

Is time-structure an issue for Cowichan First Nations students in the school system? If so, how can the school calendar be changed to better meet their educational needs?

By

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to the required standard

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CHAPTER ONE – STUDY BACKGROUND

Is time-structure an issue for Cowichan First Nations students in the school system? If so, how can the school calendar be changed to better meet their educational needs? This enquiry explores how modified school calendars are set up. This includes start and finish times, length of class times, calendar year, and breaks during the day. It also looks at Cowichan First Nations cultural events and significant seasonal times to see if a culturally-based calendar can be developed that meets the requirements of the Cowichan First Nations people and the Ministry of Education.

The Problem/Opportunity

Many First Nation students do not find schools to be a successful, affirming place. According to “How Are We Doing? An Overview of Aboriginal Education Results for District No. 79 Cowichan Valley” the graduation rate of First Nation students in Cowichan Valley School District, currently at 30%, has not improved significantly in the last decade. The provincial average is slightly higher. This document also shows that First Nation students make up the largest group enrolled in Special Education. Funding continues to rise to support aboriginal education programs. All of these impact upon the success of students, particularly First Nations students (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Though there are many other variables that may account for the difficulties faced by First Nation students in school, could the time structure of the school be one of them? If this time structure does contribute in some way to the failure of First Nation students, I hope to offer an alternative to the emerging self-governments of First Nations people who may be designing their own

school systems in the near future. Very little has changed in the way schools operate, including daily hours of operation, class time length, or yearly schedules, since the twentieth century began and I believe it is worth investigating (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994).

Impact/Significance of the Problem/Opportunity

The problem is significant simply for the fact that many First Nation students continue to have little or no success at school after nearly 100 years of being involved in the public school system. An important part of our community sends their children year after year to a system that consistently fails. If the time structure of our schools does pose an obstacle to the success of First Nations students, it would be a start by investigating how that structure might change. On a large scale the economic and personal impact on the province from generation after generation of children not being successful at school is astronomical. I am astounded that this issue has not been handled with any noticeable change in the success rates of native students in schools. Uneducated people are more likely to be unemployed and rely on the government for assistance. Unemployment rates in Canada show that 16% of dropouts were unemployed as compared to 5.5% of university graduates (Meaghan-Diane & Casas, 1997). There is also a danger of these uneducated students turning to a life of crime. According to Statistics Canada most inmates have an educational level of grade 9 or less. Coupled with this is the fact that aboriginal inmates make up 17% of the prison population but only 2% of the population of Canada. Aboriginal inmates are less educated than non-aboriginal inmates and younger on average (Statistics Canada, 1998). The cost to the taxpayer to maintain this level of failure, both in unemployment and inmate care increases with the cost of living and inflation.

Potential Cause of the Problem/Opportunity

This project is designed to look at ways the school calendar can be changed to

accommodate Cowichan First Nations students and their families and meet the requirements outlined by the Ministry of Education. First Nations people are gaining an increasing amount of control over their own destiny and this includes education. Previously, they have relied on government or church schools to provide an education based on the values of those institutions. The results have been poor and in some cases, catastrophic. I have identified several potential causes for the challenges faced by First Nations students that are under the control of institutions outside the influence of the First Nations:

- Power and Authority: The power and authority in Canada lies in the hands of predominantly white people. The native community has very little control over decisions that affect them, and this includes the school system.
- The Nature of Organizations: Organizations as large as the Ministry of Education or the Provincial Government do not change significantly without cataclysmic events occurring. The forest industry of British Columbia did not change its destructive forestry practices until the environmental organizations waged an international campaign against them. The native community does not make up a large component of their clientele and has little real power to change the way their children are taught within the organization.
- Cultural Gap: School systems are not designed to teach to a wide variety of cultures that are not European in origin.
- Shifting the Burden: The Indian Act (1876), despite the changes made by BillC-31 in 1985, instituted a shifting of responsibility to the government from the First Nations people. The system has forced a reliance on the government and decreased the ability of native people to

govern themselves. A close look at how this structure works may provide areas of leverage to change (Senge, 1990).

The Organization

The Cowichan Cultural and Education Center is a department within the Cowichan Tribes, the government of the Cowichan people in the Cowichan Valley. The work of this department is outlined in their mission statement; “to work in partnership with educational institutions to increase and advocate for the participation and completion rates of Cowichan students” (Cultural and Education Mission Statement). The organizational chart for the center places the community members at the top, followed by the chief and council, general manager, and administrator. The education committee meets to provide direction and liase with the chief and council.

The Administrator is responsible for the following programs and people:

- Cultural Program Supervisor
This person oversees the transportation department, the cultural teaching assistants assigned to the Quw'utsun Syuw'entst program, the student advisors, the curriculum writer, and the curriculum development clerk.
- Iiyus Stluliquil
This is the Cowichan Tribes nursery and kindergarten school.
- Le'lum'el
This program for children aged 1 to 6 years. It is located near Iiyus Stluliquil. They teach independence and life skills in child led activities in a sensory surrounding. The extended family is included in the success and growth of the children.
- Native Employment Centre
- Ya Thuy Thut
This educational program began in 1990. It presently serves students who are 19 years or older who wish to improve their academics with the goal of

entering the job market or other educational systems. The primary focus is to improve the literacy skills of the students enrolled.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Organization Documents

The Cowichan Tribes is the governmental arm of the Cowichan First Nation. There are a number of departments within the auspices of the Cowichan Tribes, this inquiry focusing on the Cultural and Education department. The mission statement of the Cultural and Education Centre outlines their partnership with educational institutions to advocate for the participation and completion rates of Cowichan students (Cowichan Tribes Cultural and Education Mission Statement). Most Cowichan First Nations students attend the public school system in District #79 (Cowichan Valley). The Tribes have made concerted efforts for more than 2 decades to preserve their language and have it taught in local schools. In 1993, the continuing efforts of the tribes and the cooperation of the local school district resulted in the signing of a Mission Statement. This statement committed the tribes and District to developing a K-12 Language and Culture Curriculum for all students - both First Nations and non-First Nations - to be delivered by Cultural Teaching Assistants (CTAs) in partnership with regular classroom teachers (Cowichan Tribes Cultural and Education Center Web Site).

The Cultural and Education Center are active in their advocacy role, producing policy and procedure guides for post secondary programs and adult basic education and vocational programs.

The Cowichan Tribes has had a Local Education Agreement (LEA) in place with the Cowichan School District for many years. The LEA sets initiatives designed to improve the academic success of Cowichan students. For example, the LEA provides a jointly funded mechanism to hire support workers who work in the schools with students and whose primary role is to provide support for Cowichan students. Within the contracts used in the LEA, however, there is

no mention of feedback mechanisms used to measure the success rates. The contracts focused on placement of support workers and programs to meet the needs of the moment. This includes programs for students who have left the public system, teaching assistants to support Quw'utsun Syuw'entst, the language and culture program designed by the Cultural and Education department (Smith Siska, 1995), and support workers assigned to schools with a high population of Cowichan students.

Despite the best intentions of both partners in the LEA, the educational success of a majority of the First Nation students in the public system is not good. Students continue to perform at a level substantially below non-aboriginal students. The graduation rate is near 30 percent and the number of First Nations students who are designated a Special Needs is twice the per capita rate. The contracts for the LEA are to be reviewed annually by both the School District and the Cowichan Tribes. I believe this is an area of leverage and the contracts can be restructured to include feedback processes that measure the success of the programs they support.

The Cowichan Tribes and School District 79 have produced a joint mission statement for the Quw'utsun Syuw'entst Language and Culture Curriculum. This mission statement reads that both parties agree that creating awareness, understanding, and respect for the culture, history and language of the Cowichan people will lead to better results for First Nations students in public schools (Cowichan Tribes and School District 65 Join Mission Statement). This curriculum is designed to be taught in public school systems by non-aboriginal teachers and supported by a trained cultural teaching assistant.

Review of Supporting Literature

Secondary Literature Review

In the literature review I will look at research conducted on modified school calendars, and First Nations culture. Modifying the present school calendar to fit the needs of Cowichan First Nations students makes up the backbone of this inquiry. This inquiry also focuses on a school calendar that accurately reflects the culture for which it is designed. Investigating this culture and the culture of other First Nations from the perspective of how they make meaning of their world will shed some light on their uniqueness and similarities that are sometimes overlooked in the public school system. At the same time it is important to consider the nature and evolution of the contemporary public school calendar in order to better appreciate the position of First Nation children within such a structure. The existing literature dealing with school scheduling is diverse. A review of that literature follows here.

Historically, Canadian schools have used a calendar designed to accommodate an agrarian society. In an age of an economy dominated by agriculture, it was important to have children at home to work during the summer to prepare the farm for the growing season. It was not economically wise to have school in session when all hands were needed at home. Organized education as we see it in Canada today, developed around 1816, when laws in Upper Canada established a school system administered by local boards. By confederation in 1867, school boards and the calendar year were established nationally (Flynn, 1999). The way the calendar has been organized has not posed a problem over time, until recently. There has been some concern voiced but not seriously enough to consider change. "Prisoners of Time", a 1994 report released by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning in the United States, quotes William T. Harris, then Commissioner of Education, in 1894 complaining about the reduction of days in a school year: "The boys of today

must attend school 11.1 years in order to receive as much instruction, quantitatively, as the boy of fifty years ago received in 8 years...”

This time line has changed little. There was no real need, as a lack of education did not have a large impact on society. As today, able students could understand and do the work. Many others could do enough to get by. Dropouts learned little but could find gainful employment without the benefits of a good education (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994). Although our society has changed dramatically and not many families still need their children to work in the fields, most schools still follow the agrarian-based schedule.

Currently there is a reform movement in education. Howard Gardner, Alfie Kohn, Arthur Costa, and Renata and Geoffrey Caine, and James Comer, among others, have provided research and direction for schools to use in teaching students. The reform movement includes not only looking at alternate timelines for the calendar year but looking at what is taught, when it is taught, how it is taught, and nearly every other aspect of education. This is the result of a perception of failure as compared to the rest of the world. Many other industrial societies have educational results far surpassing those in North America. This, among other revelations, has sparked what could be called panic and resulted in pressure to change what we are doing before we fall too far behind in the race to be the “best”. The modified school calendar in its many forms has been proposed, by the National Association for Year Round Education, as an answer to some of the problems facing schools today. These proponents of “year-round” education believe that the benefits of changing the structure of the calendar outweigh the drawbacks but do admit there are difficulties, mostly with changing a century old timeline around which people have built their lives. Other areas of concern with changing the calendar are family scheduling when children are in school at different times, continuing

education of the teaching staff having to occur on weekends or evenings, and the availability of sports and recreation camps during off seasons (Pritchett, 1996). The resistance to this change is powerful as is the resistance to any substantial change.

Proponents of the year-round calendar believe that learning can be advanced with less interruption; closer student monitoring is possible; less teacher stress and burnout occurs; families have more options for arranging vacations, and can enjoy off-season rates and less crowded vacation sites; and child care is provided for most of the year (Pritchett, 1996). Others, like Necochea and Cline, believe that students who have a history of poor attendance, failing grades, knowledge gaps and/or discipline problems benefit from the modified calendar because the school is able to tailor-make programs to allow the greatest number of students to succeed (Necochea and Cline, 1996). The year round calendar appears to offer solutions to many of the problems plaguing today's schools and, some believe, society at large. Charles Ballinger, executive director of the National Association of Year-Round Education, advocated the modified calendar as a solution to overcrowding in schools, and the "increasing unease in communities about having young people in our suburbs and cities largely unoccupied, unsupervised, and unemployed for up to three months at a time."(Ballinger, p. 660, 1998).

Two studies in particular proved particularly useful for this research project. One was Carolyn Shields and Steven Oberg's study of the effects of year round schooling entitled *What Can We Learn From the Data? Toward a Better Understanding of the Effects of Multitrack Year Round Schooling*. This study compared student academic and nonacademic outcomes between year-round and traditional calendar schools in one metropolitan area. They took into consideration many factors in tier assessment but one in particular was socioeconomic status. The second study was Brent Davies' and Trevor Kerry's look at *Improving Student Learning Through Calendar Change*. This study

investigated school calendar change and the advantages that may be gained by the students, teachers, and parents.

In a review of literature in 1999, Shields and Oberg found that most studies identified either a gain or, at least, no decline in academic achievement when a school changes to a year-round style of school calendar. In addition, they also state that, “there is compelling evidence that the positive effects are enhanced for students in at-risk groups” (p.4). Davies and Kerry support this finding in their study on *Improving Student Learning Through Calendar Change*. They state the summer vacation breaks up the continuity of the learning process and this is particularly true for students who are less able or have learning disabilities (p. 5). Davies and Kerry (1999) also stated that the summer break learning loss posed a higher risk for students who are at-risk or from lower-income groups (p.5).

Some researchers claim that the issue of forgetting and retaining is complex and involves more than simply time (Allinder, Fuchs, Fuchs, and Hamlett, as cited by Shields and Oberg, p.4). However, studies have found that there is considerable learning loss during the summer vacation (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, and Greathouse, as cited by Shields and Oberg, p.4)

One of the problems facing researchers in the area of modified school calendars is that there are few longitudinal studies published (Davies and Kerry, 1999, p. 4) . Coupled with this is the challenge of connecting the academic data solely with the calendar change. When the calendar of a school is changed significantly there are other changes that occur as well. Studies are not certain what causes the increased academic performance of students attending schools using a modified calendar,

...the more regular “learning rhythm” is beneficial to many students in terms of reducing review time or that the redistribution of vacation time

reduces learning loss for some students. Another premise is that new pedagogies, curriculum materials, or instructional strategies accompany the calendar change (Shields & Oberg, 1999, p. 16).

As one might expect, when schools adopt a modified calendar and experience success in areas that previously presented challenges, there is increasing pressure on other schools to adopt the calendar, especially on those schools in the same district. Districts and schools who face resistance by their employees, staff, parents, or students to adopting a modified calendar need the support of the district staff in implementing the change. The pressure to maintain the status quo is strong due to the nature of people when dealing with the unknown or with change. People naturally want to protect their self-interests and sense of self-determination (Yukl, 1998, p 440). Organizational change of this nature takes leadership skills.

Culture

Northwest Coast culture is completely intertwined in everyday life. It has developed over thousands upon thousands of years of living in the same area. It is very difficult for any non-native person to understand this. The Cowichan people specifically trace their ancestry back to the beginning of time when the first Cowichan people dropped from heaven. Qwustenahun outlines this in the preface to *Those Who Fell From the Sky*:

Those Who Fell From the Sky begins its story with the very first heaven-sent Cowichans who were dropped at various points among the pristine wilderness of long ago. My own ancestor, Suhiltun, along with Syalutsa, Stutsun, Sultimul'thw and others, were the very first Cowichan peoples, whose traditions we still practice today, such as the annual

winter dance ceremonies of the big house. (Qwustenahun, as cited in Marshall, p. xiii)

This is not unusual in First Nations cultures. The lessons of the original ancestors are reenacted in song, dance, feasts, stories, and celebrations (Marshall, 1999). Imagine being able to trace your ancestry back to prehistory. Many First Nations people do exactly that.

West Coast First Nations cultures include animals and plants on equal footing with people as part of their world view. In *The Spirit of the Land*, Gisday Was and Delgam Uukw, Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, point out that,

... human beings are part of an interacting continuum which includes animals and spirits. Animals and fish are viewed as members of societies which have intelligence and power, and can influence the course of events in terms of their interrelationships with human beings. (Wa and Uukw, 1992, p. 25)

This idea of a continuum and viewing the world in terms of interrelationships is interesting when viewed through the lens of organic systems theory. In his book, *The Web of Life*, Fritjof Capra outlines exactly this method using examples of quantum physics to support his assertions that, "ultimately ...there are no parts at all. What we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships" (Capra, 1996, p. 37). The interrelationship between the Cowichan people and the land is based on the first Cowichan people. As Syalutsa, the First Cowichan, explored his new world he identified the landforms that still exist in the Cowichan Valley and surrounding areas (Marshall, 1999) and these points of reference are part of the oral history of the Cowichan people. Imagine being able to see the remnants of ancient events and tell the stories of how they came to be.

Webster's dictionary defines culture as the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a given people in a given period. As mentioned above, the culture of the First Nations has developed since prehistory or, as the Aboriginal people state, since time immemorial. Many, like the Cowichan, trace their ancestry from a particular being who descended from the sky. The teachings of the earliest ancestors are the values of the people and have been carried on in all aspects of life. Leonard George outlines these values and how they are put into daily use by stating,

So we start with our own physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional being. Each of these aspects contributes to the wholeness of the next. If you are happy and healthy in your physical self, you can love yourself. People were taught to keep in shape, eat the right foods, and respect their bodies, not hurting them in any way. The people knew that this gave the best chance for the rest of your wheel to work. Because the native people knew this, every one of their rituals, customs, and traditions complemented each other and were enhanced by this holistic approach to life. Directions for these practices came from the Creator and from the human leaders and teachers, and the practices were all simple. (George, as cited by Jensen and Brooks, 1991, p. 162).

The education of children in these cultures was not separate from daily life but an integral part of it. Each member of the tribe would be expected to join in and contribute where they could. In Canada generally, band controlled schools have attempted to use these values as the basis for curriculum with varying degrees of success. According to Georges Erasmus,

Almost all of these schools have been based on traditional First Nations' values- self-reliance; generosity; and respect for personal freedom, nature, and wisdom- and they have attempted to return to the holistic qualities of education as it was traditionally practised by the aboriginal

people of North America (Richardson, 1989, p. 33).

First Nations cultures, then, cannot be separated from education. This is reflected in educational research. Gardner states in his work that people have more ways of learning than are graded in schools. A person learns in many different ways but immersion and connection between topics leads to deeper understanding. When we discuss First Nations culture, language and education are parts in the inseparable web of relationships.

Potential Solutions to the Problem/Opportunity

The literature review points out that the modified school calendar is an adaptable tool that can be used to improve the academic performance of students whether they are at risk or not. In the Cowichan First Nations community, a modified school calendar can be tailor-made to fit the needs of the students and families. Many of the students are at risk of leaving school early due to a variety of factors. A modified school calendar will perhaps take into consideration some of the factors that cause these students to leave school or be absent. The literature review points to the fact that very little has been written on the effects of modified school calendars and the learning of First Nation students thus, this research is original and important.

CHAPTER THREE – CONDUCT OF RESEARCH STUDY

Research Methods

Is time-structure an issue for Cowichan First Nations students in the school system? If so, how can the school calendar be changed to better meet their educational needs?

I used a form of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as the main methodology for this project. Appreciative Inquiry is a form of action research that attempts to help groups, organizations, and communities create new, generative images for themselves based on an affirmative understanding of their past. (Bushe, p.1). With this definition in mind, Appreciative Inquiry takes into consideration not what is incorrect or problematical in the public school system but is concerned with what is best in First Nations educational programs now, what might be accomplished, what should be, and finally, what can be done.

I believe AI was appropriate for the project as it focuses on changing a deeply embedded system. The strength of this methodology is its focus on the positive aspects of a situation and having people build upon them. By focusing on the negative aspects of the current system, much energy and thought would be wasted. Appreciative Inquiry is focused on the positive aspects and possibilities.

I worked with the Cowichan Tribes Cultural Education department to plan the research project. I asked permission from the Band Administrator before proceeding with the project.

I used Appreciative Inquiry methods to interview a group of Elders individually in their homes, a group of parents at the local college, and a group of students at a meeting of a youth group. The group size varied. The elders group was comprised of 6 people, the parents about 15, and the youth group of about 15 students. I used a focus group with each session, returning to follow up any data that needed to be clarified or expanded upon.

The Elders session provided a cultural background for the project as well as advice on how to schedule the school year around culturally significant events. The questions for the Elders focused on searching out the events that are most significant in the Cowichan culture, when these events occur, and which of these events are most important for students and their families to be involved in. The parent and student sessions were intended to provide data on how to schedule the optimal time line for a day as well as corroborate the Elders data on yearly scheduling. The questions for the parents focused on finding out the time structure for the school day and the school year that best fits their schedule. The questions for the students focused on finding out the best time for learning and how students share this learning.

After collecting the interviews, I analyzed them for commonalities. I looked for times when culturally significant events coincide with breaks in the public school calendar and used these as breaks in the modified calendar to assist with families who may have students in more than one school.

Based on the findings, I used templates of modified school calendars primarily from the Calgary School district, as well as the Ministry of Education requirements for minutes in a school year to assemble a number of potential calendars.

In the end I will attempt to tell the story of a First Nations elementary school

student who attends this fictitious school. I will outline a day in her school life and an overview of her year at school. The purpose of such a fictitious sketch is to know whether all the information I need is present or if I need to go back for more to fill in the missing areas (Palys, 1997). I will take this back to the Cowichan Tribes Cultural Education department for input. The participants in the three sessions will be given the calendar and asked if it accurately reflects their input as well.

Data Gathering Tools

This study focused on gathering data from people about their school and learning experiences, their history and their culture. For this part of the research I used interview questions to guide the meetings and took notes on what was said in relation to the questions. The sessions ran smoothly because of their simplicity. Using a tape recorder or video recorder would have detracted from the comfortable atmosphere for the participants.

The second part of the project required information to be gathered that was of a more quantitative manner. For this I used data gained from the experiences of other school by consulting with a principal in our district who had done extensive research in the area of modified school calendars in the past. The information he gave me was recent and lead to other avenues of investigation. I used the internet to search out articles and studies related to this one. I consulted electronically with people in Alaska who were involved in modifying schools to meet the needs of local First Nations cultures.

The library of books available in my office dealt specifically with the education experience of First Nations people across North America and much of the information in the **Culture** section of the literature review came from reading

these books.

Study Conduct

These steps were followed in completing this study:

- **Discuss the outline of the project with the sponsor**

The sponsor for this project was informed of the project and asked if it fit in with the direction of the organization. His participation in the study was instrumental in its success. His skill in communicating the intentions of the project with the people who needed to be part of it was excellent. His knowledge of the organization and culture was extremely vital in all activities that occurred with the Cowichan people.

- **Apply to the Cowichan Tribes Band Manager for permission to speak with Cowichan members**

When working on tribal land or with members of First Nations, certain protocols must be followed. For example, permission for research to be conducted in the community must be granted from either the Band Manager or Chief and Council. In this case the Band Manager was petitioned and gave her permission for the project to proceed.

- **Contact the potential participants and organize dates and locations**

The sponsor of the study took this on and contacted the Elders, the college, and the health center in setting up meeting dates and locations. Though the dates changed due to different variables, the communication remained open and all who participated were kept informed of the process.

- **Provide participants with the questions to be asked**

Although I had not originally intended to provide the questions to the participant beforehand, my sponsor recommended that this be done. I followed his guidance and felt that the results were valid. The participants had an opportunity to think about what they wanted to say and to feel comfortable about the topics being discussed.

- **Meet with elders, parents, and students at specified dates and locations**

At the locations, the questions on the interview sheets were discussed. The discussions were not always on topic but the knowledge gained from the conversations was enlightening and valuable to the final results. The parent group especially contributed some excellent insight into school change initiatives and how they could be focused to meet the needs of their community.

- **Collect and analyze data for common strands**

The notes taken at the sessions were analyzed by reading them and looking for common answers. The data gained from the Elders was used to find the times of year that were best suited to have students at home rather than at school. The winter and the summer months stood out. Their answers to specific questions used in the survey reflected a consensus among them during the interviews. Many of the students replied with similar statements to the interview questions. If an answer was unique it was noted as an exception but not included in the summary of the data.

The data from the parents was not focused on the questions provided. In these meetings the parents put forth their ideas of what was needed in the schools to provide better success for their children. They provided notes and lists for me to peruse and use. Their ideas were then arranged into common themes and resulted in six observations and recommendations outlined in the **Observations** section of this study.

- **Return to participants to confirm data gathered**

Although scheduling return meetings provided a challenge to coordinate times and dates, it was done as best as possible. The Elders received the written observations gained at our meeting but not a face to face meeting. The sponsor was instrumental again in seeing that this was done and the opportunity was presented for feedback. The parent group was attended by fewer people than originally attended. The chairperson of the group was given copies of the summary of that meeting to distribute. The student group chairperson was given the summary of that session to distribute to the students who originally attended and was asked for feedback.

- **Find and compare modified school calendars**

Modified school calendars are in use in many schools and their templates are available. Research that was previously done was accessed and used to compare the findings of the study to school breaks during the year.

- **Build calendar for Cowichan based on research**

Using the data gained in the study a calendar was designed to fit the needs of the Cowichan community. Breaks were designed to coincide with culturally significant times of year and provide students an opportunity to be with their families and not miss school days in session.

- **Return to sponsor for confirmation of data and calendar**

The calendar was given to the sponsor of the project for any final input that he may deem necessary or I may have misinterpreted along the way.

- **Complete research report**

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Study Findings

I conducted three sets of interviews. The first set was in the evening with a group of elders in the home of two of the participants, a husband and wife. They had been given a copy of the questions the week before and had an opportunity to think about what they wanted to ask and to say. I asked the questions that are in boldface. I took notes during the session and used these notes for the summaries that follow the questions.

What events or seasons are most important for you as an elder? Why?

This question elicited an interesting response and indicated my predisposition toward the type of answers I was expecting. The first two responses were about Summer. It was warm and one elder liked the warm weather better than the cold and damp of Fall and Winter. One elder liked the summer because they took short trips to places and there were yard sales to go to. As the conversation wound its way around to the cultural path, these elements emerged. Summer was the time for fun activities like pow wows, bone games, sports, and canoe racing. Summer was also a time to gather the plants used in traditional medicines. Winter was the time for cultural programs that start in the longhouse. This includes namings, memorials, and potlatches. Other activities for Winter were correcting bad habits and legal work that is culturally important.

When do these events occur during the year?

There is no specific date when these events occur. Memorials were naturally dependent upon the date of the death or anniversary of the death. It is incumbent upon the families to support one another in times of grief. Most

winter activities began near the end of October and continued through to the end of March.

Which of these events would be best for students and their families to be involved in and not in school? Why are these the most important?

The winter months were the most important. It allows the families to see their connections with the past, present, and future by seeing their relatives and hearing them speak about important matters.

Observations

The Elders who participated were well spoken and passionate about this topic. As mentioned above we met at the house of two of the elders and spoke in a close, comfortable area. The meeting lasted for about one hour fifteen minutes.

One of the Elders was a very knowledgeable woman who remembered stories that her grandfather had told her about what it was like when he was young. She told of trying to teach her nieces and grandnieces how to knit and her attempts to pass on her knowledge to the next generation, some successful and some not. She mentioned that she was taught from age 7 – 11 every other day about the things she needed to know as a woman of the Cowichan people. She spoke of how young people were taught the 4 ways of living, which included spiritual training, how to live as a youth, adult, and elder, and what needed to be done in each of the seasons to be prepared. This concept of the four ways of living is explained best using the medicine wheel. One Elder spoke of how the people had lost touch with the land in many cases and how it was a dream that future generations could regain this connection.

Residential school experience came up at this meeting and it was mentioned how this experience cut the ties to their ancestors and their ways. This was seen as one of the reasons why some Cowichan people had lost respect for

themselves, their families, and their elders. This group of Elders was passionate about finding a way to instill this sense of pride and respect into the next generation. I was asked at one point what I meant by “successful”. We discussed this at some length. It became apparent that successful meant that one could feel proud about being Cowichan, speak the language, and still do well in the non-aboriginal world.

These Elders were pleased about having the opportunity to share their information with me and wanted to see some way for their children to do better. I was very honoured to have had the opportunity to listen to them and gain some knowledge about their lives and culture.

The parent meeting was made up of three groups of students enrolled in three courses at a local college. We met for about two hours in the afternoon. The group was made up of both men and women but primarily men. The group had children of their own or used their experiences with nieces and nephews, as well as their own experiences, to talk about the issues that arose. This group also had viewed the proposed questions earlier and had an opportunity think about what they wanted to ask and to say.

It became apparent at the beginning that the question of time was not of primary importance to this group. One member of the group pointed out that the linear time line used in the school system was not the cyclical view of time held by the Cowichan people but that the differing views of time was not the reason for the lack of success by First Nations children in the school system.

The group began a discussion of some of the issues that were of more importance and the issue of time was put aside until near the end of the meeting.

Some issues that arose were:

- The residential experience still influences the First Nations people, even those who are grandchildren of those who were in the schools. One member reflected that his father's anger in dealing with things was a symptom of the experience that his father had in residential school and that this has impacted his life in return. Another member pointed out that the link with the past and how children were taught was broken with the residential school program.
- The curriculum does not reflect the Cowichan culture. It reflects non-aboriginal ideas of history and progress, ignoring the existence of many First Nations people in any positive way. Students do not feel a sense of pride or validation that their culture is important in the school system. One member stated that Cowichan people need their own Cowichan School with qualified First Nations teachers and Teaching Assistants. This school would have a multicultural curriculum including First Nations Studies and language.
- There is a perceived lack of mutual respect with teachers and administrators when dealing with First Nations people. This group felt that non-aboriginal students are dealt with differently in behavioural situations, often given the benefit of the doubt over the aboriginal students. They felt that this was also reflected in First Nations students being subjected to subtle and overt racism and bullying.
- Teachers do not have the knowledge of First Nations culture and teachings. They need to look at different learning styles used by First Nations students and integrate them into the lessons. They also need to look at alternate ways to assess the progress of First Nations students who may not do well on written tests but may still know the skills being tested. The concept of

the class being arranged in a circle was mentioned as being important.

- Support programs at schools are not sufficient. Breakfast and lunch programs, laundry facilities, health care, and self-esteem programs are needed. One member pointed out that children must feel good about themselves before they can have a healthier outlook and be more receptive to learning.
- First Nations students were pushed through the school system without learning the necessary skills to be successful at later grades. This group had experienced this themselves and saw this happening with their children as well. They felt that this compounded the feelings of marginalization that many of them felt at middle or high school.

Near the close of the meeting the group looked at the issue of time. Like many families, children of some First Nations families find it difficult to adjust in September to the early morning start and it was suggested that maybe a slow integration back into school beginning in August would help with this adjustment.

In conclusion, the time of day and the amount of holidays or when they occurred did not pose a challenge for students and families according to this group.

The student meeting was held in a Youth Council session at the a local health center. It was attended by about 15 students, some in the public school system and some in alternative education programs. There were slightly more boys than girls. The ages of the students ranged in the middle teens. It was apparent that they were more comfortable in writing their answers than in speaking them aloud. Few questions were asked and the group seemed somewhat

uncomfortable with me there.

Describe a time when you learned something new. What do you remember about the situation? Emotions? Environment? People? Time of day?

This question elicited a variety of responses dealing with formal school learning environments to situations where specific things were learned. A number of students responded that they learned best when an elder was speaking to them. Many replied that they learned something new every day but were not specific about the details of the situation. There was not a common thread in regards to the emotional aspect. Some students recalled being tired during class. Another recalled a situation that made her laugh.

When during the day do you feel you learn the best? That you are most ready to learn something new?

Of these respondents most felt they learned better in the afternoon. Others described their physical state had the most to do with their learning. That is, if they felt rested they were able to learn best, whether it was in the morning, afternoon, or evening

Study Conclusions

This research project leads me to believe the following:

- In its most successful form school is a community based endeavour.
- When school occurs can be as important as what occurs within school.
- Success at school is dependent on a large number of variables, primarily

relevance.

- How a culture views the concept of time is an important variable in dealing with other cultures.

In its most successful form school is a community -based endeavour

Look at a school that you deem to be a “good” school. What is it about that school that makes it so? Generally, you will find that the values espoused by the staff are similar to your own. The material used in the courses is similar to the material used in school when you attended. The assumptions made about students and how they learn is similar to your own. It accurately reflects the world in which you live and how you think it should be. In charter schools, parents are satisfied because the school shares their values.

In native-controlled schools the values reflect their community. In *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*, Georges Erasmus quotes the program from one of the most successful native-controlled schools, in Manitoba:

The school program uses the Medicine Wheel, an aboriginal symbol, as the model for school discipline. The main values taught are caring, sharing, honesty, and determination. The school rules are: respect for the Creator, respect for life, respect for elders, respect for parents, and respect for self (Richardson, 1989, p. 33).

It is difficult to argue that these values are not the values of most communities in Canada. Though the wording may be different, most parents would agree that they would want their children to attend a school with these values and under rules which emphasize respect. First Nations Elders, in my interviews, stated that these values were taught by their ancestors and handed down to each generation as the correct way to live.

When school occurs can be as important as what occurs within school.

In designing a modified calendar I initially focused on the differing views of time between aboriginal cultures and western cultures. The results of this research did not show that time was a large issue with the parents who were interviewed. However, academic results from other studies, such as Shields and Oberg or Kerry and Davies, indicate that when school occurs can have a significant impact on the success of students, at risk students in particular. The parents who participated in this study had no experience in school structures that were modified, nor had their children. Modified calendars can allow students to have the support they need and the time they need to improve their learning. Definitely cost issues, staffing challenges, building use, and other challenges present themselves when dealing with changing to a modified calendar. Research indicates that these need not be overwhelming if they reflect the needs of the community. If the community desires the improved academic performance of their students, specifically those students who need the most support to succeed, a modified calendar is an option that needs to be explored. What occurs within this calendar in the areas of courses, activities, and community -building, should be as inclusive as possible.

Success at school is dependent on a large number of variables, primarily relevance.

When people learn something new they are constantly asking why. Why does a person need to know this? Why is this important? To really learn something and synthesize what you have learned, it must be relevant to what you are doing or intend to do. There must be a need. Peter Senge describes this as creative tension (Senge, 1990). A person has a goal in mind. They also have a reality in which they live. To get to their goal they need to change their reality. The

things that they learn in their quest to reach their goal then become relevant and significant as long as they move toward their goal.

To those students who see school as a way to reach their goals, there is more relevance to what they are doing each day. The courses take on extra significance because they are seen as a tool to deal with the creative tension and help the student get where they want to go. The information that they learn must also be compatible with what they know to be true. Imagine a person going to a school that taught, directly or indirectly, a world view that did not fit with how that person experienced the world. Would they see this information as relevant? Valuable? Would they attend regularly? What if it was their only choice of school? The creative tension would have no way of being resolved. I venture to say the results would be non-attendance, poor grades, and frustration.

Time

I believe that a large component of the problem I am researching has to do with the differing concepts of time as held by the First Nations peoples in relation to the Western view. In my experience, organizations and people whose origins are European or “Western”, view time as a linear progression. Aboriginal organizations and cultures tend to view time as a cyclical entity. In developing this idea I have investigated different concepts of time held by cultures around the world. The literature is very clear that time is viewed in a variety of forms through history and across cultures. It is my belief that by looking at time and how it can be manipulated in a school setting, it will become apparent that there is an opportunity to construct a modified school calendar that will be culturally significant to the Cowichan people and meet the requirements of the Ministry.

Early philosophers and thinkers have delved deeply into the study of time in an attempt to understand its nature. Greek philosophers saw time as an active

phenomenon. Heraclitus, in his “Laws of Change”, used the metaphor of a river to describe time when he stated, “Those who step into the same river have different waters flowing upon them.” (Sherover, 1975, p.11). Though two people may share the same time and space, they do not share the same experience. Time flows differently around each person. In schools, teachers deal with this frustration each year. Students who are not able to succeed are moved onto the next grade though they have not gained the skills necessary to become successful at the next level. School district policies do not allow students to be held back more than once in the elementary grades. This linear movement through the grades reflects, to me, a “Western” construct of time. Though each may have different waters flowing upon them, the educational river moves each student at the same speed whether they are ready to move or not.

In Europe, the concept of time, especially in the twentieth century, was primarily scientific. Though poets played with the idea of time, and authors such as T.S.Eliot eloquently stated the view that past, present, and future are all one:

Time present and time past
 Are both perhaps present in time future
 And time future contained in time past
 If all time is eternally present
 All time is unredeemable. (Eliot, 1944, p. 7)

this poetic perspective was not the dominant frame of mind by most European scholars, who were beginning to have a clearer idea of the connection between time and space. Einstein’s theory of relativity built on the work of earlier thinkers and pushed the boundaries of scientific exploration of time into quantum mechanics and the attempt to find a unifying theory to describe the

motion of all objects in the universe. This lies at the heart of the matter. Is time the measurement of reality, a tool to describe the movement of objects? Or is time a reality in and of itself? Western thought has been dominated by Aristotle's central thesis, "...that time is merely a mark of change or of the experience of change, that time is nothing more than the way we measure motion." (Sherover, 1975, p. 20-21). Many other cultures do not subscribe to this view of time. The school system in which many First Nations students are enrolled are linearly based and, thus, do not fit with First Nations views of a more holistic viewpoint. This is not to say that First Nations students can not succeed in such a setting. It does suggest, however, that there may be a better way.

At the seminar on *the Documentation and Application of Indigenous Knowledge* at Inuvik, Northwest Territories, in November of 1996, "the participants emphasized that traditional indigenous knowledge is a way of life, based on the experiences of the individual and of the community, as well as knowledge passed down from one's elders and incorporated in indigenous language." (Inuit Circumpolar Conference, p.1) This means that knowledge is linked directly to culture and cannot be separated. In my meetings with Elders they often commented that their language told so much more than could be translated into English. It carried their feelings and emotions as well as the meaning of the word. Interestingly enough, one of the recommendations from this conference was "adapting the school calendar and requirements to accommodate participation in traditional activities at appropriate times of the year." (ibid, p.2)

Study Recommendations

Infuse the school culture with the aboriginal culture of the area

Much work has been done in Alaska in recognizing the need for cultural awareness in schools in many areas. Implementation of this awareness into day to day activities poses challenges and provides rewards. The Alaska Native Knowledge Network, in 1998, produced the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools. This document outlines what a culturally responsive school, educator, student, curriculum, and community would look like. The need for cultural standards developed by Alaska Native educators are “predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage, language, and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place...” (Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, 1998, p. 1)

The population of First Nations students in proportion to the total school population would make some of the standards more easily attainable or give the administration the political power to enact the changes required to meet the standards. These standards are not “intended to be inclusive, exclusive or conclusive”, thus they could be adapted to fit local situations.

Recognize that what works for First Nations students will work for all students

The recommendations from this study will not interfere with the learning of students who are not Cowichan. The research conducted on modified school calendars indicates that, in the very least, there is no negative impact on the students involved academically (Shields and Oberg, 1999). If a school would adopt a modified calendar based on the needs of the Cowichan community, the

change would benefit all students in attendance. The issue of time is present in most cultures and organizations. It is seldom recognized as a resource that can be manipulated and used for the benefits of the participants.

Implement modified school calendars that reflect the community served by the school.

This study is based in Cowichan for Cowichan families and students. The findings here reflect the unique qualities of the people who contributed to the study. In British Columbia there are many school districts that serve unique communities, not all of them First Nations communities. Though the standard school calendar may serve a community well, there may be alternatives that have not been considered that could result in academic growth for all students. The school is such an integral part of any area, large or small, and parents all want the best for their school and children. Investigating alternative ways of improving the quality of the school by reflecting the needs of those it serves is important work and needs to be considered closely.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Organization Implementation

To implement the recommendations of this study in the school operated by the Cowichan Tribes, I would recommend the following steps:

- Involve the wider Cowichan First Nations community from the beginning
- Set up a consultation group of interested parties (parents, Education Committee, Elders, etc.)
- Provide alternative schooling for those students not interested in the modified school calendar. This would require communication with the public school system.
- Challenge false information designed to denigrate the system. Many people are not informed about the opportunities presented in a modified calendar system and rely on assumptions.
- Have the people involved hypothesize about the difficulties and be ready to meet them.
- Go slowly.

These suggestions are from Davies and Kerry and their study on *Improving Student Learning Through Calendar Change* (1999). I would add that the support must be there from the people in charge of the school. If there is not a commitment that this change will be for the improvement of the academic success of the students, there will only be compliance and soon the changes made will not realize their full potential.

If the recommended changes are not made, the academic progress of the Cowichan First Nations students would most likely proceed as it has for the last decade. Currently the Cowichan Tribes school is registering students at nursery

school and kindergarten. When they leave this school the students attend the public school system which has been resistant to changing the school calendar. The Cowichan Tribes is studying the prospect of building a larger school that registers more grades and students. If this were to come about, they would have the opportunity to compare calendars and choose one that best suits their needs. It is at this point that more research can begin. This would be an opportune time to attempt a longitudinal study to measure the progress of these students. If the school expansion does not come about perhaps recent initiatives in forging Improvement Agreements with First Nations people and School Districts, as has happened in a number of districts, will assist in accelerating the fundamental changes that are needed.

Future Research

The implications of this project are very positive. At this point in the history of British Columbia, the voice of First Nations people is being heard and the political power they have is growing, particularly in education. The Aboriginal Education branch of the Ministry of Education has outlined five goals:

- to improve school success for Aboriginal students
- to increase Aboriginal voice
- to promote knowledge of Aboriginal language, culture, and history for all students
- to ensure effective use of resources
- to increase Aboriginal communities' satisfaction with the public school system (Ministry of Education, Aboriginal Education Branch)

These goals indicate that an opportunity exists to use the results of this study to meet these goals. Though this particular study was based on the needs of the Cowichan students and their families, other researchers, to meet the needs of the First Nations students and families in their own areas, could follow a similar process. The school system in Alaska, in particular, is working on designing culturally responsive schools. In 1998, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network produced a document entitled “*Alaska Standard for Culturally-Responsive Schools*” which was adopted by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators. Some school districts have begun to use the standards and information gained in longitudinal studies of these schools will be very valuable. The success of First Nations students is a noble goal for any school or school system to aspire to. This study adds to the knowledge base of how one might go about accomplishing this goal.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

Research Project Lessons Learned

During the course of this study there were a number of lessons learned. Some were beneficial in its completion; others were changes I would suggest researchers make if they were to pursue a similar project.

The sponsor of the project must be fully involved and committed.

The sponsor of this project, Ron George, and I had established a professional relationship as we had worked together on issues in education and Cowichan students in the past. This project built on this relationship. This relationship and the commitment Ron showed toward the higher goals of the project were instrumental in its completion and the quality it demonstrates. There was constant communication between the two of us and if any challenges came up they were dealt with co-operatively.

The faculty supervisor should have a working knowledge of the field in which you are conducting the research.

The faculty supervisor of this project, Laurie Meijer-Drees, is very knowledgeable about educational change initiatives and First Nations issues. She has worked in this field professionally and was able to offer avenues to research and connections to people who could assist and guide me through the project. We communicated on the telephone and by e-mail and her contributions to the project were astute, helpful and made the final report more complete and readable than it would have been without her input.

Passion and Communication

Though it may seem incongruent to see passion as an element essential to a research project, it was integral to this particular study. The topic I chose was

based on a passionate belief that change was needed and that I could have some impact. During the course of the investigation I met many people who shared the same passion. They were more willing to talk to me because we shared the same goal, improving the success of First Nations students in school.

Communication was a given to me. I needed to communicate my beliefs and understanding to all the people who eventually shared their time and feelings with me. They needed to be assured and comfortable with what I intended to do with the information. I also needed to communicate to others who were not directly involved with the project, such as my family and friends, colleagues and employers, what it was I was doing and why.

Meetings and Follow-up Meetings

I believe this could have been better. The initial meetings of the groups I met with were excellent. The quality of the information was relevant and important. The follow-up meetings were not as satisfying. Though many attempts were made to meet again with the student group, it did not occur. The information was relayed to them but it would have been better if I could have met with them and heard directly from them that their voices had been heard. The same situation existed with the Elders. The return meeting, though attempted many times did not occur. The information was given in written form but it is always better to meet face to face in situations like this. I would suggest when the first meeting is completed that a return date be established right then instead of waiting until later to set one.

Data Gathering

I believe that the more people who have the opportunity to contribute to a project like this the better the result will be. Though the sample population used in this study was representative of the community, I would look for more people to be involved if I were to do this again. Perhaps separate meetings with separate groups of Elders, or parents at different venues. This may not have

changed the outcome of the research but it would have ensured that I had covered all possibilities.

Program Lessons Learned

Major Project Competencies and Evaluation Plan.

1c. Provide leadership-As Curriculum Coordinator for Aboriginal Education during the work on this project, I was able to provide leadership by making the District more aware of the needs of the First Nations population. I communicated the findings of my report to those who were interested and compared my findings with an assessment of Aboriginal programs in the District. I gave direction to an external consultant on how to best go about collecting information for his assessment. I provided ideas and direction to the staff at schools on how to meet the needs of their First Nations students. I have been involved heavily in negotiating a Five Year Plan in consultation with the Education Coordinators representing five First Nations and the Metis Nation with the School District.

2b. Apply systems thinking to the solution of leadership and learning problems-At each opportunity in this research project I looked at how the problems faced in education were reflected in systems thinking. Many of the problems dealt with each day in education are the result of decisions made in the past with the best of intentions. First Nations education is still feeling the effects of the residential school decision. Many of the people I spoke with brought the effects of the residential school on their family to my attention. This “shifting of the burden to the intervenor” archetype was prevalent in many issues that deal with First Nations and government and helped me make sense of how to approach solutions in committees that dealt with both sides, government and First Nations. Recognizing that

slower is faster when working toward a fundamental solution helped me remember that the academic success of First Nations students is not going to happen soon. Time must be spent at the beginning making sure everyone is involved in the solution and allowing people time to see how their contribution will add to the probability of success.

5a. Identify, locate and evaluate research findings-Evidence for this competency comes from the literature review and the references. With guidance from many people I believe I have made a thorough search of the relevant material and evaluated its uses in this project. Though there is much more information available on modified school calendars, I chose those that represented much of what has been found and used the research that recognized the at risk students, many of whom are First Nations students in this area.

5b. Use research methods to solve problems-This competency took much thought. As this project dealt primarily with First Nations participants it was important to choose a methodology that reflected their perspective. The selection of the methodology was the right way to approach this study. In circles, listening politely to the point of view of the participants and quietly taking notes, asking for clarification, and paraphrasing what was said assured the participants that I had heard what was said and could be trusted to use the information accordingly. Supported by methods outlined in Palys, I chose the method of putting the research findings into a story to reflect the oral tradition of the Cowichan culture.

7b. Communicate with others through writing-I made use of email to ask for assistance in this study. I used written replies to each of the groups who contributed their time and information. However, the primary evidence for this competency comes from the project itself. This project forced me to be

concise and complete in what I wanted to say. It forced me to support what I wrote with evidence and be thorough in my research.

2a. Apply systems theories to problem solving- I have used the idea of complex adaptive systems to understand how a school operates its initiatives in improving academic success, recognizing that the feedback processes are not generally in place to make accurate decisions on the success or failure of the initiatives. I have used Senge's archetype of a Shifting the Burden structure to understand the process of reaching a fundamental solution and avoiding the pitfalls of symptomatic solutions in the area of First Nations education. I have used Capra's organic systems concepts to understand the relationships between everything and how the building and strengthening of relationships between the participants is the most important part in ensuring the success of a project.

3b. Provide consulting services to help organizations succeed-During the course of this research project I have been involved with the Cowichan Tribes Cultural and Education Department. I have also been employed by School District # 79. Both of these organizations have benefited from my services to improve First Nations student success. I have acted as a liaison between the two on committees. I have aided the understanding of both groups on how to best approach a solution. I have provided input to both groups on how to reach collaborative decisions. I have worked with the schools on data collection and with an outside consultant on assessment of Aboriginal education services in the school district.

4e. Help others learn-Through this project I have communicated my findings to the people I work with, the people who were involved, and the general public at every opportunity. The work on the District Assessment has helped everyone in our School District become aware that our First Nations students do not do

well at our schools and how this inequity may be addressed over the next five years.

4f. Manage own learning to achieve maximum added value-Due to what I learned in the process of this research project and the degree program, I have been hired to the position of Curriculum Coordinator for School District # 79. My work with the Cowichan Tribes and the subject of this study aided in my hiring and maximized the added value of my learning. I not only benefited from a job change but also gained much knowledge about differing points of view in aboriginal education and history. I use this knowledge base daily as this district is in the process of negotiating an Improvement Agreement with the local First Nations peoples in an attempt to improve the academic success of the First Nations students in public school.

7a. Interpret oral communication-This study was primarily based on my interpretation of what was said to me by the three groups of people I interviewed. I found that I was able to listen not only with my ears, but with my whole body. I noted not only what was said but how it was said and the context in which it was said. This is a skill in which I believe I have grown the most over the course of this degree program. I believe that I have written accurately what was told to me and the evidence is in the acceptance by the Cowichan Tribes of this project. The ultimate acceptance will be if the calendar is put into practice by a school that serves the Cowichan students.

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Cowichan Modified School Calendar 2001-2002

July 2001																																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
Medicine Gathering Summer Sports								Medicine Gathering Summer Sports										Medicine Gathering Summer Sports									Medicine Gathering Summer Sports					

August 2001																														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September 2001																														
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October 2001																															
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2001																														
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December 2001																														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2002																														
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Long House Season						Long House Season							Long House Season										Long House Season							

February 2002

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March 2002

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April 2002

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May 2002

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In Session	
Not In Session	
Statutory Holidays	
Weekends	
Altered Start/Finish Times (Salmon Runs)	

A Year in the School Life of Rachael Jimmy

Rachael Jimmy is a girl in Grade 5. She attends the Cowichan School that enrolls students from kindergarten to Grade 6. After she graduates from this school she will attend the public middle school. All the students at her school are Cowichan students.

In the last two days of July she begins her school year. She has been on summer vacation and spent much time with her family at canoe races around the coast, even down into Washington. She has collected medicinal plants with her auntie and grandmother from the forest along the river and on the side of the mountains. She is excited about going back to school but will miss the summer, especially when some of the other children who attend the public schools still have one month of vacation left.

The first two days are meant as an easing back into the routine of school. They are half days starting at 10:00 and ending at 2:00. It allows Rachael to have breakfast and walk to school with her friends. The lunch break and afternoon are spent getting settled, getting supplies, and learning routines that will be in place for the rest of the school year.

School begins in earnest on August 4. The day begins at 9:00 and goes to 3:00. The students learn about the teachings of their elders based on a curriculum entitled Quw'utsun Syuw'entst or Cowichan Teachings. These reflect the culture of the Cowichan people and meet the learning outcomes required by the Ministry of Education. Rachael's class begins the year with the theme "The Family is the Heart of Life", and she is looking forward to taking pictures of her family and writing stories and poems about them. The rest of the year is divided up into themes outlined in the curriculum.

In September, the salmon run returns to the Cowichan River. At this time of year the starting time for the school changes so the students can learn about the salmon and traditional fishing techniques from the Cowichan Elders. School starts at 9:00 and goes to 12:00. After lunch the students meet with a group of volunteers to learn to make

fishing tools, catch fish, and preserve it in the traditional ways. This process will be repeated in the middle of November for the next salmon run.

In October, Rachael has her first break. She has been attending school for 9 weeks and will have 3 weeks off. She begins school again on October 22 and continues to December 21. She has just finished the unit “Everything in Nature is Part of Our Family” and is looking forward to the winter break. The break is 5 weeks long. This time will be spent in community activities centered around the big house. This year Rachael’s younger sister Evelyn will get her name and she is very excited and nervous. She is also looking forward to having Christmas with her family. She hopes it will snow so they have a chance to make forts and slide on crazy carpets.

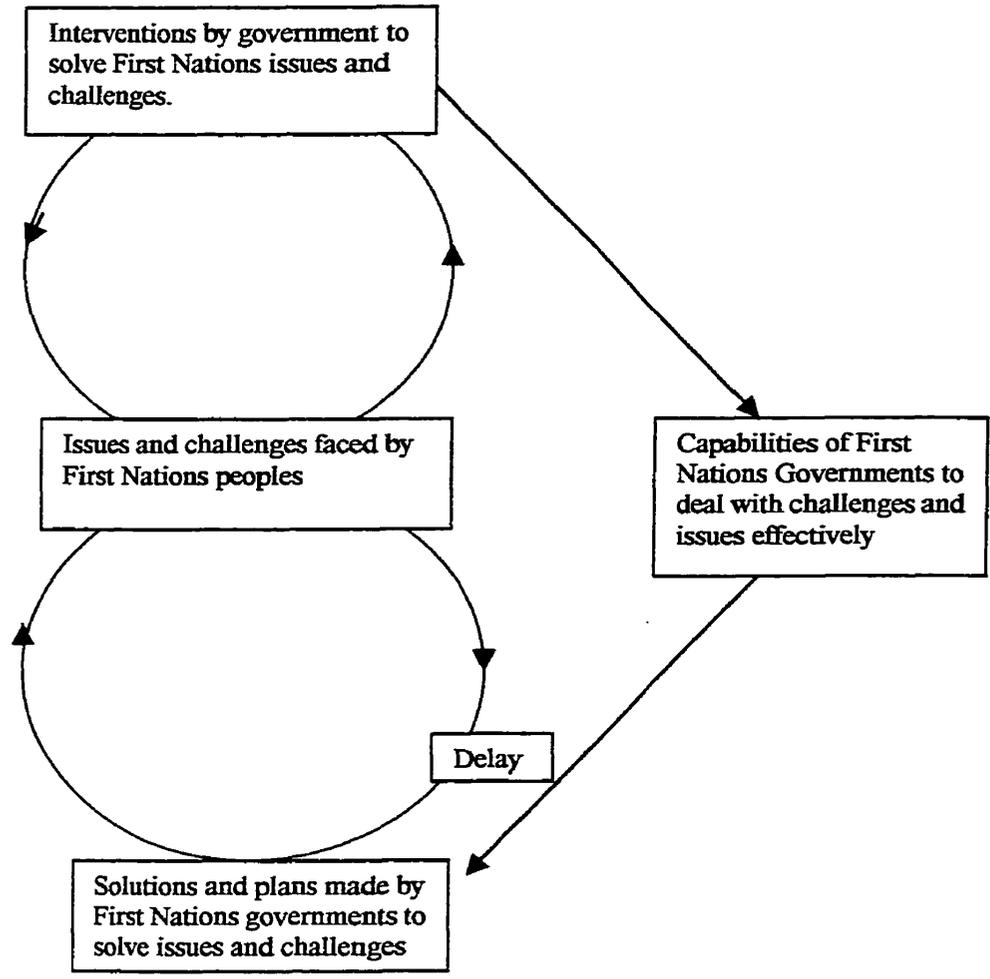
On January 28 Rachel goes back to school. She has had a wonderful winter break and is looking ahead to learning more. The theme her class starts with is “Honour the Elders”. Using the computer in her class she wants to take pictures of her grandparents and make a video about them and how important they are to her. She will be at school for the next 9 weeks, until March 29.

In April, Rachael has two weeks off for Spring break. She has learned much about her own culture at school and she is very proud to show her report card to her family. She has made her best improvements in math but art is still her favourite subject because they get to learn to knit. She has made a pair of socks for her dad.

Rachael goes back to school for the last term on April 15. In this last term she is excited about the two themes, “Live in Harmony with Nature”, and “Take Care of the Earth”. As this is the last term she will spend at the school she wants it to be the best. She finishes the year on June 21.

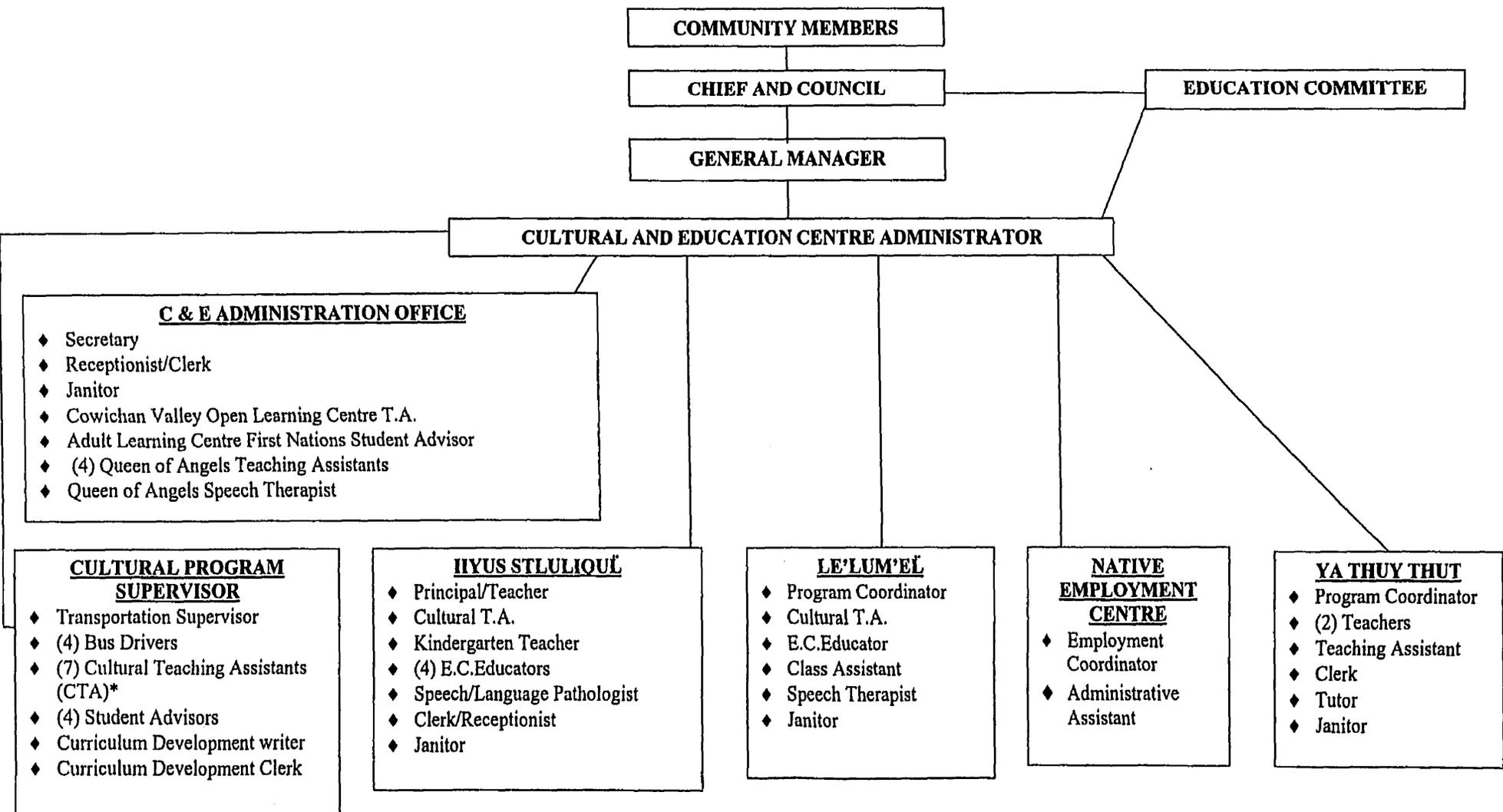
This year has been very special for her. She is nervous about going to public school for Grade 7 in September but she knows she is well prepared from her years at the Cowichan School.

A "Shifting the Burden" system based on Peter Senge's archetype (p. 382)



In this system, continued intervention by federal and provincial governments to deal with issues and challenges faced by First Nations peoples negatively impacts on the capabilities of the First Nations governments to deal with these challenges effectively. If solutions are initiated by First Nations governments, over time they become more effective. Less intervention on the part of the federal and provincial governments strengthens the abilities of First Nations governments.

CULTURAL AND EDUCATION CENTRE ORGANIZATION CHART



* CTA Breakdown:
(5) @ School District 79; and (2) @ Queen of Angels

"SHARED VISION" WORKSHOP
April 19-20, 1993

COWICHAN TRIBES AND SCHOOL DISTRICT 65 JOINT MISSION STATEMENT

for

***Quw'utsun Syuw'entst* K-12 Language and Culture Curriculum**

The Cowichan School District and the Cowichan Tribes believe that by creating awareness, understanding and respect for the culture*, history and language of the Cowichan people, there will be greater mutual understanding, involvement and pride, especially amongst First Nation students and communities throughout the District.

The Cowichan Tribes and School District also believe parents, Elders, and the Cowichan community in general have an essential part to play in order to reach and reinforce these goals. It is incumbent upon the Tribes and the District to create both the will and the environment to encourage this necessary involvement.

Implicit in these beliefs is the commitment that the District and the Tribes must work co-operatively; recognize their individual roles and responsibilities; and provide leadership within their respective organizations and communities.

- * For the purposes of the Mission Statement, culture consists of a variety of features which define the Cowichan way of life. Cultural features include such things as: language (both oral and written), history, spiritual beliefs, ceremonies, housing, food, clothing, dance, music, arts and crafts, family groups, traditions, values, education, sport, games, transportation, vocations, and traditional gender roles.

*Approved by the Tribes and District
April 1993*

*District 65 became
District 79 in 1996*



Cowichan Tribes Cultural & Education Centre

5744 ALLENBY ROAD, DUNCAN, B.C.V9L 5J1
PHONE: (250) 715-1022 FAX: (250) 715-1023

CULTURAL AND EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Cultural and Education Centre of the Cowichan Tribes works in partnership with educational institutions to increase and advocate for the participation and completion rates of Cowichan students, and to ensure:

THAT this process include the cultural traditions of the Cowichan Tribes;

THAT within our programs and our ways of working together we promote an appreciation for and an understanding of the history, traditions and language of the Cowichan Tribes within historical, contemporary and future contexts, to foster the preservation of pride and dignity among the Cowichan people within the community at large; and

THAT we as First Nations representatives recognize, and encourage others to recognize, that as members of a diverse society we need to understand and value the similarities and differences among many cultures, in order to grow together toward acceptance and mutual respect.

*Revised 30.3.00
Cultural and Education Committee
Ratified by Chief & Council July 25, 2000*

***QUW'UTSUN SYUW'ENTST* DELIVERY GOALS: BENEFITS TO STUDENTS**

- * to foster in Cowichan young people pride in their heritage
- * to help all students understand and appreciate First Nations culture in general, and Cowichan culture in particular

by

- * presenting both traditional and contemporary aspects of Cowichan culture, including language, as part of the overall school program
- * teaching basic skills using Cowichan cultural content
- * including Cowichan people as resources and role models, to support learning, heighten cultural sensitivity and deepen cultural understanding

How Are We Doing?

An Overview of Aboriginal Education Results for:

**District No. 79
Cowichan Valley**



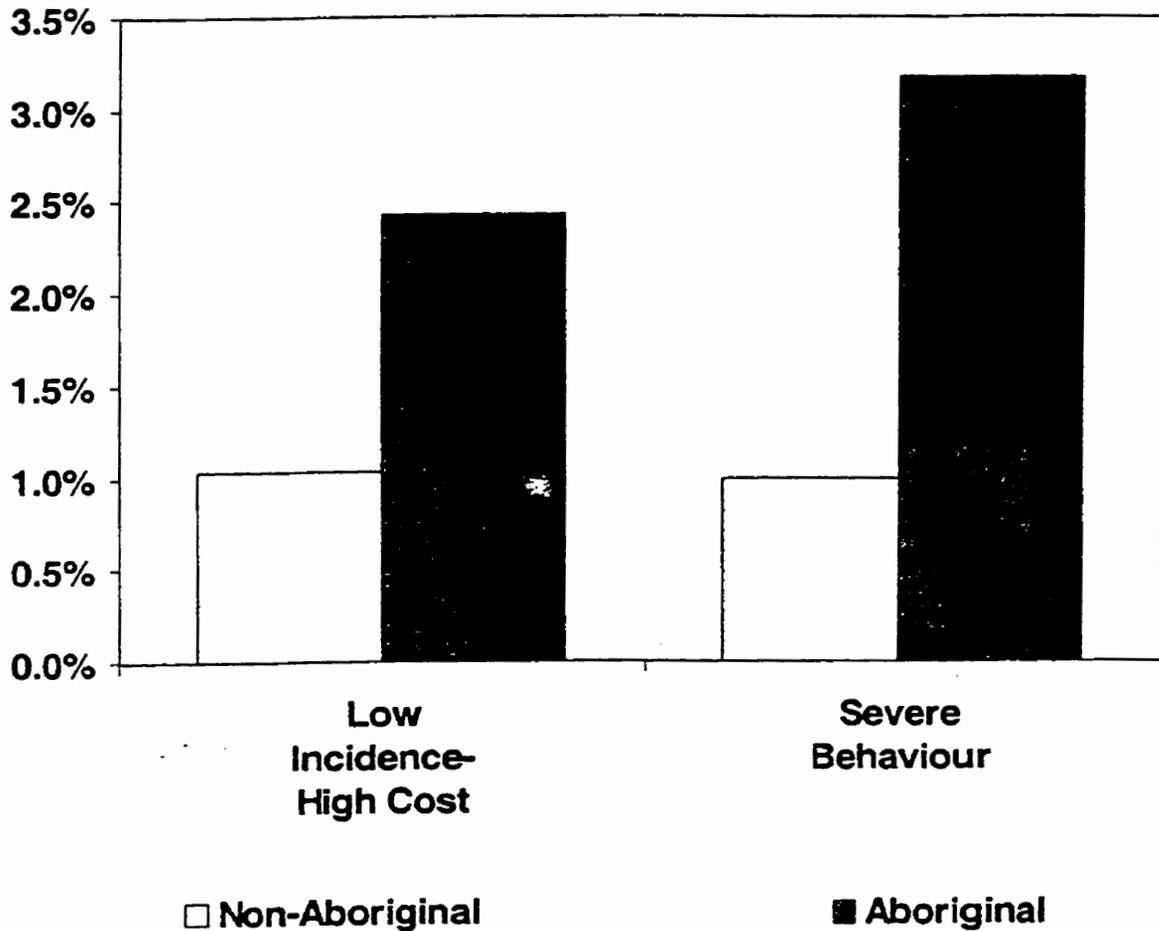
Ministry of Education

May 7, 1999

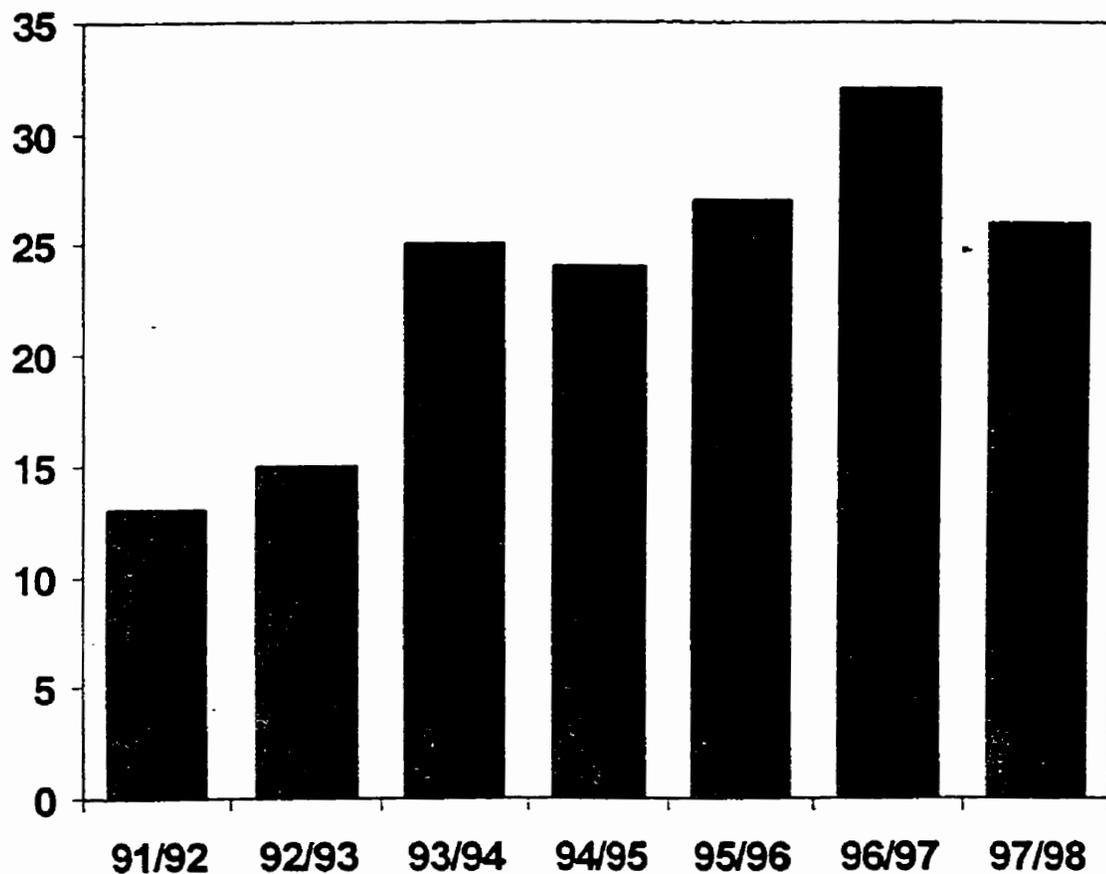
Why this Report?

- **To improve understanding of the performance of the school system in educating Aboriginal students.**
- **To provide a context for district/school performance and improvement.**
- **To raise these five questions:**
 1. **How are we doing?**
 2. **Are we doing better than we used to do?**
 3. **Is anyone or any group being left out?**
 4. **What can we do better?**
 5. **What can we learn from others?**

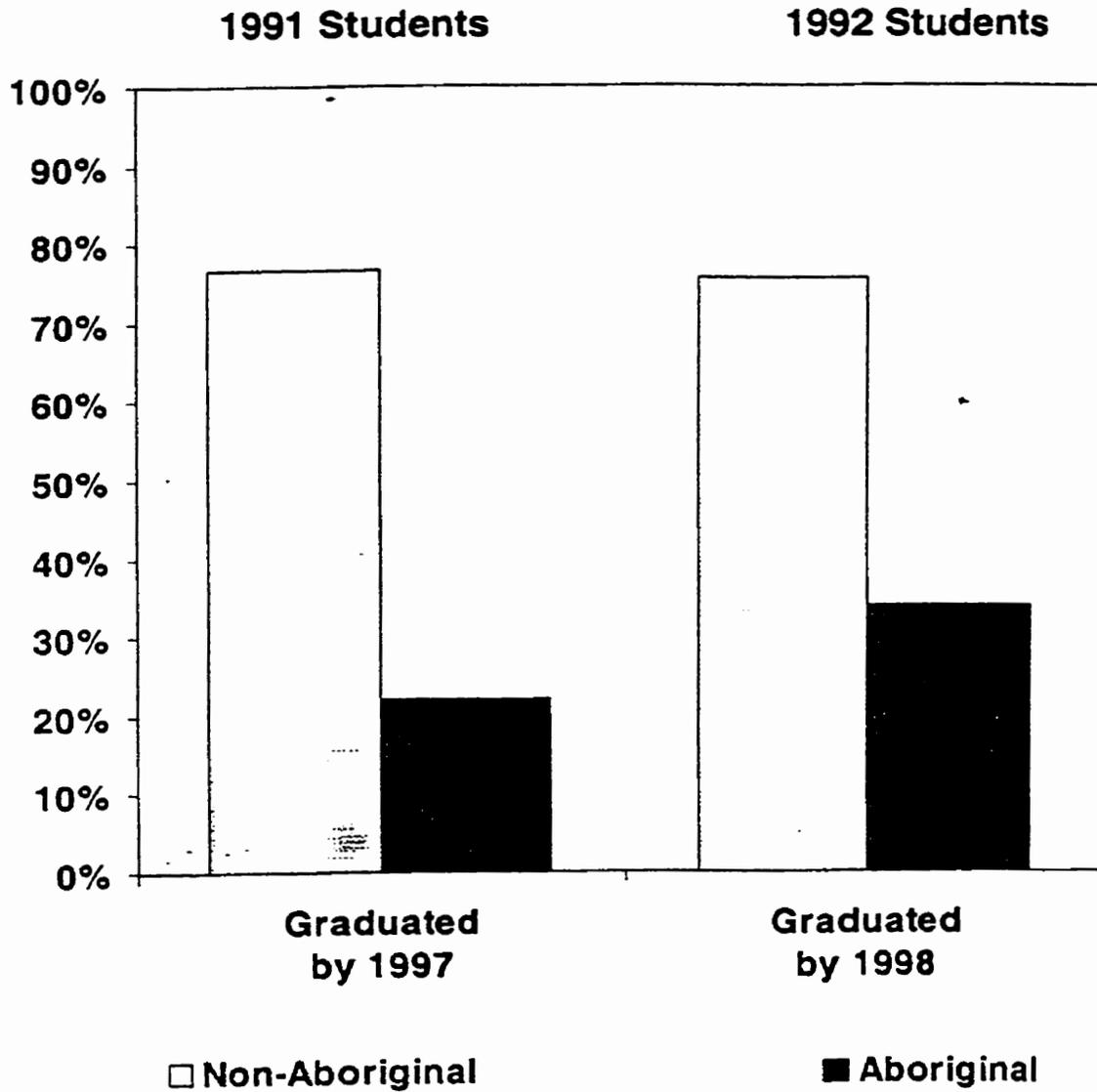
Percentage of Students Enrolled in Special Education, 1998/99



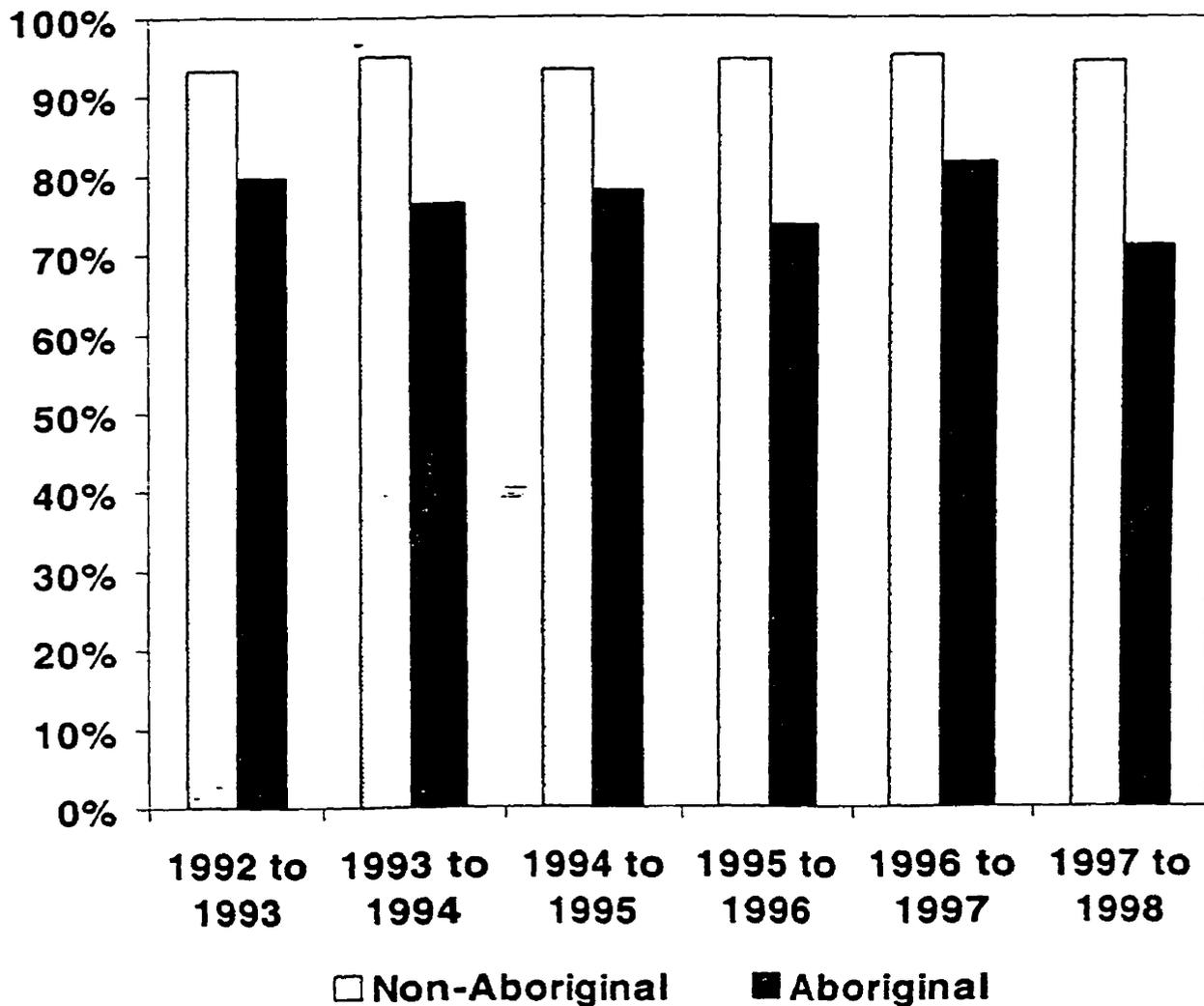
Number of Aboriginal Graduates (Dogwood Diploma)



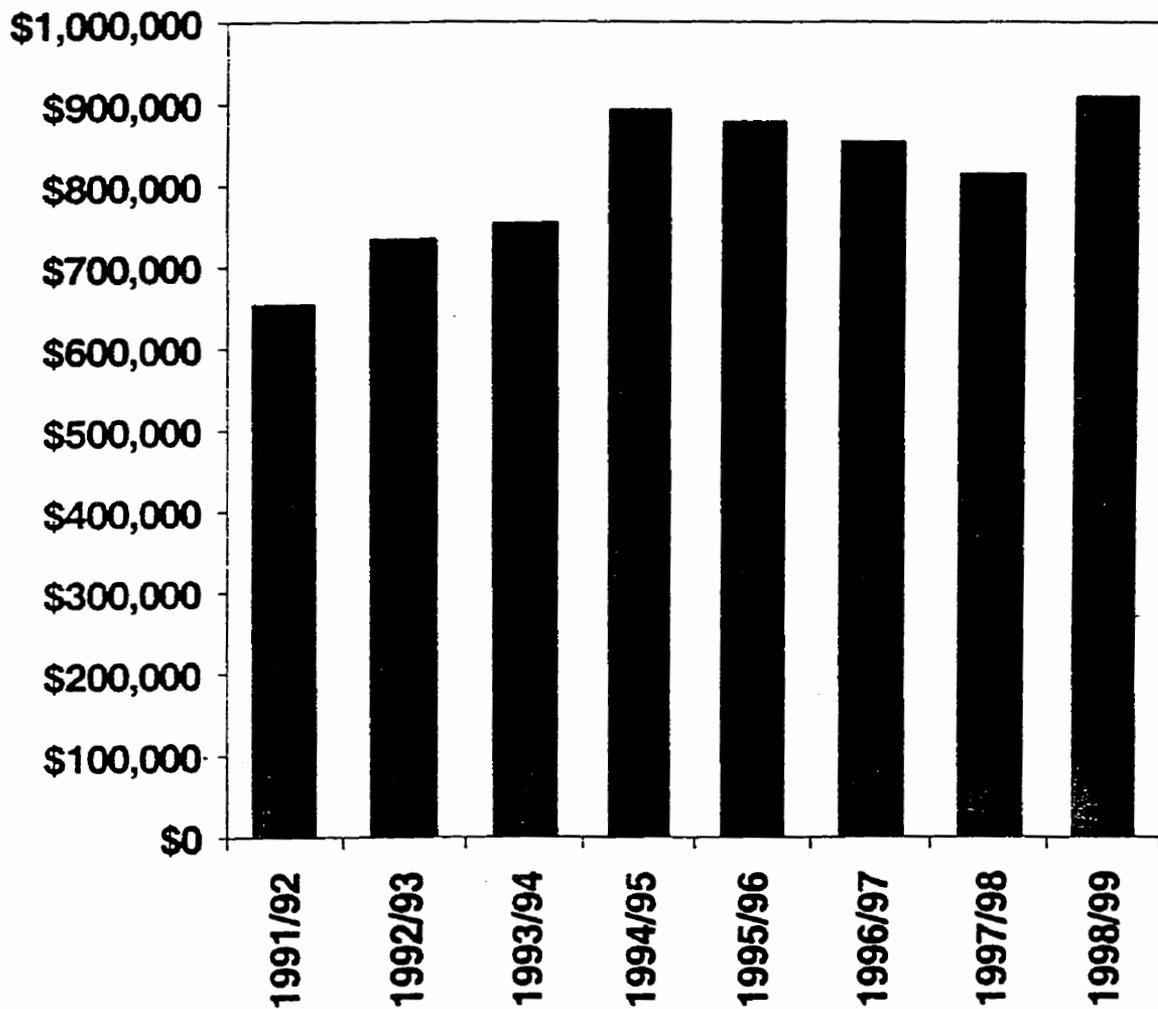
School Completion Rates: 1991 and 1992 Grade 8 Students



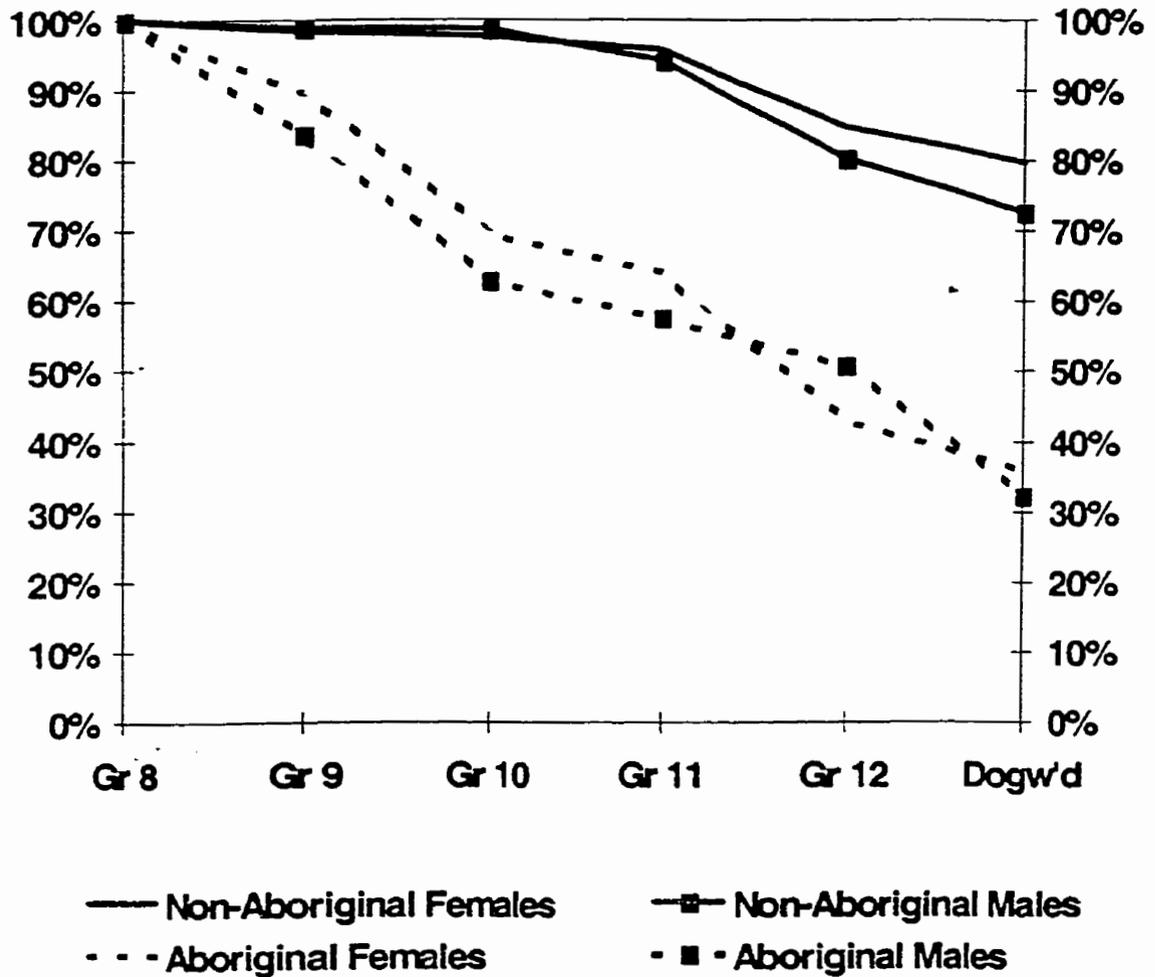
Transitions from Grade 8 to Grade 9



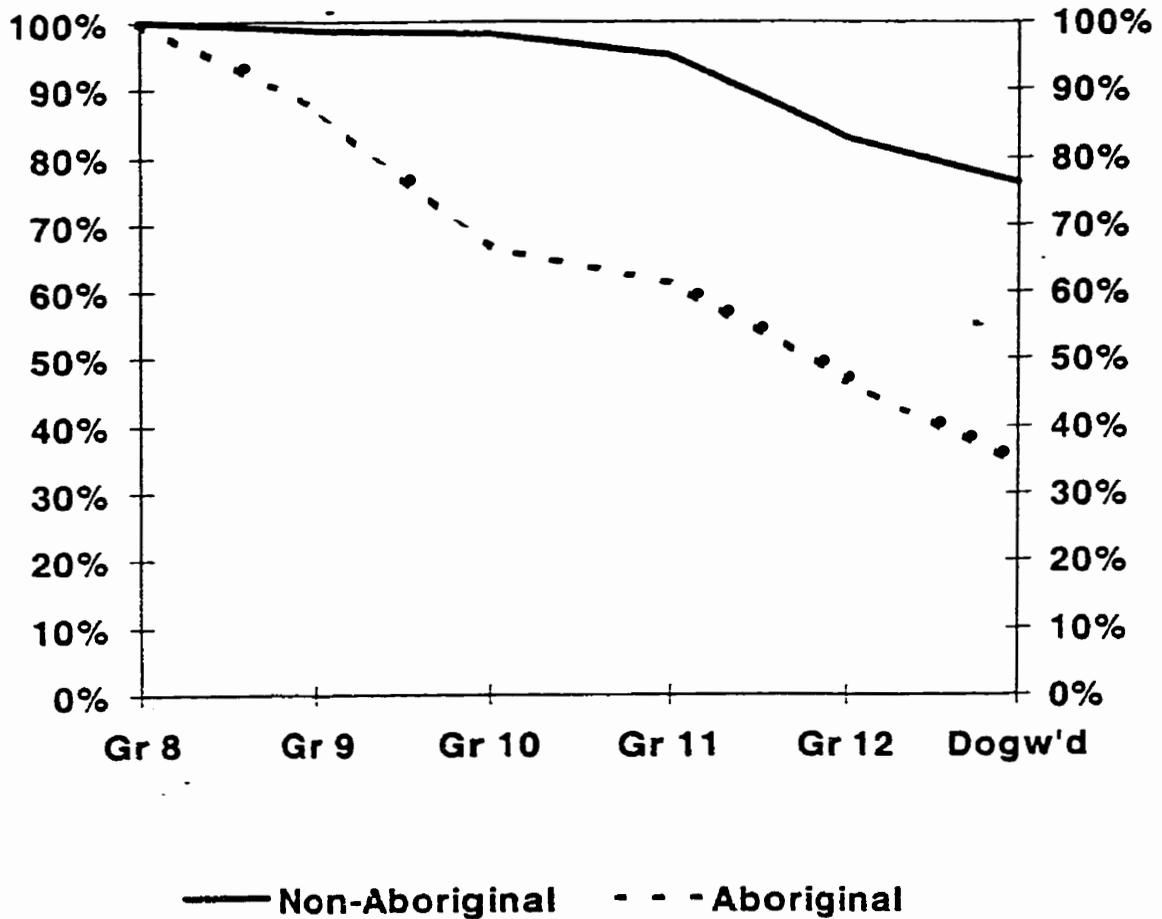
Funds for Aboriginal Education Programs



Secondary School Progress: Students in Grade 8 in 1992 by Gender



Secondary School Progress: Students in Grade 8 in 1992



Percentage of Students Who are Aboriginal

