature of Qualitative Evaluation

Brookfield (1986) explains how, in the 1960s, the idea was put forward that value questions were at the heart of evaluation. Much of what students experience and

accomplish *and value* falls outside the range of specific objectives for a program and is considered a by-product. Goal-free evaluation creates a more holistic picture of what is experienced by the learner. Many adult learners attest to the fact that much of what they learned in a program was incidental to the content of the course. Greene (2000) also refers to the shift that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s in connections with increased pluralism and public perceptions that problematized the scientific approach to social science and politics.

Eisner (1991) metaphorically compares evaluation to heat. As he says, “Temperature is a measurement of heat standardized according to a conventionally defined scale. Heat is the quality of experience” (p. 182). Quantitative measures of learning tend to turn away from the personal experience of learning in the same sense that personal experience is not considered when taking a temperature reading. Qualitative evaluation attends to the personal experience primarily. According to Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow:

Qualitative evaluation, often called naturalistic evaluation, examines the qualities and characteristics of a setting or experience to develop understanding and determine meaning. Rather than isolating and manipulating elements for study, the qualitative evaluator is directly involved in a broader process of study and interpretation. (1998, p. 29)

Eisner (1991) refers to knowledge as a verb rather than a noun; knowing is rooted in experience that is qualitative. Greene (2000) sees the primary value of qualitative evaluation as a way of collecting information as to how various stakeholders perceive a program and find it meaningful. She refers to the opinion that knowledge is not discovered but is created in the mind as a result of perception. Values are intertwined with perception of a situation, so participants with different values can have quite different experiences within the same situation. It is the individual internal construction of meaning that defines social reality and determines behavior. It cannot be ignored that

the evaluator's perception of qualitative responses factors into the knowledge gleaned by qualitative evaluation responses. Rossing and Neuman (1993) see the shift toward qualitative evaluation changing the role of evaluator from that of judge and interpreter to "one who facilitates reflection by those who have a stake in the activity . . . acting as a co-inquirer and interpreter in a joint and dynamic effort to gain better understanding" (p. 26). They see a new concept of evaluation:

as growth, by helping people to reflect, reconsider, and take new directions; or evaluation as healing and restoring, by listening to the stories of pain and triumph that people have to share; or evaluation as community, by fostering dialogue across differences, leading to shared meanings and action. (p. 26)

Greene (2000) sees the practice of qualitative evaluation as a "narrative craft that involves the telling of stories--stories about individuals and groups of people in their own complex and dynamic communities, stories that enable understanding of" (p. 989) the social context. As such, qualitative evaluation can be used to interpret individuals, groups, or programs. Greene contends that qualitative "evaluators must be accountable for the differences their stories make" (p. 990). They must not only convey the meaning of participants evaluated, but must be assertive in their use of the stories to cause change.

Use of Formative Student Assessment

Assessment is used to better understand the current knowledge and skill of a student. What a student knows is always changing, resulting in achievement that is a comparison of current knowledge over a period of time (Dietel, Herman & Knuth, 1991). This assessment of achievement throughout a period of learning is formative assessment, and can be quantitative or qualitative. Dietel et al. assert that assessment should match educational objectives and instructional emphases and should cover the breadth of skills and knowledge that are the targets of instruction. Students from all cultural backgrounds should have equal advantage to do well on the assessment and should find assessments to be both meaningful and motivating. They believe that students should be involved in

setting goals and criteria for assessment; students should perform, create, produce, or do something; students should use higher-level thinking and/or problem solving skills; tasks should demonstrate metacognition, collaboration, and interpersonal skills; and tasks should be couched in real-world applications (p. 7).

Prior to the learning activity, assessment of the learning level and individual learning style is desirable. Mezirow (1991) points out that “needs assessment must be seen as the process of helping adults think through the reason for their initially expressed needs. What learners say they want may be inconsistent with their actions” (p. 216). Panikiw (1993) affirms this by citing the work of Goldstein. She says that Goldstein “argues against the use of formal assessment instruments, asserting that these devices fail to recognize the nature of the adult learner” (p. 15) because adults have developed masks for their inabilities and are able to compensate using other strengths. Goldstein suggests a four-part informal interview that includes: (a) an interview with the learner to identify successes and difficulties in their learning history, (b) an exploration of the learner’s vocabulary and writing skills as demonstrated by a learning task, (c) an informal reading inventory to identify weaknesses, and (d) diagnostic teaching by a tutor by which the tutor arrives at the specific strategies that are effective for the learner (p. 16).

Diagnostic teaching and a dynamic assessment are similar. Vygotsky (1978), claims that the level at which the learner can function with assistance must be determined. This, he says, is considered more essential than the level at which the learner can succeed independently. This indicates learning potential with mediation (p. 209). Burrows, Scholten, and Theunissen (1992) explain that “during dynamic assessment, both the assessor and the learner are active. The assessor varies her interactions with the student in order to induce successful learning. Dynamic assessment focuses on the process of learning, rather than the products of learning” (p. 119). Panikiw (1993) believes that it is important to “discover how an individual student approaches problems,

and what he or she does best” (p. 23) so that these strengths can be used to increase learning. Wolfson and Willinsky (1997) support the use of dynamic assessment. Rather than something given or added, this type of assessment is an integral, ongoing aspect of the learning process.

Integral and ongoing are two important aspects of evaluation. Brookfield (1990) warns of the danger of students receiving a bad mark to which they respond with shame and anger and have no opportunity to talk through these feelings. This pitfall can, in part, be avoided by the use of “formative evaluation at regular intervals during courses” (p. 144).

Formative evaluation is used to monitor and guide individual student progress but there is also value in formative assessment of a program. Angelo and Cross (1993) describe a method of ongoing group evaluation of a program: quality circles involve a group of students in a discussion regarding their impressions of their classes, exams, assignments, etc. This method provides valuable formative feedback for the instructional staff, and it provides a vehicle for development of students’ team management skills and ability to draw inferences from observations.

Methodologies and Techniques for Qualitative Evaluation and Assessment

To account for educational achievement in a First Nations context, while respecting the non-judgmental cultural values, qualitative rather than quantitative forms of evaluation seem to be in order. The evaluative methods that I review next include: learning contracts, observation, portfolios, competency profiles, interviews, self-questioning, reflection, and problem solving. This emphasis in the review of the literature does not imply that there is no place for quantitative grading; but, rather seeks culturally appropriate alternatives to complement grading.

Learning contracts can be used to guide dynamic and formative assessment, and alleviate some of the possible anxiety that many learners associate with tests, because

evaluation becomes part of the learning process. Knowles (1975) outlines the components of a learning contract. There should be a number of objectives, and for each objective, the learning resources should be indicated. The evidence of learning for each objective must be identified as well as the criteria that will be used to judge the evidence. Once the contract is established, the student should be able to do some self-evaluation of his/her learning and will not be surprised by the expectations.

Burrows, Scholten, and Theunissen (1992) describe observation as a way to record a sample of behavior with respect to how one or more student(s) interact with people, environment, or subject matter. It should be decided beforehand who will observe and how the observations will be recorded. They suggest that more than one sample of the same behavior should be taken on different days and they caution that the observer must be aware of his/her “own beliefs and biases, as these may cause the observer to look for what he/she already has in mind” (p. 116). Unstructured observations consist of notations that the observer considers important. Structured observation targets identified behaviours only.

The development of student portfolios can serve as another form of formative and dynamic assessment. Newman, Smolen and Aron (1996) identify a number of results of learning portfolios: (a) a sense of ownership develops; (b) review of contents become a valuable form of assessment; (c) the student has a tangible product of learning; (d) the contents become a celebration of what the students can do; (e) instruction is guided by identification of student needs; and, (f) organizational skills, cognitive skills and metacognitive thinking develop (pp. 2-4). The suggested contents of the portfolios include checklists, goal cards, notebooks, logs, dialogue journals, assignments, projects, and writing assignments. In addition to accumulation of work, key procedural factors include engagement of students in planning, frequent assessment of learning projects, reflective statements about the items to be saved, and reflections about peer conferencing

regarding the learning process. Newman, et al. stress the importance of modeling organizational procedures and commitment to task completion and indicate that this becomes a form of mediation. They base this on Vygotsky's (1978) activity theory and the notion that students stretch toward their "zone of proximal development" (p. 209) with its implication that learners will perform slightly beyond their existing level of competence if the advancement is mediated by a person acting as a model.

Learning may also be assessed in relation to a learning goal as described by competency profiles. According to Sylvinski and Miles (1996) of the Public Service Commission of Canada, competencies are "those characteristics of an individual which underlie performance or behavior at work" (p. 2). They include personality traits, values, attitudes, and styles to give a holistic view of the individual. The expected outcomes of learning are defined and students thereby know exactly what is expected and can tell for themselves when they have achieved the learning goal. This stands in contrast to Mezirow (1991) who considers "dogmatic insistence that learning outcomes be specified in advance of the educational experience in terms of observable changes in behavior or 'competencies' that are used as benchmarks . . . [only] result(s) in a reductive distortion and serve[s] merely as a device of indoctrination" (pp. 219-220).

When the goal of education is to foster transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) offers a few means of evaluating this transformation: (a) focus on the extent to which the learners increase the amount of reflection on both content and process of the problem or their learning; (b) assess any shift towards decontextualization, which includes greater openness to others' perspectives and greater awareness of "sources and consequences of norms, codes, reaction patterns, and perceptual filters that make up the context of daily life" (p. 220); (c) have students respond to hypothetical dilemmas before and after the learning, and include student explanations of why they responded as they did; and, (d) rate changes as evidenced by "learning journals, repertory grids, metaphor analyses,

conceptual mapping, critical incidents, analysis of media, assessments of reflective judgement” (p. 221).

Mezirow (1991) chooses to focus evaluation upon changes in reflection or the extent to which the learner internalized the content and used the process of problem solving. To capture this growth, he suggests the use of hypothetical dilemmas to which he asks students to respond before and after a program. Journals may be used for evidence of change. Wolfson and Wolinsky (1997) also describe the use of problem solving, as well as interviewing and focus groups as forms of dynamic assessment that can totally involve the learners.

Burrows et al. (1992) describe the interview process of assessment as an “interpersonal encounter . . . in which there is an exchange of information about the student’s needs, concerns and difficulties and those of the instructor” (p. 131). The focus is to gather relevant and current information that will give the instructor better understanding of the student. An interview is most effective if it is planned and organized with a specific purpose that is made clear to the student. The interviewer needs to be aware of, and responsive to, verbal and non-verbal messages. Effective questioning should be purposeful, using both open and closed questions to elicit specific and anecdotal information. Fox (1991) cautions that the interviewer must be sensitive to the respondents’ feelings, be supportive and calm, not force answers, and allow time for respondents to think before responding to a question (p. 205).

The Ah-Hah seminar method developed by Gatt-Fly (1983), based on the work of Freire, is a specialized form of action-oriented group problem solving that aims to assess a social situation and set goals for resolution. The goal of an Ah-hah Seminar is to help a group do its own economic, political and social analysis so that the group or its members can be more effective in the actions they take to achieve social justice. Its approach is based on the assumption that people acquire a basic knowledge of how the economic and

political system works through their own lives and experiences. In addition, when they get a chance to share their knowledge with others in a group, they can teach each other a lot. A group of farmers or workers or immigrant women working collectively is capable of piecing together a coherent picture of how the system works and what must be done to change it.

Program Evaluation

Vella, Bernardinelli, and Burrow (1998) offer a model for evaluation of any training or educational program. Their accountability model builds evaluation of learning as an “integral part of a learning experience,” such that it “becomes a tool for continual improvement” (p. 12) as well as for transfer of learning beyond the education program. Thus, it can impact the organization that the learner returns to. This model is in accordance with cultural learning methods in which the student aspires to a model of behavior that will impact on the community. Vella, et al. stress that evaluation must be objective in that evaluation can provide clear evidence of change; identify important elements of an educational program; match the philosophy of the organization; and can be simple, accessible and efficient. It “should focus on both the outcomes and the process” (p. 12). Evaluation should be done by experts. Students can describe their experience, but only the expert can judge their effectiveness. Evaluation planning should consider: a) the purpose of the evaluation, b) what should be evaluated, c) the sources of evaluation information, d) the methods to be used to gather the information, and e) the timing of the evaluation (pp. 15-17).

The accountability planner designed by Vella, et al. (1998) is predicated on the popular education approach that “stresses that the teacher is accountable to the learner; learners are accountable to one another and to themselves” (p. 105). The planner requires that planners identify: (a) content and achievement-based objectives for skills, knowledge and attitudes to be learned; (b) educational process elements which include learning tasks

and materials; (c) anticipated changes with respect to learning, transfer and impact; (d) qualitative and quantitative evidence of change for content and process; (e) documentation of evidence; and (f) analysis of evidence to be made (p. 35). The intended learners should be involved at the planning stage by offering input as to their anticipated outcomes of the learning program.

The common thread in these evaluative tools is the involvement of the learner in their own evaluation and the focus on learning process as much as content mastery. If the goal is to develop independent learners, they must be able to assess both their own needs and learning, and learn how to adjust their learning experience accordingly. This concept of self-evaluation is far more in keeping with the First Nations attitudes of non-interference and personal choice than is the practice of assignment of grades based on a standard external to the student that compares one student to another.

The concepts reviewed in this chapter relate to my exploration of assessment and evaluative methods suitable for use with adult students in a First Nations environment. The following chapter describes my application of these concepts with a group of students.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

As a professional new to administration of adult academic programs, and as a student of adult education, I was particularly interested in learning how to use qualitative methods to assess student learning and program effectiveness. I also wanted to understand better how the students' individual learning styles might be respected within a program planning process. In order to narrow the scope of my efforts, I decided to focus on one objective. My objective for this study was to develop and use a set of qualitative evaluative methods that met all, or some, of the following criteria. By participating in the method: (a) Students and facilitator would be able to form an holistic overview of the group situation, and identify group learning, strengths, weaknesses, and needs. (b) Students would be able to express and assess their needs, compatibility of learning style, and accomplishments in relation to personal goals or in comparison to other students or course standards. (c) Students exercise cognitive skills and transfer of learning, which are identifiable by student and facilitator. (d) Students would have the opportunity to express their cultural orientation. (e) Students would enhance their self-confidence and independence as learners as a result of the method. (f) Students and/or the facilitator will produce usable data.

Overview of the Course Design

In this section, I describe the students who took part in the project, point out some of my design objectives and design constraints, outline the methods used for evaluation, and present the time frame involved.

Description of Students Who Participated

The student ages in this study ranged from 19 to 50. Some, but not all, had graduated from high school. Most were assessed to be functioning at a grade-11 English

level. All students were of Native origin, mostly Cree. Each student was on a different path of life-long learning; some were only beginning to be aware that they were on a learning path.

The students who participated in this study did so by virtue of enrolment in the UCEP program. Of the 41 students who began the program in the Fall of 1994, 31 were women and 10 were men; 36 were Cree from the local community and 6 had moved to the locale from other Native communities. Their knowledge and use of the Cree language ranged from nil to total fluency. All but five were parents, and many of them were single parents. Their expressed motivation for returning to school was principally twofold: to become educated sufficiently to attain lucrative employment, and to set an example for their own children. All of these students were supported in their return to school by Indian and Northern Affairs funding.

My Objectives in the Course Design

In planning evaluative activities for the UCEP students, I formulated objectives from the standpoint of students, program evaluator(s), and myself. As an educational institution committed to delivering programming that meets the needs of adult First Nations students to develop academically and culturally, I wanted to assess whether the students were actually learning transferable skills, not just math and English content.

Design Constraints

My evaluative design was influenced by what was culturally inappropriate. I decided that First Nations cultural guidelines must be considered when planning my student evaluations. These included things not to do. One person cannot be set above or below another in value. Cooperation, not competition, should be fostered. The integrity of the whole of anything is to be maintained, so it is not appropriate to focus on any one part or trait of an individual or categorize people according to one trait. My aim was to foster an organic view whereby my assessment would take into account changes in how the

individual functions as a whole within the greater whole of community, nature, and universe.

The ethics of reporting my assessments gleaned from student input was of great concern to me. It is fair to say that Native people are very sensitive about being subjects of research by non-Natives. I decided that before I would write any personal statements regarding their work, I would request obtain students' written permission and they would be given opportunity to read anything I wrote about them before I would present a document. This places constraints on what I can report in this thesis and how I report findings.

Another design constraint was that I was not able to turn this into a research project directly. I had to integrate my trials into the course of the UCEP program. I could not design the events to meet my intentions to serve this study if they did not fit with the time constraints of the students' programs.

Methods of Evaluation

I evaluated the progress of UCEP groups and individuals throughout the duration of the project using a variety of qualitative evaluation methods: the Ah-Hah seminar, observer evaluation, focus groups, interviewing, journal writing, and problem solving tasks. These six methods were adaptations of methods used by published educators such as Mezirow (1991), Wolfson and Willinsky (1997), and Gatt-Fly (1983). Because students cannot be separated from their community if they are to be educated holistically, evaluation of their social condition became part of my evaluation of their personal transformation. These were but a few of the methods of qualitative assessment that could have been adapted to meet the stated goals for evaluation in the given setting. I rejected some methods of evaluation and monitoring of change that may be qualitative, and are in common use in educational settings on the grounds that they were inappropriate in a Cree

cultural environment. One such example is peer interviewing, which can be seen as intrusive and judgmental in the Cree culture.

I introduced the initial phase of these changes during the 1994 UCEP orientation week. The data I collected at this time served as a base line against which I assessed learning throughout the year. During the year, further evaluation procedures were ongoing. I held personal interviews twice during a term with students and analysed these interviews according to the 18 cognitive skills identified by Feuerstein (1980), cultural identification, and independent learning skills that were exhibited by the student. There were weekly meetings with each group, which often took the form of a focus group on the issues being raised. Topics discussed were usually instigated by the group members, but also included subjects I chose, such as learning styles, metacognition, and group support. At the end of each focus group meeting, I gave students time to make entries in a dialogue journal, which I read and responded to. The fall and winter terms each began with an Ah-Hah Session.

Key Activities During Implementation

The various evaluative methods were implemented throughout the 10 months of the UCEP program. The sequence of methods are presented chronologically in the following discussion, beginning with the orientation activities that featured qualitative evaluation methods. I describe the events involving each method, and present the results and observations. My evaluation of the methods of evaluation I used are discussed in the next main section.

Orientation week began the last week of August with a general welcome of the students to the college by both the director and me. This was followed by a registration session during which timetables, college expectations, and program requirements were

explained. At the end of this first session with the new students, I took time to acknowledge their evident emotions of apprehension and loneliness as they began their journey into adult education. A cultural orientation was conducted by the Elders of the college for the remainder of the first day. My objective for the second day was for students to examine their own culture shock as they entered into an academic culture and a Cree cultural environment. I used the film Educating Rita to facilitate their examination of culture shock.

Film: Educating Rita

The film Educating Rita (Cartlidge, 1983) portrays the experience of a young Cockney hairdresser who chooses to study English literature at the open university in London. It offers open admission and tutorial classes for adults in the evening. Her enthusiasm and determination to reach out to, and become part of, the educated world collide drastically with her family's expectations for her to remain a contented member of their labouring community life, happy to work at a tedious job, to raise a family, and to socialize in local pubs with family and close friends. Rita yearns for the unknown, desires to expand her mind, and seeks options so that she has choices.

Before showing this film, I gave considerable thought about whether this film was an appropriate movie to use in a Canadian Native context, but I was influenced by Brookfield's (1990) advice that an impostor identity is felt by most new adult students. Brookfield explains that, ironically, a great number of new students believe they have entered a program under false pretences and perceive everyone else as being much more capable and confident than themselves. He believes this feeling of being undeserving impostors who will sooner or later have their real, inadequate identities revealed is remarkably consistent across contexts.

Certainly, it is typical for new students at this college to express this feeling of being imposters. As the students had been immersed in Cree culture on the first day of

orientation, I decided to introduce the film Educating Rita as an opportunity for them to conceptualize a different kind of cultural duality, while they reflected on the feelings they were experiencing as they entered a new learning culture. The contrast between Rita's and their own culture might serve to highlight the fact that anxious feelings are universal and normal, as opposed to just being a function of being Native returning to school with white instructors.

My main purpose in showing this film near the beginning of the orientation activities was to legitimate the student impostor syndrome and to encourage the students to put these feelings forward. I viewed this as an important first step to forming a supportive learning community by facilitating the awareness that each student was not alone in his or her fears. Furthermore, the experience provided me with the opportunity to facilitate a large group (30 - 40) and to encourage students to share their feelings without me being directive.

This was the fourth time I had watched this film, and I was intrigued by the different emotions I had each time, depending on the context; the first time was for entertainment. The second was at St. Francis Xavier University during my own orientation to the master's program, where it aroused all sorts of emotions related to my own situation as a learner. The third was while I was planning this orientation and the fourth was with these students where I almost felt panicky that the college professor-student relationship was so misrepresented. By this I mean, previously, I had not focused on the dependency and substance abuse exhibited by the professor. It is interesting that this had never been a concern until I was viewing it with a group of people I considered to be my students. I was not able to notice any similar concern or interest on the part of the students. The connection between Frank and the instructors at this college did not exist for them at this time. When I brought it up, it was just a funny observation.

The students appeared to enjoy the film. The atmosphere in the room seemed relaxed and they laughed heartily. Judging by the spurts of laughter, students were able to appreciate humour specifically related to literary expectations; this surprised me. Of course, all jokes related to drinking were commonly laughed at. One indicator of students' appreciation of the film was that all but a few stayed to the end, which ran 15 minutes into their lunch hour. There was little agitation about staying late. They remained involved in the movie. After the film, I asked the students to discuss their reactions to Rita's situation as it related to their own situation. I used a set of nine questions I had prepared ahead of time to help guide the large-group discussion. Responses to these question focussed on obvious labels: "Rita is in England while the culture here is Cree"; "Rita is a part-time student and we are full-time students"; "Rita has no kids and most of us have kids." Students saw the family opposition to Rita becoming educated and knew of friends and family who had experienced similar opposition in the local community. In retrospect, I appreciate that it was too early for them to have personally experienced the full force of such opposition. At the beginning of the term, most of their partners were supportive of their spouse going to school. The film may have had a different impact later in the program. They saw that Rita did not let opposition stop her from pursuing her goal and described Rita as determined. Responses to questions about Rita's expectations and her feeling out of place were minimal in that students just nodded that they also had experienced feeling out of place, and I inferred that they had not internalized Rita's process of success. As the group had not been very vocal during this large-group discussion, I was somewhat apprehensive prior to breaking them into small groups. I was doubting my choice of film and my decision to spend the time on this activity.

I asked students to break into groups of three to discuss similarities and differences between Rita's learning experience and their own situations. This was the first time these students had been asked to relate to each other. There was no hesitation and

they immediately began talking with each other actively (as compared to the strained interaction I was expecting). By walking among the groups, I could tell that the discussions were task-oriented, which indicated to me that the students understood the purpose of viewing the film and understood the objective of the discussion. After about 10 minutes, I asked the groups to share their answers with the large group. Points common to the students' own situations were: (a) Rita was coming back to school after many years away from it; (b) education changed her lifestyle; (c) Rita was eager to learn everything right away; (d) she was determined to complete her education; (e) Rita wanted to have choices in her life; and (f) Rita had no family support for her new directions. The differences noted compared to their situation were: (a) Rita was only going to school part-time; (b) she had no children; (c) Rita lived in a different culture; and (d) she was tutored alone rather than taking classes. These responses were spontaneous, with no prompting from myself; however, it took longer for them to offer differences than it did for them to list similarities. With a bit of prompting, it was obvious that the students had indeed witnessed Rita's movement from dependence to independence as a learner and her travel between two subcultures. I was curious to know if they would relate to this film further along in their college experience.

Big Picture Session

Having given voice to the students' trepidation, and having encouraged the students to share in a common experience of learning, it seemed timely to have them give perceptual shape to their community experience. I chose to use an adaptation of GATT-Fly's (1983) Ah-hah seminar. To do this, I guided students to develop a big picture (mural) to depict where they were on the first day of their UCEP Program with respect to their lives and their educational goals.

The strategy for this session was to begin with a very sparse pictorial representation of the present situation of the students. The initial mural which I drew for

the students as a starting point was a group of happy faces (representing people) in a box (representing a room) at a midpoint of a (time) line on a six-foot mural. Through guiding questions and focussed group discussion the class developed a mural of their collective learning situation by describing their feelings. I, in turn, described them on the mural. I asked one of the college instructors, whom I refer to here as TK, to serve as recorder of comments during the development of the mural. This instructor was a developer and instructor of the cognitive skills course that had been a pivotal focus of the UCEP program. She is non-Native, but had worked at the college as an instructor and program head for 7 years. I asked TK to note student behaviour and comments as well as her own observations of the process.

The purpose of GATT-Fly's (1983) seminars is to activate an existing community to change their economic destiny. In my adaptation, I had anticipated that this new group of students could collectively examine the institutional systems and life experiences that they shared, realize a sense of their own learning community, rally a sense of empowerment to sustain each other, and take ownership of their collective learning experiences while at the college. I intended that during this session students would collectively form a big picture of the forces that had drawn them to a college education, the forces and institutions that were about to affect them at this college, where they were headed, and what they needed to get there. As program head, I was prepared to act upon the general needs as expressed and the suggestions for development of community support. In addition, I anticipated that the students would remember information with respect to college administration if they asked for the information in the process of forming their big picture. This would eliminate the need to present the same information to them in the form of a lecture. I also planned to use this Big Picture session as a base point description of the group's sense of community and an indication of some of their cognitive skills and independence as students. From the standpoint of my learning to use

evaluative techniques, my personal learning objective in facilitating the Ah-hah seminar was to learn to draw out others' perceptions and paraphrase them accurately without imposing my perception.

I began the session by telling the students that they were to make a mural of their common situation including forces that brought them to this point in their lives when they were becoming students again. They were to show the college situation, their present needs and future goals. I told the students my memory of the comparison of western linear and Native circular concepts of time depicted in the video Morning Stars: A Profile of Kevin Locke (Andrews & Lenz, 1990). I chose not to show the video to the students, as it was only this one metaphor that was pertinent to this session. After a brief discussion of this comparison, I asked the students how they wanted to depict time on the mural. They were divided in their choice so both were used. I found myself having to ask many questions as prompts to solicit input for the mural. The students did not run with this exercise as I had anticipated. No artists identified themselves, and I did not want to make anyone feel uncomfortable by asking them to draw the mural, so I attempted to do the drawing. At the beginning I tried to depict the concepts offered by use of symbol and simplistic drawings; drawing quickly began to interrupt the flow of thoughts being presented so I soon began to chart words.

TK took notes of all interactions during the session. I had given TK a checklist containing some points to follow, such as cultural orientation, fact versus assumptions, expression of emotion, and widening of mental field. In the process of leading the discussion, I asked a sequence of questions which TK also recorded. In the following passage, TK's recorded observations of the collective students' responses are given after each of the questions I posed. Quotation marks are used to indicate any verbatim comments by the students, and square brackets indicate added words. TK's observations related to each of the points of my checklist are described separately, afterwards.

- Q. What has brought you to this point in your life, i.e., coming to this college?
- A. The only people identified were their children, in that they needed to provide for them and act as role models. They wanted to learn with children. With prompting as to what agencies may have affected their decisions to come, the only ones mentioned were the bands (shown by teepee on mural) and Indian Affairs which was drawn as people in a square box. No other people or agencies could be thought of that might have affected their position today.
- Q. Where are you headed?
- A. Graduation, workforce, helping fellow Natives, a more stable lifestyle, being role models for children and community
- Q. Any other goals?
- A. Better jobs, bigger salary, higher education, more knowledge
- Q. How do these goals fit into a circular cycle?
- A. "You get knowledge, then get a better job for which you eventually need more knowledge so you go back to school. We become role models to our children, they follow in step and become role models for their children." These comments were an affirmation of the circular time line.
- Q. Where do skills fit in this cycle?
- A. As a goal; along the circle; at the beginning; and everywhere.
- Q. What do you need between now and graduation from UCEP?
- A. Dedication, patience with self and others, independence, knowledge, skills (learning and coping), motivation, writing skills, confidence; support from family, partners, counsellors, elders, instructors and group; and vehicle, financial support.
- Q. How will these needs be filled? Who's going to feed these needs?
- A. Independence from self; knowledge from teachers, elders, books, and one another; skills from professors, practice, and college in general; support from immediate family. (This raised a question by one student who had to leave family to attend college: "What if you don't have your family here? Where can one go for support?"); financial support from bands, but this is limited; and "How do we budget? Help!"

Q. How can someone whose family is far find substitute family support?

A. Make friends.

This point on support led to a discussion of the difficulty of developing the level of trust that is typically found in families. The students said that they needed self-confidence in their own skills and a feeling of acceptance in order to trust each other. I said to the group that many others were probably wanting to make friends, but were unsure of how to do this. There was general consensus and a hearty request for help in building new relationships. I noted the general need for respect among all of us. After the discussion, we returned to the mural and I continued prompting.

Q. How will you meet your need of a vehicle?

A. Car pooling, budgeting, LRT! (rapid transit system)

Q. How will you get support from Elders?

A. Through parents, within family, knowing what we have been taught as children [I had to suggest college Elders].

Q. What about instructor support?

A. [No comment. I had to explain how we were all available to help them.]

Using the set of guidelines I had given her, TK recorded the following observations. She observed that drawing broke down quickly. Students could not think of pictorial ways of portraying concepts. There was no collective contribution of ideas. They did not attempt to collaborate in answering in any way, except in answer to a question that was posed to the whole group. Only about ten students contributed most of the responses; however, the others were obviously following the train of thought. Only a couple of men participated; otherwise, the comments were by women. Students comprehended the task in a concrete sense, and did seem to understand each other's responses. There were only a couple of responses completely off topic.

Some of the items for which I had asked TK to make observations dealt with concepts that I had assumed would be at the forefront in students' thinking. This was not so. For example, the students did not spontaneously think of their cultural ties to the First Nation. They only considered a comparative concept when I introduced it at the beginning; it did not occur on their own initiative. There was no visible interest in knowing facts related to sources of support. They seemed content with their assumptions. The only relationship between life factors that was strongly evident was their responsibility and role as parents. No biases or positive or negative attitudes towards any collective group or roles were noted.

Enticing a group that was together for the first time to elicit collective cognition was not as easy as anticipated. As we talked about the mural, their recognition of interrelatedness of events occurred only when discussing the cycle of role modelling education to children. However, this took some prompting on my part. They could see the cycle once it was pointed out. The only element of emotion came in around the discussion of trust. They were not able to think of adequate solutions to their lack of trust with each other, and there was a tense atmosphere surrounding this discussion. There was little comparison and contrast beyond equating more education with more money. Even with prompting, students were not prepared to easily widen their focus or views when thinking of forces in their life that brought them to this point, nor in dealing with the problem of how to substitute family support.

TK made several additional general observations during this session. There was minimal use of most of the 18 cognitive skills; a strong bias for externalized problem solving, in that they referred to others outside the group who would solve their problems; and, there was only concrete comprehension of the session task. By this I mean, that they voiced their needs in terms of what others could give to them, or do for them so they would have their tangible needs met. Irrespective of the assumptions around which I

planned this session, it did serve as an excellent way for students to synthesize discussions held during the past few days. It served as a review of concepts and a way to compare the words of the Elders, my introductions, those of the college director, and their reactions to the Educating Rita film. I learned that physically drawing concepts is not easy; I realized I had to give thought to the next session on ways of portraying a mural more effectively; or I would have to learn to draw. The most concrete outcome of this session was the students' request for help on budgeting and building relationships. These were not needs I had anticipated, but were built into the first few weeks in order to meet their request. Here was a very positive outcome!

A second Big Picture session was held at the beginning of the second term. The review of this second session and its comparison to the first are given in the evaluation section of this chapter.

Journal Writing and Problem Solving

I decided to have the students use journals as a means for expressing their views on issues as they arose during the year. I assumed the privacy of a dialogue journal would permit students to communicate personal and academic achievements and concerns to me without having to speak out in class or walk in to speak with me in my office--the latter approaches could be threatening at the beginning of the year. I also assumed that telling the students that their writing mechanics and style in the journals would not be evaluated would give them the freedom to write "from the gut" without fear of censorship and criticism. I told students that I would respond to the journals but would not mark them. I anticipated that the regular use of journals would facilitate openness between the students and myself. I also anticipated that regular use of the dialogue journals could keep me in constant communication with individual students and afford me the opportunity to encourage independent responsibility for learning. I also anticipated that their initial

dialogue journal entry might inaugurate a relationship of trust and communication between me and each student.

I decided that a journal in which the students responded to a direct question or problem that I posed might permit me to glean some insight into the students' approach to problems without the influence of a class discussion. I could review their problem solution entry in terms of the cultural orientation and the 18 specific cognitive skills that the entry exhibited—skills that I could compare to future similar assignments. These 18 were mentioned earlier and include: clear perception, labeling, systematic exploration, time and space ordering, object permanence, gathering two or more pieces of information, being precise and accurate in information gathering, defining the problem, using only relevant information, interiorization, planning, use of multiple pieces of information, comparing, projecting, overcoming trial-and-error responding, restraining impulsive behavior, overcoming blocking, and accurate visual transport.

What I was looking for in terms of cultural orientation were indications of values, priorities, sources of guidance, and assistance. For cognitive skills, I was looking for indications of such things as systematic exploration, consideration of two or more sources of information at once, spatial and temporal orientations, and making comparisons.

Following the Big Picture session, I introduced the students to the nature of journals and the purposes for which they would be used in UCEP. I explained two types of journal assignments. For the first, I asked the students to write an ongoing, perhaps weekly, dialogue journal with me. They were free to submit entries as frequently as they wished; I would respond to each at least once per week. I gave each student a labelled envelope for submitting their journal to me. Each week I gave a question to which they could respond, or they could write on any other matter of concern to them. I assured them of confidentiality. For the second type, I asked the students to write a solution to one of the two problem situations (see Appendix A, p. 127). There was to be an essay

assignment later in the week; they were to use their solution to the problem as a basis for the essay. The freedom of expression encouraged in this type of a journal provided an opportunity for the students to freely generate content for their essay. This, in turn, could then be re-written according to a fairly strict format.

Of the 41 registered students, I received 29 responses to the first dialogue journal entry. Most expressed excitement about starting the UCEP program and commented that they were enjoying it so far. Nine students stated that they were nervous about being a student again and apprehensive about their ability to succeed. Some told me of their family situation, including recent problems. I had told them in class that they were free to ask questions of me; six did so. They wanted to know my family situation, past education, and how I had felt when I started school. Only two of the 29 respondents referred to their cultural upbringing and the importance of culture in their lives.

The dialogue journals were continued throughout the fall term. The students expressed their appreciation for the system and said that they looked forward to my responses. The process proved to be a wonderful tool for building self-esteem. I was able to praise students' efforts where they would have been embarrassed to be told the same thing face to face. Students assessed their own reactions and feelings in order to write them in the journals. Some personal situations were discussed in the journals and not any other place. It was a way for students to cry for help. Often, I would make a suggestion or offer assistance in my response to a journal, and then give the person time to respond. I would sometimes ask that they come to see me. On occasion, if I felt that the issue was urgent, I would approach the person privately and suggest we speak or that they seek help from someone other than me. The dialogue journals were discontinued at the end of the first term; the students were no longer responding in the journals much, but they did visit me in my office much more frequently. I took this to mean that the method had served its purpose and the students were very comfortable communicating with me directly.

Problem solving journals were handed in by 28 students during the first week. Of these, six responded to problem 2 concerning the potential grade crisis. Twelve responded to problem 1 about applying for a grant of money. Of these 12 respondents, 7 proposed business plans, 4 chose to invest at least part of the money, and 10 chose to request the money for immediate personal needs (e.g., loans, bills, furniture, clothes). Generally, the business proposals simply stated what they wanted to do, with little or no rationale, and an estimation of the cost. The only cultural indicator was reference to serving the needs of the band. Only three mentioned that their plans for this grant contributed to future responsibilities or current needs of the community.

Evidence of the 18 cognitive skills was weak throughout both sets of journals. Each of the skills was only exhibited by only about three students, but not the same three students. Each student typically exhibited only three skills that could be identified on the basis of their problem-solving journals. Planning was obvious in seven of the papers. Most of the business proposals included no research of comparative information, nor did the plans involve other partners besides a spouse. As the importance of this exercise was to ultimately compare cognitive functioning and problem solving at the beginning of the program to that at the end of the year, discussion of this comparison is described later in the summative interview subsection of this chapter.

Personal Interviews

One of the primary objectives of the UCEP program is for the students to become independent learners in the sense that they are able to sustain their commitment to student responsibilities amidst family and social responsibilities. For these students, this would often mean sustaining a commitment in family environments which are often nothing less than chaotic. Cognitive skills are essential in order to untangle personal obligations, expectations, priorities, and responsibilities. I decided that it might be significant to track the utilization of cognitive skills by students as they worked through the many individual

issues that confront them during the year. Most of these issues were topics for discussion when they met with me. Thus, I rated their application of cognitive skills during these interviews and looked to see whether the 18 specific skills were used to a greater extent as the year progressed.

I had planned to meet with each student during the orientation week and as needed after that, but due to the heavy demands of my time I met with only some of the students during orientation week because a number of them had crises which had to be dealt with. Two students were suffering symptoms caused by head injuries for which they had not sought medical attention. Once at school, they realized that they could not see properly and were suffering headaches and dizziness. They were very concerned that they attend every class and did not consider how they might resolve their own health situation until I told them to go to a doctor. A few students had unsettled childcare problems. Rather than coming to classes when they could, they just did not come until all was settled. Many mothers were excusing themselves from classes to tend to their own children's needs around starting school. Three of the women were in relationship crisis. In one case a woman was homeless and, in another case, the woman's spouse was stalking her at the college. A few students were complaining of no transportation to the college since the rides they were counting on did not show up.

During the registration interviews I had had earlier with all of the students in this program, we had discussed such issues and they had been given pre-session guidelines encouraging them to settle family, personal, and transportation problems before classes began. Each had assured me that everything was in order and that they were able to attend full time from the start date. Clearly, all of the situations that were presented as crises during the first week demonstrated a general weakness in their ability to define and solve problems independently. In most cases the student would simply state the situation and expect me to offer the solution.

In October, I began completing a 14-point interview assessment form that I had prepared. I did so myself after some of the interviews had been conducted since it turned out that there was not the luxury of even a few minutes after each interview with a student to complete the form. Only 12 forms were completed and, of these, only 3 were as a result of a second interview with one of 9 students; therefore, there were not enough data to do an evaluation of cognitive learning on the basis of these forms. Nonetheless, I was able to observe a general transition in the students over the fall and winter term. Namely, at the beginning of the year, many of the students would present themselves to me saying that they needed to quit. With further discussion, we would determine what the problem was and how it might be resolved without them leaving the program. By the end of the fall term, I noticed that the same students would walk in and tell me what their problem was, but without having thought of alternatives or having chosen a solution. This indicated that they were able to identify and define their problem, but were not yet hypothesizing solutions. By the second term, they would often stop in and tell me about a problem they were having and how they were dealing with it; they were just seeking approval at this point. Another transition that can be generalized is that the students became more determined to stay in school in spite of life problems. Learning rose as a priority in their lives and they gained the confidence to assert themselves and their needs over those of their spouse, children, or larger family.

It might have been valuable to compile data that profiled the transition of students as they increasingly took control of their lives, but I did not manage to do this. Time was a major factor and I was also reluctant to assess private conversations in cognitive terms without the students' knowledge. Some of my observations of their transition were discussed with those students who did a final summative interview (described in another subsection).

Group Meetings

The UCEP students were scheduled to have a group meeting each week. The 41 students were divided into two groups; each met at a different time. The meeting time was set aside for a variety of team-building activities, such as airing of general concerns and queries about the program; organizing themselves as a group (with officers) for planning activities or raising money for projects; discussion of their adult student experience; and generally building a sense of cohesion as a group. A few minutes at the end of each session was devoted to writing their dialogue journals, the topic of which was usually related to the subject of discussion for that day. During one of the first group meetings I stated that I would facilitate these meetings in the beginning but wanted to turn the direction of these sessions over to them as soon as they were ready to organize themselves.

The group meetings were intended to serve as an informal group self-evaluation as well as an opportunity for individuals within the group to receive peer feedback to their ideas. Most of the students had only functioned previously in family group roles or as employees with direct supervisors. This group meeting experience afforded them the chance to create new roles for themselves in relationship with each other. The dialogue journals and interviews with me also enhanced the assessment of their functioning within the group. As a participant in the group meetings, I was able to observe each student's functioning as a group member and, therefore, was able to reflect back to them the strengths and occasional weaknesses I witnessed as a form of personal evaluation.

For the first few weeks, most of the group meetings were occupied with questions related to program requirements and course concerns. These questions were dealt with as general group discussions. All students were encouraged to contribute to the discussions but were not forced to do so. For a few students, the breakthrough to being able to voice their opinion in a group was a major accomplishment. One woman actually got sick to

her stomach from fear after speaking up. There were a few natural leaders in each group who were quick to take up the task of organizing their group to plan activities. By early October, elections took place for officers of each group.

In mid-October, the students decided to put on a taco sale to raise money for jackets, a project that they seem very focussed on. No amount of planning happened until 3 days before the sale when a sheet was passed around asking students to volunteer to cook or bring food items. Everyone seemed willing, and two people in each group definitely emerged as the organizers. On the day of the sale, the organizers were frantic because the donors were not present and no one knew if they were going to arrive with their contributions. In the throes of panic, they came running to me asking, "What should we do?" Once I offered a couple of suggestions, they were able to think of other solutions on their own. All this last minute work meant that most students missed their math class. Some ran home to cook, others went shopping, while others converted my office into an ad hoc kitchen to cook and prepare food. In the end, the sale was very effective, resulting in proceeds of \$271. From my point of observation, everyone was working together for the first time; they were enjoying it, and they made the plan work at the last minute.

At a later meeting, a committee was formed to look into the purchase of group jackets. They sought information from many potential suppliers, but could not figure out how to decide on a choice of jacket. They chose to have one large group meeting with both groups together to make a decision. During this meeting, one of the students who had years of experience with band organizations had difficulty restraining himself from directing the group. The others were feeling their way by responding to each other's likes and dislikes, and were reluctant to disappoint anyone. Nonetheless, every participant had strong ideas as to which colours and style they preferred. In the end, as a result of a few meetings and fittings, the group decided upon turquoise, black, and white as colours. One of the artistic students designed a logo for the back of each jacket. As these were the first

college jackets, the logo was not specific to the UCEP program. Other students could purchase the same design. The choice of style of jacket became moot. By the time the order was placed, it was spring; so light all-weather jackets were chosen.

While the indecision over the jackets continued, no other planning was happening. The idea of having more than one committee to handle various interests and activities emerged. A social committee came into being. A few potluck dinners and evening events were planned. Only the events that occurred during the school day were well attended.

In mid-November during one of the group meetings, I opened the topic of evaluation in general with the students. I did this because they had been showing considerable emotion and apprehension about grades on work they had done, and they seemed to be measuring their learning solely by numeric grades. I explained a bit about my master's program and told them that I was purposely trying different forms of evaluation for my research. I hoped to encourage them to use qualitative means to assess their learning. The question directed to the students for discussion was, "How do you feel about the ways that your learning is being evaluated? Are the results you are receiving in keeping with your value of your learning and achievement? How, other than by marks, would you like to be evaluated?"

The ensuing discussion was very surprising to me. The students had obviously bought into the grade system they knew in previous school experience, without question. They considered the marking fair; all was well with how their learning was being tested. A couple of people said they wanted more feedback, more frequently. A few wished they could be given marks for improvement. None felt that they were being placed in competition with each other, which is a position we are very conscious of avoiding as a Native college. Most saw a strong correlation between grades and effort expended. Two or three voiced the feeling that I had caused them to think about how they are being

evaluated and that made them feel uncomfortable. They were happy until I had brought up the issue.

I asked the students a question about evaluation for them to respond to in their journal entries. Only two students wrote anything related to the "system" of evaluation. All of them approached the question from the point of view of how they felt they were doing in the program--good or bad. I was left with the impression that, at present, these students wished to leave their evaluation in the hands of instructors. They trusted instructors to be fair. Changing the system of evaluation made them uneasy. The students did not seem want to be responsible for changing the tradition of grades. They openly admitted to still being in the high school mode where numbers are assigned to achievement. I accepted that I should not pursue this discussion of change of orientation to qualitative evaluation with these students at that time; I chose to respect their comfort zone of standards for the time being.

The group meeting model proved to be invaluable for team building and normative program evaluation. As program head, the meetings immediately alerted me to any issues concerning staff/student relations, scheduling problems, course content and general administration of the program. The students were able to participate in solutions as a result of the meetings. Attendance at meetings was good during the first term, indicating that students valued the meetings. By the second term, students had learned other ways to channel their concerns, and the group meetings evolved to student-run events, and revolved around planning of student activities. I only attended when I was asked, which was usually when they needed a mediator; I mediated by guiding them to resolve their conflicts, but did not solve the issues for them. One such issue concerned the collection of money for jackets. There were hard lessons to be learned regarding trust of each other where money was concerned. The ordering and purchase of jackets spanned

most of the year, but served as an excellent medium for the development and test of group dynamics.

Big Picture Session 2

When the students returned in January after the Christmas break, there was a general group meeting of the UCEP students, to serve as an orientation to the second term. I asked the students to repeat the Big Picture exercise they had done in the fall. The purpose of this second session was to assess whether the students' perception of their common experiences, needs, and goals had changed as a result of 4 months together in the program. Using a mural, I again drew the classroom with students on a time line. They were asked to depict where they had come from, factors influencing their student lives, goals, and needs to achieve the goals.

I had no idea what would come of this exercise, and was awed by the response. A few behaviours were notably different from the first session in the fall. This time students offered and took turns to do the mural drawing and writing. All students participated in the discussion openly and no comments were irrelevant. When describing where they had come from, the group listed all the skills they had acquired during the first term. When listing their needs to reach their goals, they listed all the attitudes and responsibilities necessary to carry them through the term. What was strikingly different from the fall session was that all the needs listed were now things they had personal control over, such as commitment and punctuality.

Just based on this activity alone, I was able to see that several of the study goals were being accomplished. For instance, the students did identify learning needs such as becoming more organized and forming study groups for peer support, and they identified skills and attitudes that they acquired during the first term. Even when mentioning the help they still needed, the phrases they used indicated that they needed to seek help on personal issues and needed to make use of assistance available in this area. They did not

say some outside source should solve their problems, however. From this observation, I concluded that the students had begun to take ownership of their learning. Goals were work-oriented and very realistic. In the fall, they had wanted things and people to solve their problems. Now they apparently were willing to do this for themselves.

This second run at the Big Picture method was useful in that it gave the students the opportunity to depict their shared experience of the past 4 months. While they were developing the mural, there was an attitude of affirmation that the turmoil experienced during the fall had, in fact, resulted in tangible skills and knowledge that they could now identify and that these were steps towards goals that were now more defined.

Observations of change from one session to another was encouraging to the students when it was pointed out to them. I do not think they would have seen the transition from dependence to independence themselves so this process was most useful.

Summative UCEP Interviews

I designed a summative questionnaire (Appendix B) to use with each student at the very end of their UCEP experience. This final interview was to serve a few purposes: (a) students would have the opportunity to identify for themselves skills which had been acquired over the year that they would continue to use in the course of future education or employment; (b) responses would provide me with feedback related to the organization and value of components of the UCEP program; (c) the problem solving question would provide an indication of the students' application of cognitive skills to the problem situation, which could be compared to their initial problem-solving journal in September; and, (d) the interview would give the students a sense of completion and closure to the year of study, in that they would have a chance to reflect on the changes they had gone through in 10 months.

The interviews were to take place at the end of spring session, in June. Unfortunately, the students were only in the college for Cree language classes at that

time. Attendance was intermittent; their presence near my office was infrequent; and showing up for scheduled appointments was unlikely. I was only able to interview eight of the finishing students. However, these eight responses are fairly representative of the informal feedback I solicited from students before this time, such as during the second Big Picture session and during the subsequent year.

The following is a summary of the responses. Many of the individual responses were similar. Feelings about themselves at the end of the year, as compared to when they began the program revealed that: (a) Some had felt confident of their ability as a student in the beginning while others were very unsure. All of them expressed feeling more confident in themselves now that they had completed the program. (b) Most had not known many or any of the other students when they began and were very shy about relating to the others. Now they all expressed ease in their friendships with the other students and confidence in their ability to make new friends in future situations. (c) Two of the respondents had not noticed any change in their relationships with family, but the other six expressed that they had held submissive roles in the home before, and now experienced more respect from family members, increased communication, and more independence. (d) Most had not changed their educational plans during the year. (e) All had begun to experience their Cree culture in ways they had not expected. Some had not thought much about culture before and now had a sense of where they came from. One woman said that the program had brought back forgotten memories of her Grandfather's teachings. Three were grateful to know more of the Cree language.

In response to the question about how they would prepare a report on the future of youth in their community, all of the students gave me a fairly detailed plan of the steps they would take, and why. Six of the students said they would first conduct research before deciding what should be done. Most referred to reporting back on their findings. When compared to these same students' responses to the fall problem solution, none of

them had thought of seeking information before making a decision; now, they not only wanted to do research, but could think of multiple sources of information to be gathered. The students were only given a minute or so to think of a response to this problem. On this basis of their responses, I conclude that some of the cognitive skills focussed on during the year had been transferred by these students and had become their habitual way of approaching problems.

All of the students interviewed were able to itemize a list of skills that they were aware of having acquired over the year. Skills that were included by many of the students were: the ability to write, proof reading, better communication with people, and word processing. The changes in attitude and behaviour that students frequently cited include increased comfort in asking questions or for help, a greater tendency to question and think about everything, better time management, more use of Cree language, better understanding of family situations from the perspective of psychology, and more responsibility. Most of the interviewees expressed appreciation of English classes and the cognitive skills course, and were very aware of how these had benefited them.

The types of learning activities and content that were easier or harder varied from student to student. Most appreciated the group activities and study groups. Some needed structure; others were happy to learn in an unstructured setting. Although this variation was to be expected, the result reinforces the need to present course content in a variety of ways to address different learning styles.

The English courses were rated highest as the most memorable event of the year. The field trip to a nearby First Nations historical site and museum was the highlight for four of the respondents. Three of the students cited completion of the program as the high point. None of the students interviewed were at a loss for good memories.

During the rough times, students were supported by family usually, but many cited me, or other instructors, or fellow students for support as well. Some expressed

being driven by the need to provide a better future for their children. Three referred to goals they had set for themselves. All had needed encouragement at times when they thought they could not succeed.

The eight interviews took at least an hour each. The occasion provided the catalyst for each of the students to have a pleasant visit. Each left satisfied with a sense of accomplishment that was close to elation, given that this was the end of a 10-month program. One student talked about how, at the beginning of the program, she was so sure she would fail, and now she was excited about going on to university studies and felt certain that she would be able to write the essays and pass the tests. Another student spoke of how good he felt to be part of the group of students and be able to help each other. They also seemed pleased that I had reviewed the learning process that I had seen in each of them. By the time these interviews took place, all of the students had registered for the following year, so the discussions regarding future plans had already been covered.

The summative interview was the final evaluative method I chose to use during the UCEP year. In the next chapter I discuss the methods used and reflect upon the effectiveness of each.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In chapter 1, I opened my study from the expansive perspective of the evolving human condition as cultures strive to advance and seek harmony in an ever-advancing global society. From the Baha'i viewpoint of this global picture, if individuals are to freely contribute to this human evolution, they must continually seek truth independently and be able to distinguish truth from falsehood. They must be able to justly evaluate themselves in relation to their environment. I began to focus on the culture that I was working with in the context of learning in an adult college. If the First Nations people I work with are to manifest this form of justice, they must be able to learn and evaluate reality. I became aware of the struggle of First Nations students as they engage in learning within a non-Native system of knowledge. It was clear to me that there was a strong link between their personal growth of identity as Cree people and their ability learn and grow in other dimensions, including academics. In my quest to assist students to seek meaning in their learning, I saw the inadequacy of quantitative feedback concerning their achievements, and wanted to begin using some means of individual and group evaluation that would permit students to assess their own needs and learning in terms of their own values and world view. I also wanted to be able to see the meaning of the educational experience through the students' eyes.

In this chapter, I discuss my quest for meaningful evaluative methods. In order to set a holistic, qualitative, culturally relevant framework for this discussion, in the first section I present a metaphor for my quest of assisting students through a modified approach to evaluation. The metaphor I chose is that of a moose hunt. Following this orientating metaphor, I then discuss the usefulness of my evaluation processes and the implications of the outcomes of the evaluation for the students. I then reflect upon the meaning this quest has had upon my own learning. Finally I draw some conclusions that

may be relevant for other adult educators who may be seeking to make their evaluation approach more meaningful for their First Nations students.

Metaphor of a Moose Hunt

As a learner within my own study of learning, I have drawn upon my own spiritual intelligence as I have struggled to find transformative meaning in this study. I intuitively think in terms of metaphors so it is not surprising that my quest for meaning was aided by the metaphor of learning described by Denis and Richter (1987) as a moose hunt.

The concept of a moose hunt is closely associated with a forest environment. As I approached the vista of evaluation within a culturally relevant context, I realized that different evaluative methods and techniques represented types of trees that dot the landscape of evaluative learning for most educators. In 1994, at the beginning of my quest for understanding of the role of qualitative evaluation in a First Nations adult learning context, I definitely had the sense of not being able to see the forest for the trees; in fact, I was incapable of seeing the forest for the trees. This study has, indeed, become a journey for me through the forest.

Denis and Richter (1987) refer to intuitive learning as a moose hunt. As one wanders the forest looking for the prize moose, the intuitive learner attempts to think like the moose and tends to take an indirect path in the process. As I have always been primarily an intuitive learner, it is clear that I have been on a circular moose hunt. The part of the forest I have been working and learning in for the past 6 years has been

densely populated with evaluation trees. The forests I have spent most of my hunt in are on First Nations lands.

A quest does not take place without a prey; in this case a moose. The moose I have sought is myself, as a mature and effective evaluator of First Nations adults' learning. As I tracked my prize moose, I became a learner in the ways of the forest, the nature of my prey, and my own ability to hunt. This has afforded me much in common with the other hunters (learners) in this forest, each after their own target. In fact, it is the process of assisting and learning from my fellow hunters that has helped lead me to my moose. In this case, learning to think like a hunter has helped lead me to what I hunted. In my journal during orientation for this master's degree program, I expressed the desire for a pair of glasses to clearly see what was happening with students. I felt dissatisfied with just feeling what was happening, which I seemed to be able to do. My driving purpose has been to understand the nature of the hunter and do what I can to assist all hunters to become the best hunters they can be. Upon reflection, I have come to realize it is not so much the object of the hunt that interests me as the art of hunting. The art and process of my own learning is the essence of my hunt. In the case of this study I was learning to improve my evaluation of First Nations students' learning.

In the Aboriginal forest, hunters often hunt alone and it is not acceptable to judge one hunter in comparison to another. If lone hunters are to develop their ability, they must seek ways to learn and be able to judge their own skill and achievement in relation to their goal. The reason a hunter needs to assess and adapt his or her technique is that, without question, the forests are changing; even seasoned hunters need to learn new and

improved techniques to hunt their usual prey, and they may even have to change their choice of prey.

The other hunters in the forest were primarily Cree adults living on a reserve. They came with a lifetime of formal and informal learning behind them. This learning was associated with a variety of emotions and attitudes, as well as distinct learning gaps. It was my role to teach, develop and administer a program designed to prepare these students, most of whom had been away from formal education for some time, to enter college or university studies. As an adult educator seeking to enhance my skills in assisting other adults learn, I intended to learn about the adult learning process with particular focus on external and self-assessment methods of qualitative evaluation of learning that would be compatible with Cree culture. I wanted to identify and to learn how to use techniques to promote independent learning skills and attitudes—both for myself and for those I hoped to assist through teaching.

The original plan for my hunt was to take 2 years. During the first year, I would complete my project and readings; the second year, I would write the reports and thesis. As this is now being written 5 years hence, it is obvious that my moose hunt took many turns and detours as I came to terms with the ways of this elusive moose. My moose seemed to have an agenda for my learning that this hunter had not conceived of in the beginning. I had planned to capture the image of hunting by doing my project first with a group of hunters scheduled to go through the forest, beginning the Fall of 1995. I thought I would be able to read and learn what had been written about hunting as I was gathering experiential images. Once I had collected my anecdotal “snap shots” of learning and had tried varied ways of helping new hunters to hunt their prey, I planned to analyse and

synthesize the experience in light of my reading. I thought I had narrowed the focus of my study to manageable parameters. By the time I reached this stage of writing about my learning, I thought I would have found my moose and would feel educated and confident in the ways of facilitating independent learning, assessing learning, and reporting about learning using qualitative data.

My hunting expedition required both formative and summative evaluation. Along the way, I needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the advice and modelling that I was offering to the novice hunters along the way; as well as to monitor my own personal choice of routes through the forest. Was I, in fact, closing in on the moose? Once I found the moose and captured a perception of it, I needed a form of summative evaluation of the moose. Is it the moose I actually was seeking, or another? Have I matured as predicted? Have I become an adult educator with competence in holistic, contextualized evaluation?

As I sought to clarify what my moose had matured into, I became well aware that my ability to function as a holistic, contextualized educator is dependent upon spiritual energy. If I fail to plug into my spiritual self through prayer, or if I am in an environment or relationship that is disharmonious, I am inclined to withdraw into a defence mechanism to reduce my vulnerability. If my spiritual energy is challenged, I do not argue (except in fun) and do not learn from debate or challenge. I will take on a challenge, but in my own way, in my own time: I simply seek another path to that moose.

As I began to look at how my life experiences have affected my style of hunting, I reviewed my life-long learning. I reflected upon my inheritance of history and personal traits; as well as the family, educational, and work experiences from which I had learned

to hunt. I came to see how my entire life has brought me to my present stage of life, where I am, coincidentally, returning to the place of my forebears to gain greater expertise in facilitation of the education to meet the demands of an ever-changing world. My great, great, great grandfather was on the first boat of Scottish settlers to land in Pictou county in the 18th century. As they moved and expanded westward from Nova Scotia, in a hunt for a new way of life, they contributed to the founding of this nation. I had returned to their starting point to begin a hunt for my personal moose, such that I might assist the descendants of those who helped the settlers to find their way and their chosen prey in these changing times.

My moose hunt metaphor provides my personal learning with a context. I now discuss the process elements of my study in terms of their usefulness as evaluative tools for the students and for the institution.

Usefulness of Process Elements

My intended outcome for this project was to have a number of effective qualitative evaluative tools with which to assess and evaluate learning needs and outcomes, in ways compatible with First Nations' cultural values. By using these methods, I sought to achieve four broad goals and within these, six more specific learning objectives. In chapter 3 I set forth criteria according to which I selected the methods I used. In this section, I discuss my intended purpose for the key evaluative processes that I used as they relate to the literature, and I compare the experience using the process according to the criteria I established. In light of literature, I also discuss possible reasons for the methods not meeting the expectation I had for each and I discuss the extent to which the four broad goals and six learning objectives I set out for this thesis were met.

Finally, for each process, I comment on the potential of each method for finding personal meaning to aspects of both life and learning, as emphasized by Lindeman (1984) and Frankl (1969).

Educating Rita

The intended purpose of having incoming students experience this particular film was to provide a non-threatening context within which they could explore their emotions related to beginning a learning journey. I was aiming for the decontextualization described by Mezirow (1991) where the students could experience the perspective of a beginning adult learner in a different cultural situation, and thereby see their own learning experience as part of broader social forces (Brookfield, 1987). I wanted to challenge their equilibrium, as indicated by Daloz (1986), such that they would distance themselves from their surrounding immediate culture long enough to realize their membership with all adult learners. I was hoping students would see a role of mentor being played out in the movie and its strength in providing a learning relationship and environment in which a student chooses to expand their learning potential and goal—a process advocated by Candy (1991). I was hoping students would note Rita's reaction to criticism as it relates to the First Nation sense that an unsuccessful attempt is not a failure, and the principle of non-judgement of a person's work (Charter, 1994).

It was not apparent during the group discussions after the film that comparison of Rita's situation to the students' had resulted in the changed perspective of their own situation that I had hoped for. When the students reflected on the similarities and differences of Rita's situation to their own, they did demonstrate Mezirow's (1991) position that people are limited in their ability to learn by their own history of culture and

personal experience. The students did not focus much on the mentor relationship between instructor and student. The students did identify with some messages of the film, however. They were aware of the motivations and barriers affecting Rita's educational pursuit. The need for commitment and perseverance, as called for by Rain, Crier, and Carnew (1996), was noted by the students. They did relate to Rita's reaction to criticism. They were able to identify with Rita's struggle to learn to write and her eventual success. Her frustrations with instructor expectations, and her development of self-esteem also rang true. The comments of students provided some indication of the degree to which students were identifying with their roles as women or men, adult learners, and members of the Cree culture; however, the students needed considerable prompting to see the comparison of Rita's struggle to adapt to a new culture with their own situation.

There was some demonstration as to what extent incoming students were able to use such cognitive skills as comparison and contrast, transference, cause and effect, and willingness to respond. The students only commented on the obvious in this film; their responses did not show any exploration of the cause of feelings nor nuances of positive or negative affect. What students identified with were character traits (e.g. determination, eagerness, freedom of choice) which were foremost in their minds at this time. They saw the traits they needed and wanted. Their reluctance to identify differences was notable, and any discussion of relationships was notably absent. The film and discussion highlighted a few aspects of their own development in the beginning stages--aspects they needed to be aware of--if they were to affect changes over the next few months.

Used at the beginning of a program, the discussion of this film did not serve to evaluate students' learning progress; however, the students were able to identify with

being at the start of a journey and, in that sense, were guided to place themselves on a continuum of personal change, skill development, and choices to be made. Sharing this experience interjected humour to a stressful situation, a technique which Charter (1994) sees as important. Students were also given the opportunity to experience mutuality as adult learners, as described by MacKeracher (1996). In this, they gained a common identity as a starting point for embeddedness in their new environment. They were all at the starting gate of a new and exciting process. The experience served as an equalizer of student rank, as deemed important by Mezirow (1991) for consciousness raising and building trust among members of a group.

As to the success of this process with respect to the criteria set for evaluative tools, it met some of the criteria but may have met more if it were used later in the term. Viewing the film and the discussions that followed did serve to frame the adult learning experience as encompassing one's whole life of responsibilities and relationships. Students' ability to apply cognitive skills of comparison and transfer were demonstrated during discussion. The cultural transition from a working class to an educated society as presented in the film allowed for discussion of the culture shock that occurs as one embarks on adult education without giving undue emphasis to the contrast of Cree culture and western culture. In the cultural context of reserve and traditional experience, it is often overlooked that students share identities with other social groupings such as working single parents, adults who have been away from school for many years, or children of alcoholics. There are common experiences and bonds that First Nations people may share with non-First Nations groups, as well as other First Nations people. While students did not develop their self-confidence in any obvious way during this

process, they did have the opportunity to vent their apprehension and fears. It was non-threatening and did, indeed, legitimate their situation without personalizing their vulnerability. The only data produced by this session was my own journaling of observations.

Any personal meaning found or identification with the characters in the film was not brought forward during the discussion. Students may have realized the similarity of their situation to Rita's later during the year. Some of this meaning might have produced data if students had been asked to write about this. As is obvious by my intentions for showing this film, there is strong meaning to the emotions Rita experienced during her transition to competent student that I wished to foreshadow with the students. That was my meaning; the students had not experienced those emotions as yet and did not, therefore, strongly relate to them as they viewed the film. The film did become a point of reference during the year, but generally I was the one who made the reference. When I compared an experience, such as feelings of failure when an essay was edited to how Rita had reacted in this situation, I could see definite recognition in the students' expressions. Some meaning connections had been made. Students also openly identified with the desire to have choices.

I would, indeed, use this film again with a Native audience so long as there is no comparable film set in a First Nation, or at least Canadian, context. I still believe it is important for students to realize that they are not alone in their fear of learning as adults and that life relationships can become incredible challenges as one seeks change and freedom of choice. I feel that these messages were delivered by the film with more

humour and less personal judgement than if I had just offered the observations directly to the group.

Big Picture Sessions

The Big Picture session was intended to give students the opportunity to envision their own community as a student body within their larger community. Thomas (1997) suggests that First Nation learners have a preference to look at the big picture before focusing on one aspect of a process. Mezirow (1991) writes of the need for trust and homogeneity of power amongst group members for collective transformative learning to occur. I wanted the students to begin forming a supportive learning community, referred to by Brookfield (1987), as they examined their common social factors. Charter (1994) believes that education should prepare people for total living such that they can advance individual and community. I hoped that they would be empowered to act as a group to articulate the reality of their social situation and influence their learning experience within the college and find solutions to community issues affecting their families. This is similar to Freire's (1984) work with groups where he uses a problem posing method to have the facilitator and participants collaborate and devise common solutions. I hoped that the students would come to the realization that their learning in the college was connected to all things and was part of community and part of the cyclical flow of natural life that included all of them individually and collectively, as discussed by Wayne (1996). I expected that the students would identify the Cree cultural social forces within their lives during this activity.

The Big Picture session was effective in that it caused students to think of their group as a community with common goals and needs; however, the responses of the

students created a different picture that I had expected. The students did not express a great degree of holistic perspective of their learning in the context of community. In line with Mezirow's (1991) requirements for, and indicators of, transformative learning, the students did identify the need for trust amongst themselves and were willing to explore sources of influence on their daily lives. However, they were at a loss to think in terms of experience of shared forces that had brought them to their choice of furthering their education at a cultural college. The centre of their lives and motivation for decisions was the family; this reflects the cultural value of family, but indicates little identification with a cultural community as the hub of their lives.

I found it intriguing that, during the first session, students chose to depict time both as a line and as a circle. Both of these positions are reflected in the literature. Lightning (1992) advocates the need to take life one step at a time with only enough foreknowledge to lead us forward. The students were not seeing much beyond the end of their first year at the college. On the other hand, the students saw family relationships and responsibilities on the circle of life that was all interconnected, as described by Wayne (1996), Lightning (1992), and Orr (2000).

The instructor and observer evaluation of the discussion contributed to a subjective description of the students' incoming identification with Cree culture. The students were able to think of common situations in the present and were willing to respond as a group of people who were about to share a common experience. To this extent it was the beginning of a sense of community. There was little curiosity expressed about the functions of various departments and persons within the college, so my intent of acquainting them with these did not materialize at all. I had assumed that the students

would have an awareness of the effect of history, band politics, government, funding, and past hardship on their present choice to return to school. If I had led the discussion in this way, I feel certain that they would have agreed with the connections that I posed, but I was determined that the content and direction of this session would be theirs.

This session was not a fair assessment of cognitive skills, as there was a definite shyness of each other and reluctance to share so their thought processes were not revealed--only their lack of willingness to respond. This session contributed only marginally to the objective of directing the students' focus onto their strengths, weaknesses, and skill development that they needed. The students' attention to external solutions to their needs did not lead to any exploration of specific skills that they would need to learn over the next year.

By way of contrast, personal learning was evident during the second session in January. The students took ownership of the mural and did it without my help. At that time, they were quick to itemize their past learning and requirements to reach more defined goals. The comparison of the September and January murals certainly served as an indication of cognitive development. The students collectively were able to articulate concepts, define problems, hypothesize solutions, see the relationship of past to present and demonstrate some metacognition. Transformative learning was evidenced by the students' ability to examine the process of their learning and the consequences of their previous behaviours and values (Mezirow, 1991). It was evident that the broad goals set for this thesis were being realized. They were learning according to their cultural learning styles and could begin to evaluate the skills and content they had learned. In addition, they were beginning to articulate their future learning needs. Both sessions resulted in a

mural that was available for the students to reflect upon for a couple of months, and for me to refer back to months after the events and use for comparison between the two sessions.

Brookfield (1987) sees it important for instructors to respond to the flow of the students' reactions in order to foster a sense of community. I did respond to the students' expressed need for trust among themselves by planning trust-promoting activities into the program. There might have been more drive to determine social influences if there had been a real problem to be solved, as there was in the Gatt-Fly (1983) action-oriented group problem solving sessions. The students had no sense of disconfirmation as noted by Taylor (1987) as the first stage of a learning task. It was I who had identified the discrepancy between present influences and what could be. Had the observations made by the instructor-recorder, TK, been offered to the students, they might have become more aware of thought process they needed to develop, but the effect of this sharing might also have had a detrimental effect on their self-confidence, as suggested by Taylor. As he explains, there can be a crisis of confidence and withdrawal in a group that can accompany the second stage of learning—a stage he sees as filled with disorientation and confusion. It would have been better to introduce the discrepancies once the students' confidence was stronger. My own inability to create symbols and draw rapidly definitely altered this session from the expected outcome of a mural to more of a mind map composed of words.

As a way for a group to find collective meaning to a joint venture, the Big Picture session is a valuable tool. Members of a group are able to find a common purpose for participating; they are able to transcend the personal motivation that brought them to the

group and see their participation as meaningful from the perspective of group needs and goals. The group is able to articulate collective objectives and goals, and thereby can create a sense of common destiny or community.

The Journaling Activities

My primary purpose for use of dialogue journals with the students was to create a private, rather than a public, forum to build the instructor/student relationship, learn about issues facing students, and engage in a two-way review of their learning experience. I hoped to use the dialogue to foster critical thinking by encouraging students to question their assumptions and their habitual ways of doing things (Brookfield, 1987) rather than imposing advice upon them, which is discouraged by Charter (1994). The relationship between the instructor and student is seen as paramount to learning, with the key factor in this relationship being trust (see Daloz, 1986; Thomas, 1997).

Friedrich (1993) points out that people have the innate capability to reflect and alter their situation in life. Each journal entry provided the students with the opportunity to achieve metacognition by looking at their internal processes (Lerner, 1995) rather than just charge ahead meeting course requirements to pass. The use of dialogue journals did afford me opportunity to learn of the inner world of the students to the extent that they shared it with me. As indicated by Kerka (1996), I was able to note changes in their cognitive skills, as well as their ability to analyse their situation and to express their personal opinion and needs without these being clouded by their fear or reluctance to share these thoughts with the other students. Journal entries guided by specific questions provided direct subjective feedback about the effectiveness of elements of the program.

I observed that some students who thought culturally about most issues, and others only responded with cultural thinking if specifically asked to do so. Students were more inclined to share their cultural thinking with me in their journals than in open class discussions. The descriptions of their personal situations provided indicators of the students' development as independent learners, as evidenced by their ability to solve problems, set priorities, and seek information. Although I will not betray the confidentiality of the journals in order to give specific personal journal content, a general example of this development is that students, in the beginning, would write that they had family problems a child or a partner, or that they could not do the work in a particular subject. As they moved forward, they would shift ownership of a problem to the child or partner and specify what was needed to solve the problem, and they often diagnosed the problems with their learning (e.g., cannot find references, cannot write opening paragraph of essay). Most of the students were most willing to open up and share their personal views and concerns with me using this format, and were obviously eager for my responses. I was able to highlight their learning as I was witnessing it. It was not possible to tell whether their development was a result of the cognitive course or natural development in a new experience that would have come about without the course. Student opinion of aspects of their UCEP program certainly affected my planning for future programs.

Whenever necessary, I also was able to help a student to focus on his or her individual need for academic or personal development; I was able to clarify my expectations if confusion was evident in the entry. By asking students to respond to a specific question each time, I encouraged the students to do a self-assessment of various

aspects of their learning. I certainly was more aware of what was going on internally for each student than I would have been without this form of dialogue. Kerka suggests that it is also the journaling process that affords the making meaning of experience for the students. Trusting relationships were established, and these were able to transfer to face-to-face communication after a couple of months. The fact that students developed a definite trend to speak to me, rather than write to me, I saw as evidence that I was succeeding in fostering a supportive environment.

The data produced by the dialogue journals were the journals provided students with the opportunity for reflection at a later date. The running notes that I made on each student's journal entries gave me an indication of the trend of their concerns (e.g., from problems at home to issue with specific subjects). Through their journals, students also provided me with some indication of their preferred learning styles, particularly those described by Briggs-Meyers (1985). Some would only focus on how they felt about class activities; some would question details and request specific step-by-step direction; others expressed curiosity with respect to other people and background to situations; yet others wanted me to set limits and define expectations. Some students gave direct indication of their learning style preferences by telling me what they liked about classes (e.g., group discussions, study guides) and what posed problems for them.

During the second term, students showed little inclination to continue with the journals. They were very comfortable coming to me to discuss problems by then, and I deduced that the journals had served their purpose of facilitating the relationships between us. They were no longer needed; Brookfield (1987) refers to the importance of instructors responding to the shifts of student needs.

Emotional transformation was also noted in journal entries. At the beginning of the year, a number of students referred to feelings of not belonging in a college program, which confirms Brookfield's (1990) impostor syndrome. A few months into the program, these comments gave way to notations of having discovered new friends and feeling good about being in school. A number of student entries indicated emotions associated with learning from long ago, as indicated by Dryden and Vos (1994). One student used the journal to indicate her strong association of an instructor to a school teacher she knew in her childhood. Some of the entries challenged the traditional marking scheme and showed the anger discussed by Daloz (1986) when expected boundaries are identified and dissolved. All in all, I consider dialogue journals a vital tool of evaluation.

The comparison of pre- and post-training problem solving proved to be an excellent means of assessing use of cognitive skills. The fact that the first and second problems posed were different and that there was no constraint placed on the format for the responses, resulted in less specific comparisons than would be possible with more consistency and formality. What struck me was the naturalness with which the students who participated in the final interview applied the concept of researching a problem before acting. I perceived this as confirmation that the students had habitualized the process. I would like to see this method of evaluation used such that the students actually follow through to solve a given problem rather than just make plans to solve one. The use of cognition throughout the process could be tabulated.

Personal Interviews

In keeping with what has been written by Daloz (1986) and Thomas (1997), I intended to conduct individual interview sessions with students so as to offer support

foster trust between the students and me such that they would reflect on their assumptions. In keeping with what Burrows, Scholten, and Theunissen (1992) describe, I saw interview sessions as an opportunity for me to listen to and reflect on what I heard and saw to the student. Charter (1994) cautions educators about the principle of non-interference that is a basic value in most First Nation cultures. I had known this value along with the value of being non-judgemental, so I held these two values foremost in my mind as I interviewed students with respect. Likewise, Fox (1991) suggests being sensitive to students' feelings and to not rush a discussion. As I explained in chapter 3, I desisted from using information gathered during interview for reasons of respect for the confidentiality and openness within the interview situation.

I consider the personal interview as a viable tool for formative and summative evaluation so long as the student is privy to all outcomes of the interview. As a program administrator, some judgement of the students and interference in their lives was necessary; however, I always attempted to work towards a mutual outcome through discussion with the student. Issues concerning their learning can always be considered in the context of their whole life during a personal interview. If the mutual trust and respect is present, students are certainly able to express and assess their needs and accomplishments. Students demonstrate their use of cognitive skills as they formulate solutions to issues and problems posed to them during the interviews. The interview is a great opportunity to boost student's self-confidence with praise that is not public (Oldpan, 1998), and it is during interviews that students can show their independence as a learner by committing and completing goals. So long as records are written in the presence of the student, data can be gathered (e.g., written contracts, goal statements that

are later marked as complete, anecdotal entries with respect to skills noted during interview).

The personal interview has great potential for both student and interviewer to find meaning, examine assumptions critically, and shift perspective. If there is mutuality both parties can learn from each other. On occasion, I was able reflect patterns of behaviour I saw in the person in ways that he or she had not observed in himself or herself. I often shifted my perception of my own expectations of a student as a result of an interview.

Group Meetings

Group meetings were used to impart information among group members, acquire skills, actualize group members, set plans, and perform tasks, all of which are noted by Auvine, Densmore, Extrom, Poole, and Shanklin (1977). As a form of qualitative evaluation, they were used as an opportunity for students to share personal experiences or feelings about a given topic, as suggested by Apps (1991). Such meetings give opportunities to learn from elders' stories (Charter, 1994) and become empowered as critical thinkers and community members. I considered group resolution of issues an excellent means to have students engage in critical questioning of assumptions and explore alternatives. As Brookfield (1990) also explains, group sessions can trigger incremental fluctuations of emotions as the comfort of old ideas give way to exhilaration and anxiety that come with new perceptions and new meanings.

The group meetings served well as an evaluative tool for the program and as a meaningful process of community. Student evaluation of the program was addressed by both direct, and indirect, evaluation of the UCEP Program that occurred during these meetings; some changes were immediately made in response to student suggestions. In

this way, the meetings became a form of dynamic assessment where both the student and facilitator were engaged in mutual assessment and were very responsive to each other throughout the process (see Burrows, Scholten, & Theunissen, 1992). Cognition was well demonstrated during group meetings as students drew on all their resources to solve problems. As described in chapter 3, many of the group meetings aroused emotion and transformation of perspective of both ideas and self. Many of the students had only participated in their extended family groups, so they experienced the impostor feelings described by Brookfield (1990) until they found their voice in their new community. Roles emerged. To begin with, those who had been leaders within the local community took control, but gradually new leaders emerged as a result of dissension with dominant voices. Students learned through peer support that their own ideas were valid and worthy of expression.

During sessions with the elders, students had a prime opportunity to explore their cultural understanding. The elders were very open and even permitted them to challenge ideas. The experience produced incredible insights for some students. In these cases, there were all the emotions associated with a fuller realization of the First Nation culture (Mezirow, 1991).

It must be noted that the group meeting were not the only opportunity for the UCEP students to benefit from group interaction; many of their classes included project work and group discussion. Confidence in the group and the sense of belonging were, nonetheless, key factors expressed by the students in journals and interviews. This helped lead to their independence as students, as well as to independence within their own families. Peer relationships established within the UCEP group experiences contributed

to their strength to deal with personal issues. This transfer of self-worth from one situation to another definitely offered proof of learning and incredible holistic meaning.

Summative Interviews

It was my intent to use the summative interview to review with the student their outcomes as a result of the UCEP program, both in terms of the expected outcomes preferred by Sylvinski and Miles (1996), and in terms of personal outcomes that were not predetermined, as would be favoured by Mezirow (1991). As described in chapter 1, I sought to achieve six learning objectives. Among them, I hoped students would exercise cognitive skills and transfer of learning. As described in chapter 1, I sought to achieve six learning objectives. Among them, I hoped students would exercise cognitive skills and transfer of learning. The expected outcomes of the UCEP program included grades and skills, which were incorporated into grades (e.g., ability to write an essay, use a word processor, remember course information). I also sought in the six objectives to encourage students to express and assess their needs, compatibility of learning style, accomplishments, and their cultural orientation. The undefined outcomes would include personal growth, identity, self-esteem and improved ability to function as a community member as part of these objectives. I also wanted to articulate with the students what learning skills they had developed and would carry with them to all future learning and work experiences. Pankiw (1993) confirms the benefit of students being aware of their learning strengths, and deBono (1982) refers to confidence of thought associated with metacognition.

Looking back, these interviews should have been scheduled earlier to ensure meeting with more of the students. Furthermore, what might have been helpful would

have been responses to the same questions by those students who dropped out of the program along the way. A comparison of those responses may have provided insight into the attitudes expressed by the successful students in contrast with those who did not continue through to the end of the program. Without this full range of responses, the college's objective for evaluation of the program was not fully met. There should have been an interview with each student when they left; however, this was not always possible or practical. Often students were withdrawn from the program as a result of not attending for a lengthy period of time. In any case, we seldom saw the student for months after they left the program.

I consider the summative interview especially valuable as a way for students to attach meaning to their learning. In all cases, it offered a closure to the program rather than the student just leaving with a set of grades. The effectiveness could be improved by both the administrator and the student preparing for the interview. Completion of a portfolio could be the product of the interview. These points are raised again in the recommendation section of this chapter.

Implications of Qualitative Evaluation for Adult Learning

The model by which Vella, Berardinelli, and Burrow (1998) evaluate adult learning, examines: (a) the learning of skills, knowledge, and attitudes; (b) transfer of learning to other tasks and experiences; and, (c) impact on the future functioning of the organization in which the learner practises. In this section, I discuss the effectiveness of the qualitative evaluative methods employed, looking at the four larger goals I set for this thesis: (a) to assess students' learning needs, (b) to help them learn in keeping with their

cultural learning styles, (c) to evaluate what skills and content they have learned, and (d) to determine their subsequent learning needs.

Students' Assessment of Their Own Learning

A number of the qualitative evaluation methods I used gave the students an opportunity to assess their own learning as demonstrated by skills, knowledge, and achievement. For example, during the Big Picture sessions, the students learned of each other's attitudes and perceptions; they learned to collaborate to form a unified vision of their collective situation, and they learned to articulate their own needs and goals. Both Big Picture sessions engaged the students in assessing their collective needs as students, as well as their priorities in terms of family being their prime relationship and motivation for learning. During the second Big Picture session, students were able to evaluate their own progress with respect to goals, skill development, and attitudes. This showed evidence of learning referred to by Mezirow (1991) when old interpretations give way to new modes of interpretation of experience and are used to direct future action.

Similarly, the discussion following the Rita film encouraged students to identify and compare their attitudes and feelings about becoming a student to those of Rita in the film. The session gave them the knowledge that they were not alone in feeling the impostor syndrome – which Brookfield (1987) claims is a widespread apprehension among adults returning to the classroom. They realized that they were at the beginning of a path of transformation. For example, one of them commented about the change in Rita's relationship with her husband and family once she started going to school. In order to participate in the journal dialogue with me, they learned to assess and express their own feelings, opinions and needs. It was also a learning experience to interact in writing.

Guided by the questions I asked each week, students were evaluating their own learning, as well as receiving my evaluation. The two problem-solving journal assignments afforded the students practice in applying cognitive strategies as they had to

evaluate and decide how to deal with a situation. As well, both the formative and summative interviews engaged students in assessing their learning and forming positive self-attitudes. The interviews were an opportunity for me, not only to offer my evaluation of their learning, but also to exchange perceptions with the students, which served both of us in evaluating their learning more clearly and thoroughly. This experience confirms Greene's (2000) explanation of the interplay of internal and external perception as related to evaluation. The learning has meaning for the students only to the extent that they perceive it; the evaluator's external perception of change through learning can be communicated to the students such that their perception is heightened. As Rossing and Neuman (1993) attest, the evaluator facilitates reflection, which, in turn alters the internal perception.

Transfer and Impact

Both I and the college administration were interested in finding ways of determining whether there was transfer between the cognitive skills course and the students' overall learning. The methods I used did reveal the students' willingness and ability to compare and contrast, to solve problems, and to transfer use of writing and communications skills. Although it was difficult to specifically determine to what extent the cognitive skills course was responsible for the obvious cognitive development of the students, testimonials offered by the students in journals, casual conversations, interviews, and the second Big Picture session attested to the usefulness of the course, in spite of some initial resistance to taking the course at the time. In the journals, I learned of how family situations were being resolved, as well as how students' new learning created or complicated family situations. For example, at the beginning of the year, students generally demonstrated an inability to deal with family problems. During the second half of the year students were more likely to tell me how they were resolving family issues than to admit defeat and ask me for help. After the cognitive course was

complete and often after the program, as seen next, students credited the cognitive course for helping them attack problems and organize strategies systematically.

Although a follow-up survey was not planned as part of this study, continuing contact with many of the students provides some informal data. Five years later, more than half of the students have notably stabilized their personal lives and have gone on to complete diplomas and degrees. In one case, a mother of six and grandmother of two, who had great fear of academic learning, has overcome many family crises, earned a diploma in social work and is employed as a social worker. In another case, a single mother struggled with commitment to learning in the midst of relationship issues. More than once, she was on the verge of quitting or being terminated from the program. She has gone on to graduate with a management degree. The work of Daloz (1986) credits cognitive development for people's ability to precipitate cycles of breakdown and rebuilding, which was certainly evident with these students. There is no question that the UCEP program has had impact on most of the participants, and thus on the organizations they work for and the community.

Reflections on the Meaning to My Own Learning

At the outset of this thesis, the goals I set out included my own professional growth. It is not surprising that during my study of holistic adult learning, I precipitated a perspective transformation within myself. I was indeed caught in own learning web. As I reflect on the meaning of my own learning, I revert to the metaphor of my moose hunt as well as direct reflections on the implications my learning quest has had for me as a promoter of holistic contextual evaluation of adult learning. The assessment of my own learning utilized evaluative methods similar to those I used in my study, so these are reviewed as a qualitative evaluation of my own learning.

Unfolding of a Moose Hunt

My experience of holistic learning during this study is not dissimilar to the lives of my students whose learning I wanted to study and account for. I now realize that this very study almost mirrors the conflict experienced by non-Western students learning in western programs. There is a saying that life is what happens while you are making plans; meaningful learning has occurred for me while I have been seeking ways to account for, capture, and prove progress in adult students. I was so tangled in my own history of assumptions and perceptions of learning, a situation well described by Mezirow (1991), that it took some time before I could break free of my perceptions.

In my forest, I was lamenting the existence of so many trees, and was trying to find the shortest straight path to my moose. I was thinking I would recognize her as me when I saw her for the first time. It would have been my preference to have no trees and be able to scan the barren terrain and spot my moose waiting for me. My moose has not been waiting for me; she has been busy doing the work she will continue to do, striving to do it better each day given the circumstances presented. There is no question that I have learned during this period of time. The experience of trying to complete this master's degree has lead me to discover and nurture a moose within me. However, up to this point, I have been perceiving the moose according to the values I began this project with. I am now prepared to recognize the moose I found for what she is, and let her go forward to serve the field of adult education, knowing that she has found her meaning for the work that she does. All that has changed and will change for my moose once I find and merge with her now. I now know that she knows why she is doing what she does--she has found deeper meaning. The meaning has come from the realization that it took the experience of

trudging through the trees, working with the fellow hunters, getting lost in the process, having the commitment and perseverance to find my way to the moose and, to find that the meaning is found in the process. The hunt has been totally an individual experience.

Learning is lifelong; it does not stop. Even as I complete this thesis, interactive learning occurs. My advisor has found meaning in this study even when I have not been able to see it. She intuitively felt that I should not refer to “progress” in students, but rather “learning.” I did not see the significance of the change, yet dutifully made the changes. It is the very resolution of the conflict this change stirred in me that has been the catalyst for my perspective transformation; I have been “beating myself up” for not having succeeded in showing progress by the methods I used. It was due to this realization that I was prepared to go back and look at what meaning was found by the students as a result of experiencing the methods I tried. I was at last prepared, through the eyes of my moose, to go back and look at the interrelationship of trees to the journey for the adult learners I studied, all the while knowing that I will always be incapable of perceiving the meaning they derived from any evaluative method. I can only hope to have facilitated the journey, offered possible routes and shared the learners’ enlightenment. I was seeking a common means of expressing that we both were learning. Is it really important to pin down what it is that each of us learned, or to what degree we have learned?

For these past 5 years, I have painfully been attempting to make progress in justifying the use of qualitative methods of evaluation to assess the need for learning and track linear advancement toward pre-determined subjective goals. I have been trying to define ways to know that other learners have found the meaning I have predetermined is

valuable for them. No wonder my project methods did not always generate the outcomes that I predicted.

Review of My Learning Using Evaluative Methods of Study

As a participant in my own project, I was unique; I was the only participant for whom I could observe internal processes and emotions, as well as what I was demonstrating. I was a learner, not unlike my students. When I attended the orientation to the master's program at Saint Francis Xavier University, I definitely experienced Brookfield's impostor syndrome. Although I am not Cree, I certainly identify with the need for learning to be part of a whole life experience, which includes mental and spiritual ways of knowing. When I discovered the article by Denis and Richter (1987) validating intuitive learning as a learning style, I was elated. Their description of learning as a moose hunt resonated with my way of knowing; one may approach the goal of one's learning indirectly. I definitely feel my way through learning as opposed to seeking information written by others. I learn from the works of others, but apply an intuitive test to everything I read. If it feels right, I will learn from it. I looked at the parallels of my life to that of my students. I have known rejection, prejudice, and emotional stress all of my life. I learn by osmosis--am always watching and learning. I now extend from this description of my learning style to an evaluation of my learning using the same method I employed in my study.

The use of a journal was perhaps the most effective tool I used to find meaning in my learning. It was during the times of reflection and intuition that I arrived at some important insights about learning and evaluation. I tend to take information in, experience the moment, and then reflect in a subconscious unexplained manner. My reaction to

information comes at a future time (minutes or days). I consciously remember very little of what I read or hear. This is not to say I am not altered by the experience, I am. I noted in my journal that spirituality was a necessary component to perspective transformation and release from cocoons.

During later phases of my master's program, I questioned in my journal why I am interested in evaluation of learning when my passion is clinical psychology? I saw this as a foreshadowing of the power of my internal guidance system to activate both paths and bring the two passions together. After a dream of seeing negative opposites played out, I wrote in my journal that negative emotions undermine our self-confidence or self-esteem. It is our inner sense of self (self-confidence) that holds the polarity of our characteristics in place. This realization makes total sense of what we are doing at the college with the Cree culture. As students develop a sense of identity, and self, their strength increases to hold their chosen characteristics in place. They also learn what positive characteristics they have and gain the self-confidence necessary to stay in this reality without escaping to a fantasy world of idleness, drugs, alcohol, or whatever. Whenever we permit fear, loneliness, guilt, shame, sense of failure, or inferiority to creep into their college reality, we are undermining our objectives because they will retreat to their nether world. Hence, in this formative period for the students we must always be positive in our evaluations and supportive in our interactions.

After reading Prosperity for Humankind (Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, 1995) I experienced an ah-ha that crystalized my sense of need for adults of all cultures to have the freedom to know and ability to discern truth from falsehood. In order to establish peace in the world through establishment of a just human

order, people of all cultures need to be adept at perspective transformation, critical reflection, and evaluation of truth. I also noted that I wanted to call my thesis, Just Evaluation, to underscore that I want to arrive at ways of evaluating humanistic development which I saw as being more just than measures of behaviour. I was interested in learning, not “progress.” Justice implies for the common good, and it is self-actualized people who will bring about a just society. If we form ways of seeing internal development of the whole person, maybe educators will focus on holistic learning more.

A review of my personal learning journal for the past 6 years served to highlight my primary areas of interest in the field of learning, to note where my opinions have changed over the learning period, and to indicate any transitions in my personal learning style. My journal also indicates the spirals of my hunting path to the moose. Without realizing I had been there before, I would return to a few themes relevant to my own growth. I have exemplified findings referred to by Taylor (1987) in discussion of Mezirow’s work, where he states that the critical reflective learning process is not just rational, “but relies on intuition, other ways of knowing and empathy” (p. 316). Taylor also stresses the need for whole-person learning which includes all dimensions of learning process, including intuition and spirituality.

During our orientation period at StFX, I did see the film, Educating Rita. At that time, the film touched some very deep emotions related to oppression and the impostor syndrome; certainly I was propelled into finding a new balance and meaning in the experience. Each step of the master’s program has been an opportunity for problem resolution. Just making it all happen amidst a very busy life has been a supreme challenge. There is no question that these problems have contributed to much personal

learning. Elder Rain stressed the need for tolerance, commitment, perseverance, and will power for people to learn and develop. I have certainly had the opportunity to test these characteristics.

I have been the subject of many interviews as I solicited feedback from supervisors, advisors and students. I still tend to expect negative feedback, and am pleasantly surprised when positive feedback is received. This is an indication that I still need to develop in the area of self-esteem. I have learned to accept constructive criticism from both students and my advisors, and with a much more positive attitude.

This discussion of my search for meaning and validation by way of evaluative methods is similar to those used in my project, is not complete without reference to the transfer of my learning and the impact of this project on the institutions I serve. I now incorporate similar evaluative strategies in all programs I work with. I continue to adapt each method to suit the students and learning situation. As an administrator and program developer, I am able to initiate the use of qualitative methods in programs; and, recently I had the opportunity to apply my learning of learning to the development of an industrial preparation program, which, at the time of this writing, has been a success. As my knowledge of learning processes, and ways to elicit meaning for the students, becomes integrated with the total schema of my educational thinking, that learning constantly impacts the institutions I serve and, I believe, the students I serve as well.

Review of Learning Goals

As I bring my master's program to a close, I must ultimately decide if I have achieved the learning goals I set out in the beginning of the thesis. In this section I

discuss how my study achieved my goals to improve my ability, as an educator in an Cree cultural environment, to facilitate students, individually and collectively, to (a) assess their learning needs, (b) learn in keeping with their learning styles and cultural principles, (c) evaluate the skills and content they have learned, and (d) determine future learning.

There is no question that my ability as an educator has improved. I have not forsaken quantitative measures; however, I am now able to glean a more rounded picture of a student's learning and needs as a result of using the qualitative evaluation methods I have worked with. My learning subsequent to my project has deepened my knowledge of the process of learning and the role of assessment and evaluation.

When assessing learning needs, I am less likely to tell the student what they need in terms of courses and credits. I am more inclined to spend more time interviewing students to assist them to think and talk through what they want from education, and find ways that will work for them. I then work to tailor a program of learning to suit their needs. I believe I am also far more responsive to students' holistic needs as they are indicated in conversation, journals, and group sessions. I am now quite comfortable in opening a discussion as to how these needs may be addressed. I recognize that, if students' home and financial lives are not in order, their learning is impeded no matter how well planned is the program. Simply, the acknowledgement of this reality opens the doors for problem solving.

With greater knowledge and experience, I am more attentive to students' learning style. Since the completion of my project, I have begun to administer short learning style inventories for students to help them recognize their uniqueness. I do not encourage students to learn only by their preferred style; rather, I stress that they should strive to strengthen other ways of learning and recognize why they find some subjects or learning

experiences more enjoyable. I use interviews, journals and group sessions to suggest alternative learning methods when difficulties arise.

Increasingly, I see the distinction between a student's content learning and mastery of learning skills. It encourages building of self-esteem to point out improved skills, so I verbalize these observations at every opportunity. I encourage students to identify their own skill improvement and strengths, particularly the skill of learning. It is their ability to learn, adapt, and commit to responsibility that will transfer to all future learning and employment. I repeat this often to all students now. I tend to create numerous opportunities during a course for students to assess or report on their own learning.

As I assist students to plan further education, as well as to complete the courses they are engaged in, I am much more cognizant of their full life demands. I present alternatives with consequences of each, and respect the choice the students make for themselves. I am also far more comfortable enforcing the consequences, when needed. I have come to respect a student's right to not meet expectations. Increased awareness of their whole life fosters this respect; sometimes, course work needs to take a back seat to other responsibilities.

It was an overriding goal to serve student learning and evaluation needs in ways compatible to Cree culture. I have learned what I have about the Cree culture by participating in the lives of Cree people. I no longer think of Native ways of knowing in an essentialist way, nor do I prescribe the specific conditions for appropriate assessment of Cree people or the culturally appropriate ways of presenting information. I have reached a point of relying heavily on intuition--if it feels right to me, it probably is. To be very honest, I now believe that I am more concerned about maintaining a culturally compatible learning environment, than are most of the First Nations students themselves. This does not dissuade me; I am also able to observe the discomfort of many students

when they are treated in culturally inappropriate ways. Due to their initial lack of self-esteem, they are more likely to interpret their emotion as self-doubt, rather than a conflict of culture. I remain confident, based on learning from the Elders, that the learning environment should remain culturally compatible to facilitate students' search for identity. The college should be a zone where they are free and comfortable to be Cree. I have learned that one need not assess learning of culture; but, I have also learned the importance of exposing First Nations people to their culture so the search for identity can unfold as it will. I have had the bounty of becoming a close friend with one of the traditional Cree instructors. As great emphasis is placed on the cultural perspective of issues and policies, I have acquired the knowledge that allows me to be very sensitive to public transgressions of the Cree way.

I will never see with First Nation eyes, or feel with an First Nations heart; but, I have come a long way in my understanding of Cree issues and perspectives. I am very grateful for having had this opportunity for learning.

In summation, I have, to some degree, met my learning goals. There is much more I would have liked to learn during this time span; however, my learning has just begun. I bring the last 6 years of my life to bear in this report and I am astounded by the realization--despite my self-deprecation for delaying this process for so long--that my holistic learning would not have come together as it has if the time line had be different. My full circle has been completed, but, as it is with a spiral, I feel I have reached a higher level of integration with respect to my "knowing" about life, humanness, and learning. It is my intent as a learner to keep learning to serve the prosperity of humankind in my role as educator and as a human being.

Conclusions and Recommendations

My study focused on the use of qualitative evaluative methods to reflect outcomes of adult learning within a Cree cultural context. As I present conclusions and offer recommendations, I begin by focusing on issues related to evaluation of adult learning and later expand to address issues related to adult learning in a bicultural environment.

Conclusions

1. Qualitative evaluative methods are effective means of encouraging students to find personal meaning in their learning experiences and to express non-determined outcomes of learning. I do, however, caution facilitators of learning not to judge qualitative results according to their own expectations. If it is the learners' meaning that is to be arrived at by qualitative methods, outcomes must not be judged according to standards nor compared to outcomes of other students. This is a particularly important consideration in a First Nation situation where the facilitators may or may not share the culture of the students. As a result of past schooling, adult students tend to expect quantitative grades as indicators of success and are uncomfortable without them in spite of cultural principles to the contrary. Where competency in specific skills is a prerequisite to employment or further learning, I submit that quantitative evaluation is appropriate, preferably combined with qualitative results.

2. My review of literature related to qualitative evaluation has led me to conclude that very few studies have been written that document qualitative evaluation or assessment of First Nation individuals. Methods of qualitative assessment are called for in the literature, but there is little written about results of qualitative methods. Most articles discuss qualitative evaluation of programs rather than individuals.

3. The evaluative methods employed in my study serve to facilitate many factors of cognitive development. Used in conjunction with other methods of facilitating

learning, they can give students the opportunity to apply varied learning styles to finding meaning in their own learning.

4. The Vella model assisted me to separate expectations for learning content as distinguished from skills and cognition that the students will transfer to other situations. In my view, such a model for program evaluation should be fully integrated from the point of initial program planning.

5. In order for people to have the freedom to know and discern truth for themselves, perspective transformation on the part of both adult learners and learning facilitators is essential. This awareness is particularly important in bicultural learning situations. My experience with First Nation communities is that, while non-Native educators need to recognize and broaden their meaning perspective, this same process is an integral process of learning for First Nation students if they are to achieve the freedom to know truth for themselves and determine their own path in the larger society. Activities that promote critical thinking and challenge assumptions are vital to this process and should be important aspects of self-assessment.

6. Many students in adult education programs appear to be challenged by invisible barriers to learning. While my study has explored means of assessing or uncovering those barriers, it has not addressed the means to overcome barriers to learning. Part of encouraging the learners to learn at our colleges is to help them overcome these barriers to learning and become open to new knowledge and experience. As I have been wandering through my forest of trees and experiencing my hunt, I have come to see individuals as systems of self-parts, which should be fluid and integrated. When they are not, the person has difficulty functioning as a learner, employee, or member of family and community. The meaning-seeking methods of journaling, interviews, and problem solving all stimulate the learner to find their own internal meaning or blocks to functioning.

Recommendations

1. Research on use of qualitative evaluative methods with First Nation populations would certainly contribute to the validation of such methods with this culture.

2. I recommend the use of an activity similar to the Big Picture session at the beginning of group learning programs such as the one in this thesis to develop a sense of community and put the learning tasks in perspective of a common experience. The benefits of dialogue journals are multiple and should become an inherent part of most learning programs.

3. I recommend the preparation of a portfolio of student accomplishments as a form of formative evaluation, as well as one focus for a summative interview.

4. Summative evaluation of a program is not complete without interview responses from students who have withdrawn from the program. Therefore, I recommend that a means be established to interview students as, or soon after, they leave a program without completing.

5. An evaluation model such as that offered by Vella et al. (1998) should be used to ensure formative and summative evaluation of adult learning programs. Learning, transfer and impact should be planned as much as possible, because if there is neither transfer or impact, the purpose of the program is questionable. I strongly recommend the use of this or other model of evaluation from the point of planning a program. If built into a program, qualitative forms of formative assessment can be integral to the learning process and valued by the students.

6. Educators must respect the individual journey of the First Nation students with respect to their cultural identity. The role of educators can be to facilitate the journey by providing opportunities for students to find their own meaning with respect to culture, but

educators must be vigilant to not impose their own assumptions with respect to the students identity.

7. As it is now becoming more popular for people to seek their own inner fulfillment as spiritual beings having a human experience, I expect that more literature on the methodology for fostering this learning will emerge along with understandings of how personal fulfillment will contribute to the betterment of society. I recommend, therefore, that the spiritual reality of human beings be addressed in its relation to learning and growth. It must also be recognized that each individual is on his or her unique path of human development and spiritual growth which is to be respected by honouring the student's responsibility to direct his or her own learning.

I believe that all races must work together to pool their ancient and new knowledge in the effort to promote a global learning community to parallel the global economy. The First Nations cultures of every continent have much to offer in this regard. I intend to continue my research of ways of learning for humanity as I am intuitively guided, and will look to all sources, not just western educational theory. My future learning will be directed to seeking ways to assist individuals to free themselves from internal barriers built up over a lifetime. I believe that this is a necessary process in order for people to truly develop holistically, have choices and achieve the freedom to know.

The moose I have found as a result of my master's program is, without question, a better educator than the one that began this program in 1994. My learning journey has brought me to a position of responsibility for the work of many moose all of whom are on their own learning path as educators. The methods I have explored during this study can be adapted to evaluation of educators, which is now one of my major responsibilities. As the moose I have come to be, I now have some confidence in my adaptability to different forests and different weather conditions. I can sustain myself on a diet of spiritual waters. I hope to contribute to the well-being of the forest for years to come.

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APPENDIX A**PROBLEM SOLVING AND ESSAY TOPICS**

1. Imagine that your band has given you a grant of \$50,000.00 to improve the quality of your life. This will be a grant, so you will not have to repay it, but there is only one grant of money for each family. To receive the money, you must provide the band with a written outline of how you intend to use the money. Write out a plan to present to your band.

2. Here is a situation that our students have sometimes faced. Imagine that you now face the same situation. While going to school, you find that you just never seem to have time to get your work done. You are behind on your assignments and your marks are slipping. Although there may be situations in your life, which are making dedication to studies difficult, your instructors fear you may not succeed if the trend does not change. How can you improve your situation? Write out an explanation of your situation and a plan as to how you can improve your academic standing.

APPENDIX B**UCEP SUMMATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Think back to how you felt and thought of yourself at the beginning of this year, and contrast that to your feelings now with regards to:
 - a) your capabilities as a student
 - b) your relationship with other students
 - c) the roles you play in your family
 - d) your future plans
 - e) your cultural identity
2. If I were to hire you to prepare a report on the future of youth in your community, how would you approach the task?
3. What skills have you acquired during the UCEP program that you will consciously use in your immediate future?
4. What kinds of content were easiest for you to learn? Why?
5. What kinds of content were most difficult for you to learn? Why?
6. What types of learning activities were most effective for you (e.g. lectures, group discussions, homework)?
7. What situations/work did you dislike?
8. Tell me of one event that is most memorable to you as a learning experience during this year. What did you learn?
9. Who or what kept you going through the rough times?