

WEAVING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE INTO THE ACADEMY:
PROMISES AND CHALLENGES FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF THREE
ABORIGINAL POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

RHEANNA ROBINSON

B.A., The University of Northern British Columbia, 2001

M.A., The University of Northern British Columbia, 2007

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Abstract

This study examines the promises and challenges of integrating Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into the academy from the perspectives of Elders, leaders, students, staff, and instructors from three Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in British Columbia. Using a case study method and an Indigenous and Western theoretical foundations, this research shares the perceived successes, limitations, and the challenges the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), and the former Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University (CCWU) program face, or have faced, in the integration of IK. Also included in this study are perspectives from individuals from one mainstream, non-Aboriginal institution, the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

Topics explored through the research are the following: a) challenges and benefits of integrating IK in three Aboriginal institutes and how the integration of IK at the academic level in Aboriginal institutions impacts and benefits students, staff, and the local community; b) the challenges and benefits of partnerships with mainstream institutes; and c) the formal policies and/or lack of formal policy for Aboriginal institutes. As a result of the research, emerging themes include: Elders have a core role in higher learning; the integration of IK at a post-secondary level impacts higher learning; Aboriginal post-secondary institutes have taken the lead in building partnerships with post-secondary institutes; and Aboriginal post-secondary institutes demonstrate resiliency despite systemic challenges. To represent my position as a Métis scholar I present my findings through the framework of the Métis Sash that represents through its colour and design the integration of key concepts and findings from the study.

Preface

An earlier version of pages 46 - 57 in Robinson, R. (2007) *Education Transformation: Issues for Implementing an Aboriginal Choice School in Prince George, B.C* Unpublished MA, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC is included in this dissertation as pages 37 – 47.

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I was the lead researcher for this study and was responsible for all academic and non-academic research approvals and engagements. Some transcribing was completed through the assistance of individuals through the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing Lab at the University of Northern British Columbia.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AANDC	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
AIC	Aboriginal Institutes Consortium
API	Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institute
APIs	Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes
BC	British Columbia
CANDO	Canadian Advancement of Native Development Officers
CCWU	Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University
CFDC	Community Futures Development Corporation
CASHS	College of the Arts, Social, and Health Sciences
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
GWES	Gitx̱san Wet'suwet'en Education Society
IA	Industry Adjustment (Committee)
IAHLA	Indigenous and Adult Higher Learning Association
IIG	Institute of Indigenous Governance
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
ISSP	Indian Studies Support Program
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOUs	Memorandums of Understanding
NEC	Native Education Centre
NESS	Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
NTA	Nicola Tribal Association
NVIT	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
PACPENL	Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners
SCFNAP	Senate Committee on First Nations and Aboriginal People
SFU	Simon Fraser University
TCUs	Tribal Colleges and Universities
TRU	Thompson Rivers University
TSS	T'seba Student Society
WWNI	Wilp Wilxo'oskw̱hl Nisga'a Institute
UBC	University of British Columbia
UNBC	University of Northern British Columbia
UVic	University of Victoria
VCC	Vancouver Community College

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Dedication

For Sean (*Yagabax*) and James (*Jagabax*).
with deep love and respect for the amazing gifts you are in my life,
and to my mom, dad, brother, sister, and Ayda. I love you

Chapter 1: Introduction to Using the Métis Sash to Present the Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Three BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes

The position of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes in British Columbia is an important topic to study when considering Aboriginal learners, Aboriginal knowledge, and the future planning of Aboriginal education in institutions of higher learning. Using three Aboriginal post-secondary institutes (APIs) located in British Columbia (BC) and one mainstream non-Aboriginal university in Northern BC as models, this dissertation presents the successes and limitations APIs face when integrating Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into the academy. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University (CCWU) are the APIs included in this study, with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) providing the First Nations Studies courses and curriculum for WWNI and CCWU. All four are excellent examples of higher learning institutions that engage in Aboriginal education. With APIs as the foundation for this study, this research uses the Métis Sash as an Indigenous research framework that celebrates the contributions of IK and Aboriginal perspectives.

For over a decade I have witnessed a growing presence of IK being included within institutions of higher education in varying ways. Through roles I have held in both mainstream universities and APIs in BC, my academic pursuits have been profoundly impacted by my experiences and the knowledge I have acquired about the inclusion of IK. Most significantly, my time spent working at CCWU, an API in Central BC, provided me with unique and important insights into the role IK plays and its relevance for Aboriginal learners. This research topic emerged out of my desire to understand more intimately the important role APIs have in contributing to a decolonizing, self-determining academic experience that is actualized both

within the classroom and beyond and the promises and challenges of implementing IK in APIs in 21st century British Columbia, Canada. This arena followed my Master of Arts degree topic of looking at the challenges of creating an Aboriginal choice school in Prince George as a means to introduce IK at the elementary and high school level (Robinson, 2007).

This introduction to my dissertation presents an outline of my research by providing an overview of the areas I feel are relevant and necessary for the study of APIs with IK integration. In this chapter, I present the situational background to my journey that led to this topic, I introduce the institutions included in my study, I describe how my position as a Métis woman influenced the research, and I explain how the purpose of the research led to the research questions. This chapter also introduces why I use the Métis Sash as a framework for my research design to privilege my Indigenous voice, (a topic also expressed by the Maori scholars Mayeda, Keil, Dutton & 'Ofamo'oni, 2014). Finally, this introduction provides an outline of the dissertation, noting the contribution I believe this study makes to understanding the place of Indigeneity in academic discourse.

Situational Background

I was in the Faculty of Education, Educational Studies doctoral program at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and had recently finished teaching another semester at the CCWU in Williams Lake, BC, when it was announced that the CCWU program would be closing its doors in September 2011. I was devastated by the news. As someone who had been privileged to teach for CCWU for several semesters, I was sad for my former students and staff members at CCWU and knew I was going to miss having the opportunity to continue with this API. For me,

teaching for CCWU was both personally enriching and professionally rewarding. From prescribed course content, to student presentations and guest speakers, the CCWU program celebrated and welcomed the integration of IK into the academy in a way I had never witnessed before.

In addition to including the integration of IK, the CCWU program profiled a unique example of a community-based academic partnership between local Aboriginal Nations and three mainstream institutions including UNBC, Thompson Rivers University (TRU), and Simon Fraser University (SFU). It was exciting to be a part of the collaborative relationship existing with the local Aboriginal communities, and I was and am humbled to have been offered the opportunity to be a part of CCWU and come to know the local communities and Nation members in Central BC more closely.

Marking a significant time for me while I was in the midst of my doctoral program at UBC, the closure of CCWU enticed me to consider studying more about the nature of partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions and what is required to sustain such partnerships more permanently. However, while contemplating this, I knew that my former students, guest speakers, and program coordinators were dealing with a loss of educational choice for their communities and their Nations, as well as a loss of the opportunity to share and include IK in an academic setting where it was formally celebrated and appropriately honoured.

So, while I thought that doing an analysis of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary partnerships was going to ease some of my uncertainty and concern about the closure of CCWU, I moved into a position of understanding that it is not necessarily the “partnerships” for which I felt the loss. Instead, at the time, and to this day, I continue to feel the loss of the

integration of IK into the academy in the setting CCWU presented. CCWU, as an API, was a remarkable example of IK in action in higher learning and I feel that this topic should be recorded and celebrated. Although the position of partnerships is still important to consider, it became more meaningful and relevant to me for my research to address the integration of IK in a formal space of higher learning and some of the promises and challenges that are involved with that integration. I adamantly believe that the more we talk about having a foundation of IK in the academy, the closer we get to a common understanding of what IK integration means and how such educational integration can be supported. There are many examples of APIs in BC (described in Chapter Four), but for the purposes of my study, I include institutes that I am more familiar with as a result of their relationship with a mainstream institution that I have been a part of for a very long time, such as UNBC.

Aboriginal Institutes

The three APIs included in this study are as follows: NVIT located in Merritt and Burnaby, BC; WWNI in the community of Gitwinksihlkw in Northwestern BC; and the former CCWU housed at the TRU campus in Williams Lake, BC. In this section of the introduction, I provide some context of the history of APIs in Canada and a brief overview of each of the institutions included in this research that will be expanded on in Chapter Two.

The 1996 report delivered from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) provides a description of the three different “types” of APIs that have emerged in Canada, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) describes them in their policy

background paper titled, *Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in British Columbia: A Place for Aboriginal Institutes* (2008).

The first type is a full-fledged college where fully accredited programs, including degrees or certificates, could be offered, often in partnership with other post-secondary institutes (FNESC 2008, p. 8). The second type is an affiliated institution which, as FNESC (2008) explains, is “smaller and more locally focused...serves primarily the members of a tribal council or a regional area... [and] generally need[s] to access funding in order to shop for the best programs for their students” (p. 9). Finally, the third category is a community learning centre (FNESC, 2008, p. 9). FNESC (2008) describes the programs that a community learning centres can offer, saying:

Including adult basic education, academic upgrading, distance education courses, language courses, vocational training, and community-delivered programs from larger institutions. Some programs are accredited and others are not. The local community controls the learning centre, but its operations are usually dependent on external grants in connection with program services. (p. 7 – 8)

Characteristics of all three “types” of APIs including a full-fledged college, an affiliated institution, and a community learning centre, are addressed in this study.

Most closely aligned with the first “type” of institute described by FNESC is NVIT. As a public post-secondary institution, NVIT sits in a unique position as the only First Nations governed public post-secondary institution in BC. Blair Stonechild (2006) explains that NVIT is “generally affiliated with a local tribal council and focused on brokering programs” (p. 103) and “operates as a provincial institution under the *British Columbia College Institute Act*, with 230 students, 80% of whom are Aboriginal” (p. 121). NVIT has two campuses in BC, with a main campus in Merritt and another in Burnaby. The number of students attending NVIT has

increased significantly since Stonechild's publication; recent figures are presented in Chapter Two.

NVIT has a history that is as unique as the school itself. NVIT did not always exist as a "public" institution. In fact, NVIT opened its doors in 1983 as a private post-secondary institute and did not enter into the domain of public post-secondary education until the 1990s. K. W. Tourand (2004) explains that NVIT "started in the early 1980s as a private post-secondary institution; in 1995, NVIT received public status through an order in council of the provincial government and became a public post-secondary institution with a mandate to serve Aboriginal students and communities" (p. 18). NVIT is known for its inclusion of Elders in all facets of educational programming and delivery, the hiring of Aboriginal instructors and the use of many traditional practices (e.g. talking circles) in the pedagogical delivery of programming (Price & Burtch, 2010). As a public post-secondary institution, NVIT offers a wide breadth of programming inclusive of both college (e.g. trades) and university (e.g. Bachelor of Arts degree) courses and as the only publically funded First Nations institute of higher learning in BC, NVIT is an ideal institution to include in an analysis of the promises and challenges of integrating IK into the academy.

The next institution included in this research, WWNI, is an example of the second "type" of API. Although WWNI is a federated institution rather than an "affiliated" institution, WWNI has many of the characteristics as defined by FNEC. This includes that it is smaller and more locally focused and provides programs and courses which are relevant to the Nisga'a Nation and its members.¹ Translated into English as "the Nisga'a House of Wisdom", WWNI is a Nisga'a

¹ As described in the Government of Saskatchewan's website, "Federated Colleges are each academically integrated with [a university] but legally and financially independent. They offer undergraduate Arts and Science degree programs in a variety of areas as well as pre-professional studies." (Retrieved September 27, 2015,

Nation and community-based API incorporated under the Societies Act of BC in 1993. The institute came into being as a result of the determination of the Nisga'a people to have greater control and autonomy over the post-secondary education curriculum being delivered to their Nation members on their traditional territory.

Although initially governed by an interim Board of Directors appointed by the Nisga'a Tribal Council (Evans, McDonald & Nyce 1999, p. 200), the current WWNI Board of Directors is made up of one representative from each of the four villages in the Nass Valley and a Chair elected at-large to represent the Nisga'a Lisims Government (Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. n.d. *About*). This Board of Directors has a close relationship with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and negotiates with UNBC to ensure appropriate course instructors and course curriculum is being delivered to the Nation. As Evans et al. (1999) explain:

The need for formalized relationships between universities such as UNBC and Aboriginal communities is paramount. The Nisga'a experience indicates that these relationships ensure accountability to a particular community and ensure the community relevance that is so important to curriculum design. It is critical to both the WWNI and the UNBC to continue to develop and enrich this relationship. (p. 202)

Barriers related to funding, especially since WWNI is not a "public post-secondary institute", but rather a non-profit organization, continue to be a consideration within the relationship between WWNI and UNBC. The history of WWNI and its affiliation with a university such as UNBC was a valuable example to include in this research because of its integration of IK. As stated on the WWNI website by the late Jacob McKay, *Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*, formerly Chair the WWNI board,

Only by learning to share did the Nisga'a people flourish in our rugged and isolated corner of British Columbia. Today, we are forging full partnerships with other

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/universities-colleges-and-schools/post-secondary-institutions#federated-colleges>

educational institutions in order to provide top quality, culturally appropriate post-secondary education to everyone who lives here in the Nass River Valley. Increasingly, we welcome students from other parts of the world as well. (Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. n.d., *Making a difference*)

WWNI provides a strong example of how an Aboriginal-based federated institution utilizes the inclusion of IK in higher learning, higher learning, having relevant courses integrated into the UNBC calendar.

The final Aboriginal institution included in this study, CCWU, emerged from a desire to provide locally relevant and culturally respectful programming at an academic level, and can be considered an example of the third “type” of Aboriginal institutional as described by FNEC (2008). Although this program is no longer operational, CCWU played a significant part in this research, especially since the dissolution of the partnership has resulted in a revitalization of a community-born initiative to take control over post-secondary education in the Williams Lake area with courses now being offered to students through the Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG) with decision-making processes led by the Tsilhqot'in Elders and people. Therefore, the history and post-history of the CCWU is important.

The CCWU was founded by the late Sister Mary Alice Danaher who was for many years an educator in the Canim Lake reserve community. In the *Lexey'em*, a local community magazine, the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (NSTC 2005) states that Sister Mary Alice knew that some of her graduates were ready for post-secondary studies, so she collaborated with former Chief Roy Christopher and previous Band Education Coordinator Charlotte Christopher from Canim Lake to find a way to establish an on-reserve baccalaureate program (p. 12).

Together, Sister Mary Alice, Chief Christopher, and Charlotte Christopher succeeded in establishing a partnership with Gonzaga University in Washington State, and collectively, Gonzaga professors and administrators and members of the Canim Lake Band, and Sister Mary

Alice designed a seven-year Canim Lake-Gonzaga University Program where some courses were completed on reserve and some at the Gonzaga University campus during the summer months, a place that was over 500 miles away from the students' home (NSTC, p. 12). The program was a success; the NSTC (2005) notes that "by 1993, 21 students aged 22 to 50 completed Bachelors' Degrees in Native Indian Leadership" (p. 12).

The momentum to continue expansion of similar post-secondary opportunities was growing and Sister Mary Alice continued to explore innovative ideas and options to bring culturally relevant, accessible educational opportunities to the First Nations with whom she was working.² Later, as Education Coordinator for the Cariboo Tribal Council (now the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council), Sister Mary Alice brought together members of fifteen First Nations Bands, comprising Southern Carrier, Chilcotin, and Northern Shuswap people. A paper titled "Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University: The Opportunity of a Lifetime" (n.d., p. 1) notes that the Bands the CCWU offered programming to include the communities of *Ulkatcho*, *Anahim*, *Lhoosk'us Dene* (Kluskus), Stone, Alexis Creek or Redstone, Toosey, *Eskatemc* (Alkali), *Xeni Gwet'in* (Nemiah), *Tsq'escen'* (Canim Lake), *Lhtako Dene* (Red Bluff), Nazko, *Xatl'tem/Stwecem'c* (Dog Creek/Canoe Creek), *T'exelc* (Williams Lake or Sugarcane), Alexandria, and *Xats'ull/Cmetem'* (Soda Creek/Deep Creek) (p. 2). In a voluntary agreement, Sister Mary Alice ensured that a Weekend University partnership between the NSTC, TRU, and UNBC would offer quality education to the First Nations learners.

The UNBC website explains that the CCWU program was a flexible post-secondary opportunity, oriented towards First Nations adults who would be able to attend classes on

²Although I never had the opportunity to meet the late Sister Mary Alice, I found that her impact on the students in my classes was profound. Her commitment and contribution to community and education generally was and is remarkable. I was always grateful to hear the individual stories my students had to tell about the impact she had on their individual and family's lives.

Fridays and Saturdays, twice a month. This enabled the students to continue to be employed during their educational pursuits. Tuition was free to students who were members of one of the fifteen Cariboo Chilcotin Bands. Further, the web site explains that there was a full-time program coordinator available for student support and that there was on-site child care for students who needed it on Saturdays. In describing the strengths of the program, most notable is the fact that it was accessible and relevant to the local communities and culture (University of Northern British Columbia, n.d. *Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University*). Graduates from the CCWU program have gone on to hold significant roles with UNBC, including positions on the Board of Governors and the UNBC Senate. Others have continued on with further educational pursuits and career opportunities and play important roles such as Chief within their communities, in one instance.

Using these three institutions, NVIT, WWNI and CCWU, this research presents the different types of Aboriginal institutes available in British Columbia and discusses how these three institutions, whose primary focus is Aboriginal education, enhance the learning experiences of Aboriginal students, staff, and the local Aboriginal community. As an example of a comprehensive university that is, or has been, engaged in partnerships with the three APIs included in this work, I also provide a description of UNBC in Chapter Two because it has, or has had, a direct relationship with NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU. Also, many of the research participants interviewed for this study continue to have a direct relationship with UNBC; therefore it is important that UNBC is included, especially for the insights I provide in my own reflections on the relationship.

Although there are other Aboriginal-based institutes in Northern BC as recognized by the Indigenous and Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA)³, I chose to include institutes I was already familiar with and that I knew could be accessible for the purposes of this research. Therefore, there are many other institutions that undoubtedly have important stories to share, but my personal connection and history brought me to the specific sites of NVIT, WWNI, the former CCWU, and UNBC. My boundaries consequently indicate what APIs were and were not studied in the scope of the research project while also showing the breadth and depth of the project (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 545). I believe that by weaving together the many interconnected threads of considering IK in the academy from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal experiences, my research facilitates the future blending of various IKs that exist and enhances the future role of IK in an API and beyond.

Locating Myself in the Research

Researchers like Reinharz (1997) write about how our life experiences and our experiences in the research process influence and affect our research outcomes. As part of the reflexive process for my doctoral work, it is important that I reflect on who I am, where I come from, and the many influences on my life that have shaped me so I am able to contextualize how my position influenced this research. Abolomon (2011) realizes that “the re-searcher’s experiences were as important as the methodologies they used and that the two are

³ Other Aboriginal-based institutes in more remote locations of British Columbia include: the First Nations Training and Development Centre in Prince Rupert, BC; the Gitwandak Education Society in Kitwanga, BC; the Kyah Wiget Adult Learning Centre in Smithers, BC; the Nuswadeezuhl Community School in Takla Lake, BC; the Kwadacha Dune Dy Centre in Ware, BC; the Muskoti Learning Centre in Moberly Lake, BC; the Ted Williams Memorial Learning Centre in Burns Lake, BC; the Waglisla Adult Learning Centre/Heiltsuk College in Bella Coola, BC; the Acwsalcta School/Nuxalk College in Bella Coola, BC; and the Tl’azt’en Learning Centre in Fort Saint James (IAHLA 2007, p. 23).

interdependent” (p. 13). I have grown to understand and appreciate the interdependence of my own interests and research as an Aboriginal woman with my own unique background and experience in the domain of Indigenous education and research.

My Family History. I am a member of the Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC). I am the daughter of John and Patrice Michelle Caden and the mother of two boys, Sean (*Yagabax*) and James (*Jagabax*), who are of both Nisga’a and Métis ancestry. I grew up in the small town of Smithers, BC, but my Métis heritage stems from Manitoba’s Red River Valley. For this doctoral work, I proudly and consciously position myself as an Indigenous woman and a Métis scholar.

It is important that I acknowledge that I did not grow up immersed in Métis culture; in fact, I did not know that I was Métis until I was eleven years old and my mom, who was adopted by a non-Aboriginal couple when she was six weeks old, found her birth mother and learned that she herself is Métis. For my Mom, meeting her birth mother marked an important and transformative milestone in her life, and it also marked a turning point in my own journey of self-discovery and self-identification.

When I found out that I am Métis, I did not understand what that was going to mean to me as I progressed through the next few decades of my life. In fact, I had no idea what the word “Métis” meant as I had not yet taken Social Studies 10 in high school with the brief overview of the Métis people and Louis Riel. Before meeting my mom’s birth mother in 1989, who is a proud Métis woman, and without understanding anything about our heritage, I thought that I must have had some “Native” ancestry simply based on my physical appearance. Yet when people would ask me what my background was when I was a teenager, I would simply respond that I was “French-Canadian” after I had taken Social Studies 10 and knew of the intermarriage

between the French immigrants and First Nations people. I had also become introduced to the derogatory name “half-breed” in reference to the Métis.

Because I have looked Indigenous my whole life, like my mother and her birth mother, I would usually receive a quizzical look with a response that I was too dark to be French-Canadian. But since the disconnection of adoption and separation influenced the relationship between my mother and her birth family, and essentially her culture, I was not then in a place or space where I knew how to include my Aboriginal heritage in my life even though it was and is always there. I feel that I fall into the category Richardson (2006) describes when saying “many Métis have perceived incongruence or a void in their family history when Métis culture was kept hidden” (p. 67). In my case, I was hiding it from myself, unsure of knowing how to begin to make that association with a history I am now a part of. I now celebrate this important part of my identity.

The Impact of Higher Education. When I started attending university in 1995 at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), I found myself beginning to learn more about my history through the courses I was drawn to and the peer network I had established in places like the First Nations Centre at UNBC. I became more confident about how I should and could include a connected identity in my life, even though I did not grow up immersed in Métis culture or traditions and an understanding that my heritage comes from a mixed background. In addition to the intermarriage within my mother’s cultural background, my father is of European ancestry. So because I did not grow up with my mother’s birth family, I, like Dwayne Donald (2011), experienced a struggle with identifying myself as an Aboriginal person because “I have been led to believe that I cannot live my life as though I am both an Aboriginal person and the grand[child] of European settlers” (p. 2). Through my post-secondary experiences, connecting

myself more with the local Métis community in Prince George, BC, and my marriage to a man of Nisga'a heritage, I experienced a reconciliation and reconnection process.

It is important that I explain how, in addition to learning more about myself through my personal and post-secondary experiences, I built a desire to study Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary and post-secondary institutions more closely. I have been involved with UNBC as a student, volunteer, staff, and faculty member since beginning my post-secondary education.

When I started attending UNBC, the university was in its second official year of full operation; I felt like the university was full of enthusiasm and excitement for all of the initiatives, ideas, and plans to which a young university can look forward. I felt that UNBC was creating a name for itself as a national leader with aspirations to garner a reputation of having unique and innovative approaches to knowledge acquisition and learning, especially in the area of Aboriginal education.

I was an eager undergraduate student who wanted to become more involved in the university community at a political level in my capacity as a student, so I began engaging with organizations that existed on campus at the First Nations Centre, in particular the T'seba Student Society (TSS). I was involved in a formal capacity as a student representative with the UNBC First Nations Studies Program and also as a member of the Senate Committee on First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples (SCFNAP), on which I continue to serve to this day. In graduate school at UNBC, my volunteer commitments increased as I served as a member on the Graduate Student Society representing the College of the Arts, Social, and Health Sciences (CASHS) and sat on various committees that were related to the hiring of senior administrative staff that dealt with budgetary issues and initiatives.

The research for my Master's thesis in First Nations Studies titled *Education transformation: Issues for implementing an Aboriginal choice school in Prince George, BC,*

examined issues to consider when establishing an Aboriginal choice school in Prince George, BC. This research included the opportunity to visit Aboriginal choice schools in Canada and interview people who were instrumental in establishing and maintaining a public school environment that was founded on the philosophy and traditions of Aboriginal peoples and culture. At the same time, I began teaching for UNBC at both the Prince George and regional campuses. When I started teaching for the CCWU program I came to know how unique and important this institution was for the Aboriginal learners and communities it served. Although my doctoral studies are at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, BC, I continue to reside in Prince George and work in an administrative role at UNBC, maintaining the relationships I have built throughout my years as a post-secondary student. I am fortunate to have had opportunities to teach on a sessional basis for the Department of First Nations Studies, the First Nations Centre, and the School of Education at UNBC, as well as to continue to serve in a volunteer capacity on the UNBC Senate and other university and community committees.

I include in this study my relationships in both my professional and personal life with three of the Aboriginal institutions (NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU) that began in the formative years of my academic journey at UNBC. NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU are, or have been, partnered with UNBC in various capacities and my teaching experience led to relationship-building opportunities and growing to understand how important Aboriginal institutions that celebrate IK, cultures, and traditions are to Aboriginal people. The knowledge I have acquired has shifted and grown; I want this research to contribute formally and collaboratively in describing the experiences APIs provide to their students when incorporating IK, culture, and tradition into the academy.

UNBC continues to maintain formal partnerships with WWNI and previously worked with NVIT, but the official closure of the CCWU program has had a significant impact on my understanding of the importance of partnerships and how they can act as an avenue for IK integration. In fact, since the closure of CCWU, different First Nations in the Williams Lake and the Quesnel regions are creating courses that implement aspects of the CCWU program and I believe that it is significant to acknowledge the perseverance and self-determination of these Nations despite the lack of formal partnerships. Nevertheless, the importance of partnerships and programs are a major part of my motivation for showing the importance of Indigenous post-secondary education settings and why I think it is necessary to add more research in this area.

As Maenette Benham (2001) says,

Partnerships, real partnerships, honour the strength, needs and shared values of all partners. Authentic partnerships are important to tribal communities because they demonstrate a concern for the welfare of all community members, the environment, and the language and culture of the people. Tribal colleges and native-serving institutions are important to creating meaningful partnerships due to their regular interaction with constitutions within and outside the tribal community. (p. 21)

I believe from being an Instructor for the CCWU program that the strengths and values of the First Nation members from the communities that the CCWU program served flourished in this environment and created a remarkably unique space and place for IK to be integrated into the academy. I know the same is true for WWNI and NVIT.

Indeed, it is because of my higher learning experiences that I have become more aware of my own culture and have learned about the unique perspectives Indigenous people bring to the academy. The wealth that comes from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge integration is something to be celebrated and included in the fabric of university policy and practice. I am grateful to have had UNBC in place in Northern BC to help foster and nurture this important time of my life.

Significance of Identity. As a Métis woman, I come from a history of people who are considered to be one of the founding people of Canada (Department of Justice, 1982 as cited in Richardson, 2006 p. 1), but it came as no surprise to me to read Cathy Richardson's (2006) statement that "Métis exist at the periphery of the Canadian historical, cultural and social landscape" (p. 1). Sometimes I feel this existence in my personal, professional, and academic life, but I continue my journey to learn more, contribute more, and bring more voice and reason to the world by being ethical and respectful, most of all, by honouring IK.

Although Manulani Meyer (2003a) talks about how "we know with every fiber of our body that knowledge is more than an external experience only" (p. 58), through my own evolution with my identity and cultural connectedness, I struggle with putting some of this knowledge into words and describing it for myself and for others. Weber-Pillwax (2001) explains:

As Indigenous scholars, we want to end up and stay in synthesis. Deconstruction, post structuralism, and postmodernism are concepts and discourses that are simply other topics and steps along the way in our analysis of the thinking. Unless we realize that knowledge in actuality through integration into our own ways of being and knowing and doing, our studies have no life. (p. 169)

It is important to me that my experience through this doctoral research makes some kind of a larger contribution for myself, in addition to those I want this work to benefit. As Meyer (2003a) explains, "Research for us is not simply about asking 'burning questions' we wish to resolve, but rather, we are answering a call to be of use... we must first develop the correct orientation to ourselves and our place" (p. 54). I continue on the journey of developing my orientation to myself and my place in this evolving experience. This journey includes having been married to a Nisga'a man and being adopted, as were our two sons, into a Nisga'a House (House of *Gwiiix*

Maaw) and Clan (*Laxgeek*). Undoubtedly, through the process of completing this research, my understanding of my position and identity have been impacted and deepened.

The significance of my identity as a Métis woman with all the personal and professional experiences I have has deeply influenced every aspect of my approach to the research topic. I believe that my personal and professional experiences with UNBC impact my research design and outcomes. My educational journey in the doctoral program in Educational Studies at UBC has, and is, contributing to this identity journey, and provided me with the opportunity to explore this topic in my research.

In addition, choosing the topic of the promises and challenges of integrating IK at the post-secondary level is an organic extension of a topic I am passionate about. Integrating IK into all academic settings is something I believe is not only necessary, but entirely timely as we move forward in a complex and competing world which would benefit from the foundations and principles of Aboriginal knowledge at all educational levels. While my research from my First Nations Studies Master of Arts (MA) degree looked at these issues for the secondary school level, I know it is important for Indigenous post-secondary institutional experiences to be shared as well.

Purpose of the Study

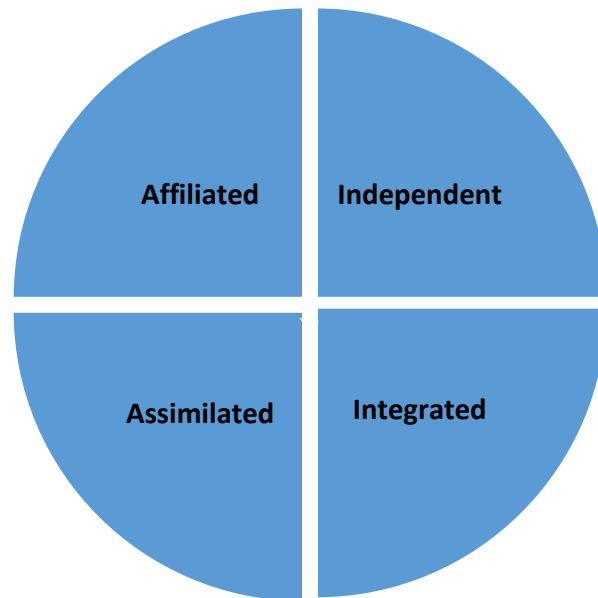
As stated in the title, *Weaving Indigenous Knowledge into the Academy: Promises and Challenges from the Perspective of Three Aboriginal Institutes in British Columbia*, this study provides substantial contributions to the knowledge gap existing around APIs. First, this study describes the benefits and challenges of being engaged in partnerships with mainstream

institutions from the perspective of integrating IK into the academy and the Aboriginal education champions who have been involved in creating the schools. Stemming from this, the second major contribution to filling the knowledge gap is that this research addresses the successes and limitations of incorporating IK in an Aboriginal-based academic environment that is evolving alongside Western-based institutions. Third, this research describes how APIs are impacting students, staff, and the local Aboriginal community through a qualitative and experiential perspective. Finally, by including the different “types” of APIs in British Columbia, a full-fledged college, an affiliated institution, and a community learning centre, much may be gleaned with regard to the advantages and disadvantages associated with each type.

Research Questions

In addition to the three “types” of APIs as described by FNESC (2008), (i.e., a full-fledged college, an affiliated institution, and a community learning centre) the four distinct categories noted by Barnhardt (as cited in RCAP 1996) are relevant to consider in the research questions for this work. The first three categories are assimilative, integrative, and independent. Barnhardt (as cited in RCAP 1996) also adds a fourth category of affiliation to describe “an organizational variation that offers an enhanced degree of autonomy for Aboriginal institutions short of full independence” (p. 478). These categories are appropriate to acknowledge and are complementary to the “types” of APIs determined by FNESC (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institute Categories



Barnhardt as cited in RCAP (1996, p. 478)⁴

As a result of learning about the “types” of APIs from FNESC (2008) and the categorical definitions brought forward by Barnhardt (as cited in RCAP 1996), I developed the following questions to consider when conducting this study on relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, specifically how the types of APIs (i.e. a full-fledged college, an affiliated institution, and a community learning centre) include IK:

1. How do APIs include IK within their programs and course offerings? What are the promises and challenges of including IK in an Aboriginal institute that relies on partnerships with a public post-secondary school?
2. From the perspective of an Aboriginal institution, how can the nature of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in British Columbia be described? What are the challenges and benefits of these institutional relationships?

⁴ Please note that this figure, although adapted from the format in the RCAP (1996) document, has been recreated to provide picture clarity for this dissertation and is not an exact copy of the original.

3. How do APIs address IK, policy development and decision-making, and relevance to Aboriginal communities in their relationships with non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions?

These questions are beneficial for an analysis of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary relationships, promises and challenges of integrating IK, and provide a space to signify how Aboriginal people and their communities continue to move forward to meet the desires as set out by the National Indian Brotherhood 1972 policy paper on *Indian Control of Indian Education* in a strong and self-determining way. Having a broader understanding of these questions brings forward the potential to influence government policy and support the self-determining goals of Aboriginal Nations so that the role of IK in institutes of higher learning moves to becoming a necessary and integral part of academic visioning.

Introduction to My Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The role of theory and my chosen methodology in the research process is important to consider. In this brief introduction to my theoretical and methodological framework (which is discussed more in Chapter Three and Four), I describe how I use a theoretical and methodological position that is inclusive of Indigenous and Critical theoretical perspectives and how foundationally, both my theory and method reflect on the praxis of the theory of Métissage and support the use of the Métis Sash as a conceptual framework.

Métissage. As an Indigenous theoretical paradigm, Métissage has space for both Indigenous and Western theoretical concepts to be integrated. This theoretical foundation, complemented by critical theory, forms the basis of my paradigm. As an Aboriginal graduate student who struggled with relating to academic theoretical orientations, I was drawn to Métissage for its inclusiveness, its representation of strength in diversity, as well as the unique

Indigenous and non-Indigenous qualities that contribute to the premises within Métissage.

Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Donald, Hurren, Leggo and Oberg (2008) write that:

Métissage emerges from the Latin word of *mixtus* meaning “mixed,” primarily referring to cloth of two different fibers... its Greek homonym is *metis*... In various colonial contexts, such as Canada, Métis became a racial category translated as “mixed-blood” or “half-breed” with negative connotations of animals and humans breeding across species. (p. 141, 142)

Despite the negative connotations, this theoretical paradigm creates an opportunity for scholars like myself to celebrate and integrate multiple perspectives within a research study while honouring the unique strength and resiliency of Indigenous cultural congruency and realities. As a research praxis, “Métissage seeks cross-cultural, egalitarian relations, collective contexts, and individual circumstances while resisting 19th century scholarly conventions of discrete disciplines with corresponding rhetorics for conducting and representing research” (Chambers, et al, 2008, p. 142). As a theoretical paradigm, Métissage welcomes an integration of diversity (including non-Indigenous influences) while still enabling a distinct and important inclusion of Indigenous frameworks. For the research purposes of this study, I believe Métissage most appropriately invites the Indigenous and non-Indigenous views and visions presented in this work and also complements the use of the Métis Sash as an overall conceptual design.

There are distinct purposes for utilizing Métissage that fit with my overall research purpose, design, and methods. Donald (2011) writes: “one central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to enact ethical relationality as a philosophical commitment... [to] human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 3). The “relationalities” and knowledge relationships Donald (2011) writes about provide an important opportunity to begin a reflexive process that is respectful, relevant, and meaningful within a

research process that includes multiple views, realities, and experiences that deserve equitable and distinct recognition within appropriate cultural and relational parameters. Donald (2011) also expresses how another “central goal of doing Indigenous Métissage is to bring Aboriginal place-stories to bear on public policy discussions in educational contexts in appropriate and meaningful ways” (p. 10). When contextualized in relation to the Indigenous and Critical theoretical paradigm of this research and my research on APIs, Métissage becomes an ideal form for bringing different perspectives and experiences together.

Ultimately, combining the research praxis of Métissage, Indigenous and Critical theoretical positions from non-Indigenous scholars became crucial for answering my research questions. Moving forward with the determination to contribute to the positionality of IK and Indigenous higher education, the premises of Indigenous and Western theoretical paradigms emerge and merge as relevant and complementary for a thorough study of the topic of the integration of IK into APIs and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary relationships. Chapter Three presents more closely how critical and Indigenous theoretical paradigms are important in shaping this work.

My Indigenous and non-Indigenous theoretical perspectives create the opportunity to consider examining IK in an Indigenous academy and the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous post-secondary institutions in a case study design. The steps I took in this research process are a result of the theoretical platform I started from and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous literature that influenced my research direction. Yin (2012) explains that “elaborating on the theoretical issues related to the objectives of study also can provide useful guidance when you are selecting the case or cases to be studied” (p. 32). Having theoretical and

philosophical underpinnings in both non-Western and Western perspectives influences the multiple layers embedded in this work.

Privileging the Indigenous Voice. Throughout this dissertation, it is my intention to privilege the Indigenous voice in my methods and in the presentation of the perspectives of IK in the academy. I was struck by the article written by Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, ‘Ofamo’uni (2014) entitled, *You’ve Gotta Set a Precedent: Maori and Pacific voices on student success in higher education*, where the authors explicitly state at the outset of their methodology that it was their intention to privilege the Indigenous voice in their work. Mayeda et al. (2014) explain how, in addition to utilizing a community-based participatory approach to research, their “project also relied on kaupapa Maori (Maori ideology) research principles... [with which] Indigenous literature, provide culturally safe spaces for participants, *privilege Indigenous voices*, place the onus of change on Eurocentric institutions, and demonstrate long-term commitment to Indigenous leadership” (p. 4, italics added). Similarly, my theoretical and methodological foundation includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous influences and I hope their contribution to Indigenous academic discourse is obvious and meaningful to Indigenous theories and methods alike. As a result of the positioning presented by Mayeda et al. (2014), I feel the Indigeneity embedded in their research was celebrated and, at the same time, it makes a strong contribution to research surrounding the experiences of Indigenous learners in higher education.

Therefore in this study I will also celebrate and privilege the Indigenous voice. In addition to using Métissage and the Métis Sash as a conceptual framework, I acknowledge the use of Indigenous authors in my secondary source analysis and I highlight the Indigenous identity of my Aboriginal research participants. All of my source authors and participants have a significant and important place in the context of this study, but as an example of Indigenous

scholarly activity, I want the voices and views of Indigeneity privileged in a way to honour the wisdom and knowledges they bring to this research and contribute to a decolonizing scholarly experience.

The Métis Sash as a Methodological Framework. I am proud to celebrate the fact that I have found a way to include a part of my own Métis culture and history in this study through the use of the Métis Sash as a conceptual framework for this research. As Margaret Kovach (2009) explains, “Indigenous research frameworks reference cultural grounding specifically or generally, and permeate the research in a manner consistent with the researcher’s relationship with his or her culture” (p. 116). In my research for my Master of Arts degree (see Robinson, 2007), I also utilized the Métis Sash as a conceptual framework to deliver my findings. The Sash is a useful tool for research dissemination. It not only became useful for the purposes of my research, but resulted in another step forward in terms of weaving together my identity and understanding.

I believe the framework of a Métis Sash is also relevant and complementary to the multiple Indigenous views and world views included in this research (see Figure 2). The Sash, as a metaphorical and conceptual tool of representation, embodies distinct and relevant meanings that can directly relate to the issues of benefits, challenges and the role of IK in post-Secondary education; furthermore, it assists in weaving together the many interconnected threads layered in post-secondary institutional partnerships and initiatives.

Figure 2: Métis Sash



(Métis Youth British Columbia and the Métis Nation BC, n.d., “Métis Sash”)

The colours in the threads of the Sash hold meanings that I can relate to the topics I address in my case study. Although the exact meanings of the colours may change slightly depending on the Métis Nation the Sash is associated with, I am choosing to follow the same colour meanings as used in my previous research. Therefore, the colour associations in this work are: the colour red as symbolic of the history of the Métis people, will be aligned with the represented history (both in primary and secondary format) of all four institutions involved in the study; the colour green, as representative of prosperity, will be used in discussing the benefits, celebration, and impact of the integration of IK at an API; the colours of the Métis flag, blue and white, will be aligned with the role of partnerships in the respective APIs. Finally, the colour black, as representative of a dark period of history for the Métis will be associated with the challenges the institutions face in their relationships in implementing IK, and other matters relevant to the API.

Darren R. Préfontaine (2003) writes about the cultural, spiritual, and communal importance of the Sash, saying:

The sash is considered to be an integral and highly symbolic aspect of Métis identity. No Métis cultural or political event is considered official until somebody arrives proudly wearing his or her sash. In fact, Métis communities often honour the social, cultural or political contributions of talented Métis by awarding them the “Order of the Sash.” Sashes are also awarded to non-Métis as well. For example, on September 24, 1998, the then [Indigenous] President of South Africa and great human rights activist Nelson Mandela, was given a sash by Senator John Boucher of the Métis National Council. In such circumstances, awarding the sash is a tangible means of expressing and preserving Métis identity and culture, while striving towards self-determination. (p. 1)

The Sash has a long history for Métis that encapsulates an evolution of the culture and an establishment of traditions and symbolic virtues. Based on a finger weaving technique of the First Nations people, the Sash, initially woven with fur, evolved over time and when wool became available to the Aboriginal people, colours and designs started to signify different Métis groups and their cultures (Barbeau 1941; Préfontaine 2003).

As a metaphor, the Sash is an excellent way to deliver the findings from this study while honouring my positionality as a Métis person and an Aboriginal researcher. Used as a metaphor by Jane Scudeler (2006) in her writing about Gregory Scofield, she explains: “while sashes appear tightly woven, there are gaps between threads, creating spaces for multiple ideas, and more importantly... multiple identities to shape themselves” (p. 129). Through these gaps, and between the threads, the Sash becomes a process to weave the accumulated knowledge in this study while contributing to decolonization in the research and methodology process.

Using the Métis Sash as a framework emerges from an epistemologically grounded combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views, ideas, and experiences. For this research, the Sash emerged as a relevant and complementary design for the inclusion of all perspectives as belonging. As Rains, Archibald and Deyhle (2000) explain, “while our numbers

in the academy remain small, the epistemologies, paradigms, scholarship, and research interests we bring to the academy offer fresh and insightful perspectives grounded in different traditions than the mainstream” (p. 339). The Métis Sash contributes to that fresh perspective and is equally appropriate when talking about issues relating to all the different Indigenous traditions that the different post-secondary academies seek to enhance and teach, be they Nisga’a, Dakelh, Shuswap, Tsilhqot’in, or other.

Although the Sash is not something that is used by all of the cultures included in this study, I believe that it is still fundamentally relevant and inclusive of honouring and acknowledging an Indigenous approach to research. Frameworks are common in Indigenous research work (cf. Aboloso 2011; Archibald 2008; Atleo 2004; Donald, 2011; Kovach 2009; Meyer 2000) to represent the interconnectedness of life, being, and knowing. For example, Robinson (2008) explains that “as Nisga’a we all share from the Sayt K’ílim Goot (common bowl/one heart)” (p. 8). The Métis Sash, as a representation of interweaving, provides opportunity and space for many Nations, many cultures, and many world views to be interconnected as relevant to each other so that the Sash as a conceptual framework is relevant and useful for all.

Indeed, since Métissage as a theoretical foundation is “committed to interdisciplinarity and the blurring of genres, texts, and identities” (Donald, 2011 p. 142), using the Sash in relation to this theoretical approach is relevant to all the cultures and backgrounds that will be presented in this study. As the case study design will demonstrate, the necessity for multiple realities will not only provide a necessary breadth of perspectives, but will strengthen the rigour and validity of the work.

Using Métissage and the Métis Sash as the foundation for the methodology chosen for this study provides a path that defines an Indigenous position that I hold as a Métis woman and a study design that augments the goals of this research. I know it is important to acknowledge that my positionality influences my research approach, the research relationships I built, and the people I interviewed. Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes: “Most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene...other more critical approaches have made the *insider methodology* more acceptable in qualitative research” (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 137, italics added).

Insider Research. I identify myself as performing my research as an “insider” since I am a Métis woman and a staff and faculty member at UNBC with current engagements and relationships with the institutions and Nations under study. Since my children Sean (*Yagabax*) and James (*Jagabax*) are members of the Nisga’a Nation and the *Laxgeek* (Eagle) clan, the fact that WWNI is a part of this work has specific meaning to me personally and professionally.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) says:

At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking *critically* about their processes, their relationships and the quality of richness in their data and analysis. So too do outsiders, but the major difference is that insiders have to live with the consequences of their research on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so do their families and communities. (p. 137, italics added)

As an Indigenous researcher, what I do must be intimately connected and ultimately beneficial to the communities with which I worked. This consideration is of primary importance as I contemplated the design of this research for this case study. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains:

Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles, relationships, status and position...[t]his makes Indigenous research a highly political activity and while that

is understood by very experienced non-Indigenous researchers and organizations it can also be seen as a threatening activity. (p. 139-140)

By reflecting on my insider/outsider status, I was appropriately able to prepare myself for the research while situating my own perspective through self-location. In preparing myself, I gave time to consider all protocols to adhere to while reminding myself of the importance of the research to the communities and institutions I include in this research. I will elaborate more on this preparedness and the steps that were taken in Chapter Three.

It was important that in order to ensure that the personal relationship I have with WWNI, the professional relationship I had with CCWU, and the absence of a relationship I previously had with NVIT did not affect my findings, I followed the same standards and protocols for ethics, consultation, and recruitment of participants with all three APIs.

Case Study Design. In this brief introduction to my methodological position, I present the definition and boundaries of this case study and describe why a case study was the most useful methodology for highlighting some of promises and challenges of integrating IK into the academy from the perspectives of APIs.

Stake (1995) notes that “case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry” (p. 435). This approach was entirely fitting for my research questions as there is opportunity to create a research design that is reflective and inclusive of and for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and institutional communities involved in this study. With the selection of several sites for examination my case study research consists of a “multiple case” analysis. As defined by Yin (2003),

A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory. (p. 547)

A better understating of the phenomenon of Aboriginal higher learning comes forward with the examination of more than one API in BC. There are similarities and differences between the cases, providing opportunity for further analysis. Stake (1995) also provides a design for a collective case study to incorporate several cases within the same project. For reasons that include the availability of literature and relevance to my particular research design, Yin's 'multiple case' method is what is included here.

Yin (2012, p. 7) notes that while a multiple-case design is usually more difficult to implement than a single-case design, a multiple case study allows the researcher to broaden the bases of analysis so as to analyze within each setting and across settings so that the similarities and differences can be better understood (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 550). Also, with the coverage of the case study broadened the credibility of the research is greater as the breadth of the research allows for a deeper understanding of the topic.

This was a significant consideration in choosing and designing this case study method for assessing the relationships and partnerships Aboriginal institutions have and the promises and challenges they experience in integrating IK in higher learning in BC. It is important that the experiences between the different APIs are acknowledged and that the unique Indigenous foundations of all three of the APIs are explored. Kovach (2009) notes that because of "the expectation that the majority of findings will be presented in some categorical way... qualitative research concerns itself with uncovering knowledge through human subject research via observations and inquiry into phenomena" (p. 132). This method provides a research scope to bring forward the different perspectives and experiences in an honourable and respectful way that will acknowledge the position APIs have with mainstream academic institutions.

Secondary Sources. My primary sources are the people I interviewed at the three APIs and UNBC. However I found that secondary data was useful in the preparation of my interviews and this secondary data will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two as well as throughout the rest of the dissertation. It is useful to be able to reflect upon and draw upon other related literature that is relevant to the people with whom I worked, as noted by Weber-Pillwax (2001, p. 171). Therefore, the secondary source analysis will be apparent in the literature review in Chapter Two where relevant scholarly and government-related documents will be presented. In the later chapters of this dissertation other examples of documents include a partnership agreement between an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institution. Fulford, Daigle, Srevenson, Tolley, Wade and Rahman (2007), in *Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling*, describe how in addition to the interviews completed in the case study:

findings were triangulated with the specific contexts within which the schools operated and relevant documentary evidence such as school policies, mission statements, codes of conduct, organizational charts, budgets, parent and community involvement programs, and professional development records. Available evidence relating to both standardized and non-standardized aspects of student achievement over time was reviewed. (p. 18)

The credibility of the conclusions and recommendations are strengthened with this kind of triangulation.

Chapters Three and Four bring together the words of many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars to support the theoretical and methodological approach of this work. Scholars such as Abolomon (2011); Archibald (2008); Atleo (2004, 2011); Battiste (1998, 2013); Battiste & Barman (1995); Battiste et al (2002a), Battiste et al (2002b); Cole (2002); Deloria & Wildcat (2001); Donald (2011); Ermine (1995a, 1995b); Kovach (2009); Kirkness & Barnhardt (1991); Meyer, (2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b); Nakata (2007), Pihama (2005); Robinson, A.

(2008); Robinson, R. (2007); Sefa Dei (2000); Smith, G. (2000a, 2000b, 2005); Smith, L (1999); and Wilson (2008) write about Indigenous theory and the role that IK and orality have in an Indigenous research framework. I have benefited from reading their work since these Indigenous scholars have effectively positioned an academic presentation of how IK includes theoretical and methodological considerations that are important to my research.

In addition, scholars like Canada (2012); Castellano, M. Brandt (2000a); Castellano (2000b); Chambers et al. (2008); Haig-Brown (2000, 2008); and Kuokkanen (2007) realize that there is much to be gained when including and reflecting on an Indigenous research theoretical framework which supports an integrative approach. Finally, including and acknowledging the role of Indigenous people, identity, and culture when approaching studies such as this one is the most effective way of providing the breadth and depth to make IK research effective and relevant (Fixico 2003; Grande 2008; Hampton 1995, 2000; Iwama et al. 2009; Pidgeon 2008; Weber-Pillwax 1999, 2001).

From an integrative approach that acknowledges the liberating and progressive movements that can be realized through education, scholars like Denzin & Lincoln (2005); Freire (2009/1970, 2005/1974), Hart (2010); Kincheloe & Steinberg (2008); Lincoln and González y González (2008); and Lincoln & Guba (2000) use a Critical theoretical approach for achieving a liberating premise. Fook (2002) also uses integrative tenants of language, power, discourse, and identity to show the distinct relationship between decolonization and a Critical theoretical framework. Their positions have strengthened my methodological approach.

Interviewing as a Method. As a major part of the methodological design, I conducted interviews for this case study with 22 participants. The interview style was primarily semi-structured with open-ended questions. According to Berg (2004), the semi-structured interview

is located somewhere between the extremes of the completely standardized and the completely unstandardized interview structures (p. 80). Yin (2009b) explains that “diminished structure permits open-ended interviews, if properly done, to reveal how case study interviewees construct reality and think about situations, not just giving answers to specific questions” (p. 264).

Seidman (2006) believes that:

The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process. (p. 10)

I understand from Seidman that the insights in this investigation are strengthened if the people being interviewed are “key” individuals or members of the organization or community. It is important that this research is grounded in a position of Indigeneity. My interview participants were selected from the three distinct categories that I feel best answer my research questions.

The nature of their involvement with the API deepens the perspective they provide to the research questions. These categories include:

1. A representative from the API who holds (or has held) an Administrative leadership role with the API (e.g. President, Chief Executive Officer, or Program Coordinator).
2. A community representative who is (or has been) involved either formally or informally with the API as staff or faculty (e.g. Instructor, Elder, Advisor, or guest speaker).
3. A current or former student from the API.

For questions one and two, I interviewed at least two people from the APIs. For question three, I interviewed at least one person from each institution. Chapter Four will further elaborate on who was selected from each institution, and why. An explanation of the research ethics process and steps taken to adhere to specific community protocols is presented in Chapter Four. There, I also expand on some of the opportunities and limitations I experienced during my

research experiences. Next, this Introduction touches on an important aspect of my research and writing: how this study can contribute to filling a knowledge gap.

Contribution to Filling the Knowledge Gap

This study is significant for many important reasons that are relevant to both mainstream academic institutions as well as APIs. Reflections on the experiences of these APIs contribute to an increased knowledge base about where the opportunities and limitations exist so that policy and programmatic strategies can be created to effectively mitigate and improve the way such relations are created and maintained. Aboriginal Nations that are considering creating a place of formal higher learning in their own communities deserve to know where the benefits and challenges of creating an API are so they can learn how other APIs have mitigated those circumstances. An examination of different types of APIs in BC and across Canada has not been found in the literature; my study thereby fills a scholarship void that is important in Aboriginal Education. The integration of IK into mainstream academic discourse continues to evolve and an analysis of APIs in BC is significant for this reason. Other public post-secondary institutions may benefit from the experiences of APIs regarding the use of IK, since many public institutes have taken on the ‘Indigenizing the academy’ theme.

Outline of Dissertation

To conclude this introductory chapter of my dissertation, I provide a description of the chapters to follow. In Chapter Two, titled, “Selecting the Strands: Aboriginal Post-Secondary

Policy and Institutional Design”, I provide an overview of some of the literature that relates to Aboriginal education, Aboriginal post-secondary Policy in British Columbia, APIs and tribal colleges, the role of partnerships, and the APIs included in this research (NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU). In addition, I include an overview of UNBC since it has been so intertwined with my experiences with APIs and is a good example of a comprehensive university that serves BC that has, or has had, partnerships with the APIs included in this study. In Chapter Three, titled “Placing the Threads: Theoretical Positioning and Qualitative Design”, I present a detailed analysis of my chosen theory for this work. In Chapter Four, which I have called “The Contextual Tapestry: Research Methods and Study Framework”, I provide an in-depth description of the research methods utilized in this research, including ethics, community protocols, my engagement with research participants, and describe how the framework of the Métis Sash influences how the data is presented in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five presents “Weaving Perspectives from Leaders, Elders, Students, and Instructors at Aboriginal Institutes”, with the words from my interviews woven in alignment with the research questions asked. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with “Interconnecting Threads and Weaving Indigenous Knowledge: Conclusions and Future Work”, and I offer my summary analysis and ideas for future work I see relevant to the communities I have worked with and beyond.

Since I began my doctoral program in 2008, I have been privileged to be part of a scholarly experience I never imagined I would have had the opportunity to complete. I deeply value the relationships I have built through graduate school and I am so pleased to finally share this work.

Chapter 2: Selecting the Strands: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Policy and Institutional Design

Using Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources, this chapter presents an overview of some of the literature that is important to consider when studying the role of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in Aboriginal post-secondary institutes (APIs) in British Columbia (BC). I begin with a presentation of some of the key advocacy organizations that are leaders for Aboriginal learners and IK integration in educational systems in Canada and present the sources that describe a brief history of Aboriginal education and higher learning for Indigenous people. The review moves forward to discuss provincial and national Aboriginal post-secondary policy and the potential role of partnerships between APIs and mainstream institutions before presenting the literature available on the three APIs included in this study and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). Finally, this chapter concludes with an overview of some of the themes that emerge from the literature that continue to tell the story I want to share about the role of IK in APIs.

What the Literature Tells Us

At the outset of this literature review, I want to note that while there are substantial resources available on the topic of Aboriginal education, Aboriginal learners, Indigenous Knowledge (IK), and the position of Aboriginal students in higher education, there is less literature available on the topic of creating APIs that implement IK as a scholastic foundation. In

particular, there are marked gaps in the literature available to describe some of the challenges and opportunities an API may experience when integrating IK as part of academic discourse. Nonetheless, there are still important sources to acknowledge and consider.

I want to provide some context and background to three educationally-related Aboriginal organizations that provide relentless support and advocacy for Aboriginal-based learning and are referenced frequently throughout the literature review and also in other chapters. They are: the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (AIC), the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), and the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). As important contributors to the literature about Indigenous education, I want to provide individual descriptions of these organizations so their relevancy throughout this study is apparent and obvious. The breadth of meaningful resources provided by the AIC, FNESC, and IAHLA are interwoven throughout this dissertation.

Aboriginal Institutes Consortium. The first organization I would like to present is the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (AIC). Although the AIC originated in Ontario, the AIC has a nation-wide influence as a result of the consortium's tremendous achievements to be a tireless advocate and resource for the support and inclusion of First Nations higher learning by Aboriginal-based organizations. AIC says on its home page:

The AIC was established in 1994 as a way to address the issues that affect Aboriginal owned and operated education and training institutes. The consortium's seven member institutes are committed to supporting and developing programs and institutions that successfully meet the needs of First Nations people. (Aboriginal Institutes Consortium, n.d., "Home")

The AIC is supported by the Chiefs of Ontario and includes the following seven institutes as members: Anishinabek Educational Institute; First Nations Technical Institute; Iohahi:io Akwesasne Adult Education; Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute; Oshki-Pimache-o-win

Education and Training Institute; and Six Nations Polytechnic (AIC. n.d., “Members”). Each of the seven member institutes describe their intentions and goals of creating culturally relevant and meaningful higher learning experiences for Aboriginal learners through collaboration with government as well as other higher learning organizations.

Working with federal and provincial governments, the AIC continues to advocate for the recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal institutes within a broad context where funding and sustainability can be realized. As described on the AIC web page:

The consortium plays an instrumental role in driving and in some cases, setting the Aboriginal institutes agenda at regional, national and international levels through the development of strategic relationships and supportive networks. The consortium has succeeded in raising the awareness and profiles of Aboriginal institutions, learners and communities through ongoing advocacy. (Aboriginal Institute Consortium. n.d., “About Us”)

In addition to having seven member institutions deliver key programs in APIs, the AIC celebrates the fact that in the drive for the pursuit of recognition and learning excellence the AIC has been instrumental in being a voice for APIs in Canada and beyond.

As a consortium that formally documents its facilitations with collaborative efforts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, the literature the AIC publishes is necessary to consider in this study especially since the premises of Indigeneity and community are obvious threads in the goals and missions of AIC’s work.

First Nations Education Steering Committee. Another key organization that supports First Nations learning and Aboriginal-controlled education is the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) in the Province of BC. As described on the FNESC home page:

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is an independent society led by a strong and diverse board of about 100 First Nations community representatives. FNESC is committed to improving education for all First Nations students in BC. (First Nations Education Steering Committee. n.d., “Who we are”)

FNESC was established in 1992 and strategically works with government, community, and Aboriginal organizations to effectively communicate the goals and desires of Aboriginal people and Nations regarding education. I know from my own experiences working as an Aboriginal Education Worker for School District No. 57 in Prince George that the conference and professional development opportunities offered by FNESC to those who are interested in knowing more about the rapidly changing landscape of Aboriginal Education in British Columbia provide an effective and valuable resource for knowledge sharing, networking, and communication with an overarching goal of improving the success and experience of Aboriginal learners. In addition, the growing body of literature being published by FNESC for public use makes a marked contribution to filling the literature gaps so Aboriginal voice and thought are brought to the forefront for consideration in making strong contributions to policy development.

Some of the accomplishments made by FNESC over the years include important and relevant contributions to APIs and IK. In particular, FNESC co-founded the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group which includes representation from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada⁵, the Métis Nation of BC, the Ministry of Advanced Education, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, the Indigenous and Adult Higher Learning Association, and Service Canada to support higher learning for Aboriginal people (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d., “A post-secondary resource: Aboriginal learning links”). Through collaborative contributions, the partner groups are able to work together to initiate relevant and meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal people.

⁵ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) was formerly known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and AANDC is how this organization is included on the BC Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners Group home page.

A creative and effective example of the accomplishments of creating this partner group is the establishment of *Aboriginal Learning Links*, a portal website intended to “empower student and frontline student advocates with the tools and knowledge to effectively plan post-secondary opportunities” by providing resource information on everything from financial support and housing to employment services and childcare (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, n.d.). These kinds of support and resource-related initiatives from accessible advocacy groups like FNEESC are important to reference and include when considering APIs and IK as they represent Aboriginally-relevant educational desires in a respectful and inclusive way.

Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association. The final advocacy group I would like to provide a brief description of is the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). IAHLA is a strong Aboriginal-based non-profit Society that gives voice to 38 member APIs in British Columbia (<http://iahla.ca/about-iahla>. Available January 11, 2015). As described on the IAHLA home page, the mission of IAHLA is to:

Support quality post-secondary educational institutes that leverage Indigenous language, culture and knowledge to create adaptable, competent, skilled citizens who are able to contribute to local, provincial, and national advancement. (Indigenous and Adult Higher Learning Association. n.d., “About”)

By acting as a portal of communication, IAHLA is able to share important information about Aboriginal higher learning (including conferences, meetings, and workshops) while facilitating relevant research projects for IAHLA institutions and Aboriginal learners (Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association. n.d., “About”).

The exceptional and admirable leadership within the IAHLA Society includes an eleven member Board of Directors⁶ that seek to advance the positioning and support of Aboriginal-

⁶ I want to acknowledge that two of my interview participants, Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet and Deanna Nyce sit on the Board of Directors for the Indigenous and Adult Higher Learning Association and Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet serves as the Board Chair.

based higher learning throughout the Province of BC. As stated in the IAHLA (2007)

Framework document:

Aboriginal institutes occupy an important but not widely recognized **third sector** in adult and post-secondary education in British Columbia, distinct and separate from the public and private sectors. The combination of their Aboriginal character, their expertise in adult education, and their attention to individual support make Aboriginal institutes important both within their local communities and in the Province as a whole. Through the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, local communities and the provincial and federal governments can coordinate their recognition and support for this third sector, allowing it to flourish and develop. (p. 20, emphasis in original)

The relentless drive by IAHLA to continue to see the mission of the organization realized provides an invaluable resource when studying the opportunities and challenges facing Aboriginal post-secondary institutions (APIs) and the integration of IK.

All three of the Aboriginal-based institutions included in this study are, or have been, a member institute of the IAHLA Society. Therefore it is imperative that the work of IAHLA is reflected within the context of the literature associated with this research and analysis of the study undertaken.

Aboriginal Education

In Canada, Aboriginal education is marked by a history that dramatically impacts the contemporary realities Aboriginal learners experience with primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. The failure of Mission Schools, Residential Schools, and struggling governmental policies of integration created an opportunity for Aboriginal people to press for the reconsideration of appropriate educational methods for Aboriginal learners. This literature review acknowledges the impact of educational realities for young Aboriginal students, but primarily focuses on higher learning and the processes and policies that impact adult Aboriginal

learners in BC. What has happened in Canada as a Nation is important to consider and as such, will be acknowledged here through an examination of the emergence of APIs.

History

Eber Hampton (1995) provides five definitions of First Nations education that can be reflected on when thinking about the history of Aboriginal education and, in particular, its development since colonization. From Hampton’s (1995) reflection, a summary of these definitions include:

Table 1: Definitions of First Nations Education

Traditional education	The forms of education practiced by First Nations before non-First Nations schools were introduced
Education for assimilation	Non-First Nations education applied to First Nations with the goal of assimilation
Education by First Nations	Education administered and/or delivered by First Nations using non-First Nations curriculum, methods, and structures
Education for self-determination	First Nations-controlled education with the goal of self-determination
First Nations education <i>sui generis</i>	First Nations education as a thing of its own kind: based on the cultures and spirit of First Nations, designed and implemented by First Nations

Hampton (1995), p. 5 – 10.

It is important that in regards to the first two categories presented by Hampton (1995), I reflect on some of the historical context of Aboriginal Education in Canada. This includes traditional First Nations education and then Residential Schools. The paragraphs below in regards to traditional education, mission school, and Residential Schools first appeared in the thesis I wrote for my Master of Arts degree in First Nations Studies at UNBC in 2007 and I believe they have relevance here and support Hampton’s (1995) first two definitions:

Traditional First Nations Education. The traditional education of Indigenous peoples differs greatly from the education that was imposed on them after colonization. Although Aboriginal people did not have formal schools, they possessed a form of education that was a vital component of their society. J.R. Miller describes that traditional Indian education “aims, first, to explain to the individual members of a community who they are, who their people are, and how they relate to other peoples and to the physical [and spiritual] world” (Miller, 1996, p.15). Likewise, Gregory Cajete explains that, “American Indian education historically occurred in a holistic social context that developed the importance of each individual as a contributing member of a social group” (Cajete 1994, p. 26). Therefore, in this system of tutelage, Aboriginal people were exposed to various educational standards that would meet the needs of the community and their Nations as a whole.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996) determined that there is indeed a North American Intellectual tradition that exists in the minds of Aboriginals that has evolved from past instruction and education within their communities. The Commission states: “Elders approach all issues through the traditional teachings of their culture, teachings seem to emanate from the creator” (p. 113). In this relationship with the Creator, Aboriginal people were instructed as to how they should relate to the world and all other beings around them. Elder Roger A. Jones describes how:

In all of our teachings, your spirit lives forever. It is only using this vessel for the period of time it is on this realm on Mother Earth. And when we were placed here on Turtle Island, the Creator promised us for ever that life and love. He promised us all of those things that we would ever need to go to that beautiful place. Everything you will ever need is there for you medicine... food...water. (Canada 1996, p. 114)

In this worldview, Aboriginal people had a highly developed social consciousness and responsibility (Kawagley 1995, p. 8). Because of this, Aboriginal people were able to identify themselves as a unique people with a unique system of learning.

Indeed, Aboriginal people had their own customs, rules and practices for the transmission of their knowledge and heritage in order for their society to have strength and survive (Battiste/Henderson 1996, p. 88). J.R. Miller states, “For all these peoples, instruction was suffused with their deeply ingrained spirituality, an invariable tendency to relate the material and personal in their lives to the spirits and the unseen” (Miller 1996, p. 16). Therefore traditionally, Indigenous students saw themselves, their heritage and their worldview as a part of their educational system and worked within their culture to learn the values of their society. Elizabeth Furniss explains,

Instead, children learned the skills they needed to survive, and the beliefs, values, and codes of behaviour appropriate to their society by a trial-and-error process of observing and imitating adult behaviour and by listening to stories in which ethical concepts and morals were imbedded. (Furniss 1995, p. 48)

In a system of education that required lifelong learning, Aboriginal people were required to always be looking and listening to learn (Miller 1996, p. 17). Games and storytelling were essential to the transmission of knowledge. For instance, Miller describes how “the learning of vocational skills was accomplished mainly by childhood games or by observation and copying of adult behavior” (Miller 1996, p. 37). Miller continues to say that “a family’s store of myths and legends taught, gently but effectively, what was and what was not acceptable conduct by the youngest members of the community” (Miller 1996, p. 18). Undoubtedly, the success and survival of Aboriginal peoples proves the effectiveness of this sort of education.

This form of teaching governed Aboriginal nations for thousands of years without schools and was an important aspect of their culture. Reflecting the economies and social

structures found within Aboriginal cultures prior to the coming of Europeans, there was an ecologically based emphasis on reciprocity, harmony and balance that connected the human, natural and spiritual realms with each other (Kawagley 1995, p. 10). Miller states that “perhaps the most important features of their educational system were its lack of an institution and educational structure and the absence of coercion and routine” (Miller 1996, p. 38). Indeed, once Canadian policy began to exert its influence on Aboriginal education, all of the schooling Aboriginal people were once used to, would dramatically change.

Mission Schools. Mission schools were the first schools to dramatically impact First Nations people. The government decided that the initial way education could be used to alter the Native person was through missionaries. Robin Fisher notes “missionaries had developed quite deliberately and consciously thought out plans of acculturation for the Indians...they came with plans to alter Indian society totally” (Fisher 1992, p. 120). The government and Indian Affairs welcomed their motives as it was through the mission that First Nations people would become Christian, civilized, and educated (Armitage 1995, p. 96). Jean Barman describes, “Education was perceived as the primary vehicle in the civilizing and advancement of the Indian race” (Barman, Hébert & McCaskill 1986, p. 5). When a First Nations person became a Roman Catholic, an Anglican or a free church member, Indian Affairs recorded this information and used it for enfranchisement purposes. In this way, churches became an integral aspect of Indian Affairs and played a significant role in the dissolution of Native society through education as assimilation.

The early schooling established by missionaries resembled what was available to Britain’s poorest population (Barman, Hebert & McCaskill 1986, p. 5). Many Native students resisted or rejected much of the Mission school’s programs and preferred to retain and practice

their own traditional dances and gatherings (Gresko 1992, p. 88). Jacqueline Gresko examined two early mission schools, Qu'Apelle (North West Territories) and St. Mary's (British Columbia), and concluded that there was indeed a negative reaction by some Native people in regards to the teachings. She stated:

though some Indians welcomed the missionary concern for their well-being in a time of government and societal indifference...Native people were not aware of the increasingly assimilationist government regulations for school staff, nor the financial burdens borne by missionary groups to keep schools open. (Gresko 1992, p. 97)

However, regardless of these negative reactions, mission schools carried on. Robin Fisher describes how William Duncan, when given the mission of converting the Tsimshian people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia, had one objective: "like most missionaries, Duncan came among the Indians to teach rather than to learn and convert rather than conserve" (Fisher 1992, p. 132). In the 1860s Duncan was typical in his assimilation objectives. Through the following rules, one can see how Duncan's educational policies were not aligned with the culture of the Tsimshian; they were:

1. to give up their *Ahlied* [Shamans] or Indian devilry
2. to cease calling in conjurers when sick
3. to cease gambling
4. to cease giving away their property for display [having potlatches]
5. to cease painting their faces
6. to cease drinking intoxicating liquor
7. to rest on the Sabbath
8. to attend religious instruction
9. to send their children to school
10. to be cleanly
11. to be industrious
12. to be peaceful
13. to be liberal and honest in trade
14. to build neat houses
15. to pay the village tax

Fisher (1992, p. 142)

Obviously, educating Native people through missionaries included far more than learning about Christianity. In the case of William Duncan, it included learning about Victorian order and regularity as missionaries worked within the framework of governmental coercion established during the settlement period.

The mission schools were an important component of educating Aboriginals to follow the “proper” way of life, according to the government of Canada. As Christianity began to develop foundations within the Aboriginal communities, the traditional schooling of Aboriginal children was becoming replaced with a foreign form of instruction that was radically different from what First Nations people were used to. However, more importantly, mission schools represented the first step in segregating Aboriginal children from the tutelage of their elders and also from the tutelage provided to the rest of Canadian society. Elizabeth Furniss described, “The increasing moral authority that the missionaries yielded over Native people was part of a more general process of domination of Native societies by colonial forces” (Furniss 1995, p. 45). Beginning their education with blatant discrimination and condemnation of their language and culture in the form of mission schools only became worse when Aboriginal people began to endure the ‘Residential School experience.’

Residential Schools. After mission schools were established, the *Indian Act* and the administrative components of Indian Affairs changed. Therefore, so too did the education of Canada’s First Nations peoples. Armitage describes, “The Residential School was the central institution through which Canadian child welfare policy was conducted during the assimilation period” (Armitage 1995, p. 109). It was determined that mission day schools were inadequate to the task of assimilation because of the influence that parents exerted when young students would return from class and the fact that children were still able to be closely associated with their

culture (Armitage 1995, p. 103). By 1879, the Davin Report would become the basis for the establishment and implementation of Residential Schools. Jean Barman explains:

The Davin Report approved American practice with the proviso that schools be operated so far as possible by missionaries, who had already demonstrated their commitment to ‘civilizing’ Canada’s Indians. The Department of Indian Affairs accepted the proposal...Preference was given to the creation of large industrial Residential Schools located away from reserves, and, a few years later, to Boarding schools nearer reserves for younger children. There, attendance would be ensured, and all aspects of life, from dress to use of English language to behavior, would be carefully regulated. (Barman in Armitage 1995, p. 103)

It becomes evident that collaboration between the church and state was very close when concerning the education of Indian children. Four churches were involved in the operation of the schools on a contractual basis with the federal government: Roman Catholic orders, Anglican, Presbyterian and United. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches prior to union in 1925 were each involved in Residential Schools, but this eventually became part of the mission work of the United Church.

The church received operating grants from the federal government, enabling the church authority to become larger and more organized than it would have been without donations. Because of this, the church worked very closely with state officials and looked upon the Indian Agents for the ultimate curriculum they would practice in their schools. Armitage notes “as far as the church was concerned, the approach to First Nations education as expressed by the Indian Agent...was not unwelcome, for its objective was to establish its own form of ‘Christian citizenship’” (Armitage 1995, p. 105). This curriculum of ‘Christian citizenship’, according to the authorities at the time, would enable Indian children to enter the world as civilized beings once detached from their traditional culture.

However, aside from legislative policy that was obviously racist and oppressive to these young children, the most devastating thing about Residential Schools was and is what actually

occurred because of their implementation. Elizabeth Furniss (1995) explained, “The physical isolation of children from their families and communities was the central ingredient of the Residential School system” (p. 51). Here, children who spoke only their Native language and ate only traditional foods were taken from their families to enter a world that was totally unfamiliar. As Furniss (1995) explained, “The Oblates committed themselves to provide the children with Board, clothing, care, education, and training in two or three trades” (p. 50). Therefore their experience at Residential School was not only to teach them academics, but skills that would assist having First Nations people “fit” into Canadian society (Furniss 1995, p. 50).

While the children were away from their parents, communities were left with a gap of school age children to care for. Celia Haig-Brown (1988) noted:

Alcohol also became a force in the lives of some families. Some parents, heartbroken at the loss of their children and objects of continuing oppression from all aspects of the dominant society escaped these pressures with alcohol. (p. 123)

Imagine a community without children, a community with adults who felt unneeded and unworthy of being able to provide their children with an adequate educational experience. Celia Haig-Brown (1988) gives an example of a mother who “would have on the one hand, the children pleading to stay home, and on the other hand, the government and church insisting that she send them [the children] to school” (p. 123). Haig-Brown (1988) continues to describe how suicide became a reality as the Residential School experience:

can be seen as a contributing factor to people’s confusion over values and the meaning of life, and symptomatic of the social attempts which may lead to such [suicidal] attempts. (p. 123)

While children were away and communities were left parted from their young family members, traditional ways of life were eroded.

Many children that left their communities to attend Residential School experienced harsh discipline, horrific sexual and mental abuse and lost much of their individual freedom and personal control. As a “student” in this educational institution, these young children were subject to teachings that taught them that their way of life, culture and language were barbaric and savage. As described by a Residential School survivor in Celia Haig Brown’s book (1988), called “Resistance and Renewal”:

At the Indian Residential School, we were not allowed to speak our own language; we weren’t allowed to dance, sing because they told us it was evil. It was evil for us to practice any of our cultural ways. (p. 58)

In an investigation of the Williams Lake Industrial School in the early 1900’s because of a death of one of the children, Elizabeth Furniss (1995) described the overt feelings of government officials towards Native children and the societies they come from after students began to run away from Residential School:

On initial investigation, Indian Agent Bell claimed that the students had no good reason for running away; rather, it reflected racial characteristics of the Indians. It was in their “wild nature” to resist discipline...Native peoples, they believed, needed to be “tamed” and “civilized.” (p. 78)

The schools made Aboriginal children feel “different” and inadequate and only instilled a stronger feeling of alienation and isolation from this new society that was supposed to be providing them an education.

Contradicting everything that they had ever learned, while being at home with their families, the Residential School experience disrupted generations of Aboriginal learning. Loss of identity, language, and being taught a culture that is not congruent with their own, made this form of schooling detrimental to Indigenous well-being. Celia Haig-Brown (1988) describes the

following in reference to language retention:

For some the transition back to their native language was smooth. As time went on, more of the parents only spoke English in response to their own training in the Residential School - training which convinced them that their language had no place in Euro-Canadian society... (p. 93)

In regard to state policy and Aboriginal education, it was because of government law that Residential Schools were executed in the first place. In a book written by Chrisjohn, Young and Maraum (1997), a spokesperson from the Department of Indian Affairs is quoted as saying:

One thing the Canadian government failed to recognize was the social implications of their policies...in terms of the things that have happened to Native peoples as a result of the Residential School era. (p. 11)

The role of Residential Schools in the suppression of First Nations culture continued into the 1960s. Armitage (1995) explains,

in the end, the Residential Schools did not prepare First Nations children for life in any type of community; not for the First Nations community from which their parents originally came; not for the urbanized white communities to which some tried to go; and not for the idealized Christian community which existed only in the minds of the missionaries. (p. 112)

Thus, the attendance of Indian children in Residential Schools began to drop significantly in the 1970s and Canada began to shift to the “integration” of children in the public school program where the Child Welfare System they believed would ensure equal education opportunities for Aboriginal students. But the impact of Residential Schools on Aboriginal communities is enormous. Not only was this form of schooling (like the mission schools) a method of instruction that made the Aboriginal child feel inferior, alienated, and isolated from the rest of society, but an entire generation was forced to surrender their culture all for the sake of receiving a very limited and inadequate Western education. These feelings of being outside the “normal” system of education would carry forward as Aboriginal people became integrated into public

institutions. Yet Celia Haig-Brown (1988) describes:

Negotiated solely with the federal and provincial governments...attendance of Native children in the public school system...was expected to serve as the answer to Native children's educational needs. (p. 66)

Aboriginal students who attend off-reserve schools⁷ remain to be “integrated” into the system that presently operates in Canada... Celia Haig-Brown (1993) notes, “While there was little overt prediction to the effects of integration, it appears that people assumed that teaching the same content in the same ways to Native and non-Native students would provide their children with the same opportunities for employment and further education” (p. 130) (Robinson, 2007, p. 37 - 47). The system of “integration” has encountered some marked changes in the public system that will be described below.

Education by and for First Nations

There has been a significant shift from trying to extinguish IK and Indigenous ways of learning from the Residential School days that applies both to elementary and high school education. I will describe the creation of Aboriginal choice schools for Indigenous youth before proceeding on to address how post-secondary schools are now seeking to include IK in their curriculums.

Although most primary and secondary school age Aboriginal children are currently attending the same schools as non-Aboriginal children in a Child Welfare system that was

⁷ It is important to note that in 2012, Saskatchewan Education Minister Russ Marchuk estimates the funding gap between provincial and reserve schools remains to be as high as 40 per cent per student ultimately impacting graduation and employment rates. In addition the federal government has committed \$15 million to “equalize some school funding” for Aboriginal children in BC (Sniderman, A. S. 2012. Available August 5: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/an-education-underclass/>).

developed by the Ministry of Education and the Department of Indian Affairs to “integrate” Aboriginal students, there are also many examples where primary or secondary education is now being taught by and for Aboriginal learners. To name a few, this includes *Nusdeh Yoh*, the Aboriginal choice elementary school in Prince George, BC, Amiskwaciy Academy, the Aboriginal choice secondary school in Edmonton, Alberta, and Children of the Earth Aboriginal choice high school in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These latter two schools are described in Robinson (2007). *Nusdeh Yoh*, the Aboriginal choice elementary school in Prince George, BC opened in 2012.

Given this difficult history of Residential Schools, it is not surprising that APIs are highly useful for higher post-secondary learning for Aboriginal people and are complementary to the “Education by First Nations”, “Education for self-determination”, and “First Nations education *sui generis*” categories described by Eber Hampton (1995). In fact, much of the history of APIs in Canada is rooted in the reality that through strong decolonizing efforts, Indigenous people have demonstrated a persistent desire for management and access to education on their own terms after the experience of Mission Schools and Residential Schools. When First Nations people were given a legal and educational voice about how education should be enacted within the Canadian State, there was a distinct and uniform response from Aboriginal community leaders.

The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB, now Assembly of First Nations) expressed in 1972 that First Nations people want control over First Nations education. The NIB (1972) document states:

Indian parents must have FULL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONTROL OF EDUCATION. The Federal Government must adjust its policy and practices to make possible the full participation and partnership of Indian people in all decisions and activities connected with the education of Indian children. (p. 27, emphasis in original)

This expression came after the uncertainty surrounding Aboriginal education and the obvious failure of the Residential School system and Trudeau's attempt in 1969 in the "White Paper", a federal government initiative that was intended to ensure an absolute and final step in the process of assimilating the Indigenous population of Canada. The reaction of Aboriginal people to the "White Paper" resulted in the delivery of a strong message from Aboriginal people that spoke about their desires of education for their people, communities, and Nations. The NIB words set the tone for future considerations of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational frameworks that would be initiated and exercised by Aboriginal people (Stonechild, 2006).

Some of the first examples of First Nations people taking control of their education at a post-secondary level came in the late 1960s with the creation of the Native Education Centre (NEC) in 1969 and the occupation of Blue Quills School in Alberta and the Qu'Appelle Residential School in Saskatchewan, resulting in First Nations people establishing the Blue Quills First Nations College in 1971 (Haig-Brown 1995, Stonechild 2006). The AIC (2005) describes, in addition to Blue Quills, the establishment in 1977 of the Yellowhead Tribal College in Edmonton, Alberta, and how "these institutions began by offering upgrading programs, adult training programs, and other courses identified as pertinent by members of their communities" (p. 28). This is powerful since all mainstream academies that have associations with APIs should include programming ladders that reflect the identified gaps visible in Indigenous educational journeys.

The emergence of these kinds of post-secondary schools became fuel for further aspirations of other First Nations in Canada to begin developing and offering programs that were relevant and useful to their people and communities which resulted in the emergence of the three "types" of Aboriginal institutes as describes by FNEESC (2008). This includes a full-fledged

college, an affiliated institution, and a community learning centre.⁸ Although these institutes utilize Western educational formats, they are inclusive of language, culture and spirit and are distinct in this regard. The latter part of this chapter focuses on the self-determining efforts of Aboriginal people to be formally included and acknowledged at the level of higher education within post-secondary schools.

Higher Learning. In the 1995 publication titled, *Taking Control: Power and Contradiction in First Nations Adult Education*, Celia Haig-Brown describes how after the failure of the Residential School system and the struggles of integration for First Nations children within mainstream schools, “children’s education showed little improvement [and] the need for adult education increased” (p. 71). Haig-Brown discusses how First Nations people saw that it was not only the education of children that should be of significant importance to the missionaries and government officials involved in providing educational opportunities, but that “First Nations people... saw *adult* education as most important to their increasing involvement with non-Native people” (p. 51, emphasis in original).

Hampton (2001) writes about the responsibility of the Crown to ensure the following three things when considering Aboriginal education:

1. That there are schools established for Aboriginal learners;
2. That there are equal educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, and
3. That there is *choice* available for Aboriginal people in education. (p. 211, emphasis added)

In regards to higher learning, Hampton (2001) sees a complementary relationship between self-determination for Aboriginal people and the role of universities in facilitating that process.

⁸ The three types of Aboriginal Institutes as described by FNEESC (2008) were discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

Hampton (2001) explains:

Our students and communities should have the choice of benefitting from what provincial universities have to offer, but Indian control of Indian education is not just for elementary and secondary education. It is even more important that we seize our responsibility for university education as an expression of self-government. We have the responsibility to articulate the knowledge, philosophies and the ideals of our living cultures. We have the responsibility to give the best that we have to our youth, both in terms of our own knowledge and experience and in terms of support for their own learning. (p. 213)

It is noteworthy to add that institutes of higher education assist in creating the foundation of bureaucrats, administrators, consultants, and experts who may have a dramatic influence on our daily lives in the creation of policy and governance function (Hampton 2001, p. 215). Having Aboriginal people included in these positions of influence is essential. Knowing that Aboriginal people have access and success in a system of higher education is something that garners much attention from politicians, educators, and Aboriginal people alike and will continue to influence the evolution of Aboriginal-based higher learning institutions.

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes and Tribal Colleges and Universities. APIs in Canada and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in the United States model a shift in the management and delivery of higher learning for Aboriginal learners. They are a distinct and obvious representation of Aboriginal people and Nations reclaiming control and responsibility for higher education. Including First Nations histories and cultures within formal institutes of higher learning makes the importance of having IK in academia visible and accessible to Aboriginal learners (Haig-Brown, 1995). APIs and TCUs are strong examples of integrating IK in academia.

In Canada, the representation of APIs continues to grow as Aboriginal people and communities continue to work towards relevant educational opportunities for Aboriginal people. The British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education (2012) describes in *Aboriginal*

postsecondary education and training policy framework and action plan: 2020 vision for the future that “there are now also approximately 40 Aboriginal controlled institutes in the province, which deliver adult education and post-secondary programs and services, primarily on reserve” (p. 4). The Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (AIC) notes that “Aboriginal institutions have been developed to address the specific cultural, linguistic, intellectual, social, and economic needs and conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada” (AIC 2005 p. 33).

The AIC (2005) explains the necessity of having Aboriginal institutions operate in a manner that is different from what mainstream institutions are trying to do, and notes that there are distinct features that belong in a sphere of Indigenous education (p. 33). Pauline Waterfall (2007) explains what this means:

Generally, Aboriginal institutes offer services in holistic settings that encompass cultural, family, and community values and ways. They work in partnership with community stakeholders to provide personally relevant and academically challenging education opportunities within a safe, caring and supportive environment. They work to reinforce self-identity, historical teachings and lifelong learning. (p. 6 – 7)

The aspiration of Aboriginal people to have greater control over their own educational delivery has resulted in many First Nations making initiatives to establish their own post-secondary institutions. This is reflective of self-determining desires; as such, institutions can reassert the position of Aboriginal people in education to address some of the many educational crises that exist while ensuring that the educational setting and delivery is structured in a culturally respectful and relevant way (Barnhardt 1991, 2000; Deloria & Wildcat 2001).

AIC (2005) describes that “with the growing number of Aboriginal-controlled institutions... being established, the dilemma faced by [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada] was to either acknowledge the growing number of Aboriginal institutions and provide funding to both Aboriginal institutions and mainstream institutions or to establish general funding criteria that

would serve both interests” (p. 31). Therefore, the federal government leaned towards providing the financial support for institutions that would offer learners either a degree, a diploma, or certificate programs. Since many of the Aboriginal institutes did not have degree granting authority, partnerships with mainstream institutions became necessary in order to secure funding for institutional sustainability. The result was a directive to fund only those Aboriginal programs offered by Aboriginal institutions when they are degree, diploma, or certificate programs. Nevertheless, Aboriginal institutes continue to entertain the expansion of their programs and services in order to continue to meet the needs of First Nations communities. The AIC (2005) explains:

The result has been more than twenty years of programming offered by Aboriginal institutions, but offered in partnership with ‘recognized degree-granting institutions.’ This situation affects some fifty Aboriginal-owned and controlled institutions of higher learning in Canada. (p. 31)

Thus the role of partnerships that APIs have with mainstream universities is important to consider.

In the United States, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) have similar educational objectives and partnership experiences as APIs in Canada. In their publication, *Postsecondary education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher education for nation building and self-Determination*, Brayboy, Fann, Costagno, and Solyon (2012) present a deep examination of the relationship between Indigenous control and access to education and Tribal Nation building and principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and self-governance in the United States. The necessary acceptance of higher learning opportunities as examples of Indigenous people exercising their inherent rights is powerful. Brayboy et al. (2012) explain:

Tribal sovereignty articulates intersecting worldviews and definitions. On the one hand, it represents an unusual relationship with the federal government, defined by early treaties and court cases in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the other hand,

tribal sovereignty represents a communal process and encompasses multiple dimensions: inherent, political/legal, economic, cultural, and educational aspects where all features are inextricably linked and are defined by particularity of individual tribes. (p. 19, emphasis in original)

Acknowledging that there is a link between educational systems and decolonizing ideologies that include diverse and varying IK systems is necessary to understand the premise and practices of different TCU frameworks.

At this time, there are approximately thirty-six TCUs in the United States (Brayboy et al. 2012, p.69). When TCUs began to emerge in the 1960s, the leaders and Elders desired that the TCUs be accredited post-secondary institutions (Guillory 2013, p.96). In order to achieve this, it was necessary that collaborative relationships be developed with mainstream institutions that would welcome the presence and inclusion of tribal knowledges and ways of being. Guillory (2013) describes how TCUs created partnerships to provide accredited degrees, noting “for TCUs, the primary motivation for entering into partnerships with mainstream institutions was to eventually become accredited institutions of their own” (p. 96). Alongside these partnerships, TCUs have become leaders in areas of culturally relevant teaching and learning practices, place-based educations, and research where traditional methods and methodologies are prevailing (Guillory 2013, p. 97).

Brayboy, et al. (2012) note that there is evidence to suggest that TCUs are making a difference:

A 1983 American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) study found a 75 percent greater completion rate for [American Indian/Alaska Native] students who completed a course of study at TCUs and then continued on to a four year degree program than among [American Indian/Alaska Native] students who went directly to four year institutions. (p. 70)

Understanding the history and origin of APIs and TCUs is critical to building a foundation for the successful future and vision of this model of higher learning. This includes understanding

how Indigenous ways of knowing are relevant in Aboriginal-based higher learning experiences and why partnerships continue to be articulated by APIs and TCUs as important collaborative endeavours. In Canada, with a lack of formal policy related to the functioning and sustainability of APIs it is necessary to emphasise the paramount importance of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions and the integration of IK into higher learning.

History of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Policy in British Columbia. The foundation for APIs is the concern of Aboriginal post-secondary policy. In Canada, when it comes to educational jurisdiction, the provinces have a distinct responsibility to ensure there are educational opportunities for all learners. Donald Fisher, et al. (2006) describes how:

Canadian federalism is characterized by a major paradox. On the one hand is the constitutionally derived responsibility the *provinces* have for social welfare, health, and *education*. On the other hand is the *federal responsibility* for concerns of national interest, equality of treatment and opportunity, economic development, and *Indians and lands reserved for Indians*. (p. 1, emphasis added)

This paradox filters down to impact provincially-derived policies for educational responsibility and initiatives that may impact Aboriginal people. The Canadian federal government has a legal responsibility for First Nations people, as set out by Treaties and the *Indian Act*, yet when Aboriginal people began asserting post-secondary educational initiatives like APIs, the provincial and federal governments were unprepared to support the First Nations' desire to take this kind of control (Stonechild, 2006). The Canadian federal government has been undecided if the responsibility for this education lies with the provincial or federal government and as a result, the paradox of responsibility becomes a real impediment to moving Aboriginal-specific initiatives forward (Fisher et al., 2006; NIB, 1972; Stonechild, 2006). In fact, Stonechild (2006) explains how in 1987, "the federal government denied that higher education was an Indian right and attempted to cap higher education funding as part of a general initiative to cut government

expenditures” (p. 71). For the purposes of this study, I will provide a review of how the federal and provincial educational responsibilities impact Aboriginal learners in higher education and in particular in APIs.

The population of Aboriginal Canadians is growing faster than the rest of the Canadian populace with the Aboriginal birthrate 1.5 times the general birthrate (Malenfant & Morency 2011, Fisher et al., 2006). As Donald Fisher et al. (2006) explain, “as this population ages, postsecondary institutions will be increasingly called upon to meet their academic needs and aspirations” (p. 110). This is indeed a perceived challenge for both federal and provincial governments. Federal governments, who hold a fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal people, have altered federal policy related to funding support for higher learning to control expenses and “increases in funding were capped at 2 per cent annually throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s” (Fisher et al., 2006, p. 110).

The Canadian Federation of Students (2015) writes that:

Prior to 1992, funding [for First Nations and Inuit students] was allocated based on the number of eligible students and their estimated expenses. In 1992 the model shifted from per-student funding to block funding. In 1996, increases in funding were **capped at two percent annually**. As a result of this strict limit, funding has been unable to keep pace with the increasing number of Aboriginal learners, increasing living costs, inflation, and tuition fee increases that average roughly 4 percent per year. (“History of Funding”, bolding added)

With the funding cap, the number of Aboriginal students receiving financial assistance to attend post-secondary school fell from 27,000 prior to the cap, to approximately 22,000. It is estimated that between 2001 and 2006, “over 10,500 students were denied funding, with roughly 3,000 more students denied each year” (Canadian Student Federation, 2015, “post-secondary student support program”). With these funding related issues, “priority is often given to shorter college programs to the detriment of more expensive professional or post-graduate programs of study”

(Canadian Federation of Students, 2015, “post-secondary student support program”). Obviously, there is an increased need to secure general funding from federal and provincial governments that is specifically related to Aboriginal post-secondary education. Until this need is addressed, the availability of funding resources for Aboriginal learners to access higher education will continue to decline.

Through a critical policy study, Madeleine MacIvor (2012) details the multiple factors that have impacted the evolution and existence of Aboriginal post-secondary policy in BC. This includes, and is not limited to, the construct of social history between the state and Aboriginal Nations and the political and economic forces that have shaped how BC is moving forward with its commitment to higher learning for Indigenous people (MacIvor, 2012). MacIvor (2012) focuses on a number of common themes that have a role in policy development including:

Sector intersection between the Ministries responsible for post-secondary education and Aboriginal affairs; privileging of First Nations; relationships between policy actors and policy structures; the importance of leadership and ownership; the exercise of state and institutional power; and different understandings of accountability. (p. 110)

MacIvor (2012) provides an analysis of how these themes changed when there were different governing bodies in power in the province of BC between 1986 and 2011 to show the interconnecting linkage between political ideological priorities and Aboriginal higher education.

Following a change in federal policy for Aboriginal learners at the federal level, the Province of British Columbia experienced a tremendous opposition to any diminishing educational opportunities for Indigenous students (Fisher et al., 2006; MacIvor, 2012). As a result, the provincial government decided to establish a Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary

Education for Native Learners (PACPENL)⁹ (1990). First Nations across the Province of British Columbia were invited to participate in making recommendations related to policy development and initiatives for post-secondary education and Aboriginal learners with a unified goal to improve access and Aboriginal participation in the public post-secondary system (PACPENL, p. 4). The committee states, “In British Columbia, across Canada, and around the world, Indigenous peoples are claiming their right to exercise authority in systems that govern their lives” (PACPENL, p. 6). APIs are just one example of this movement.

The work of the PACPENL (1990) was guided by four distinct principles that helped shape their policy recommendations. These principles are important to acknowledge as an example of the influence Aboriginal people in British Columbia want to have on higher learning policy. The four principles are:

1. THE RIGHT TO FIRST NATIONS SELF-DETERMINATION
2. FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE IS AN INHERENT ABORIGINAL RIGHT
3. THE HIGH EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS SET BY FIRST NATIONS MUST BE ADHERED TO
4. THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE (PACPENL, p. 11, emphasis in original)

⁹ The Final Report of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners also earned the title the *Green Report* when the advisory committee Co-Chair, the late Chief Gordon Antoine (Coldwater Band), could only find green file folders available to hold the report (John, Grand Chief Edward, *Akile Ch'oh*, Keynote Address, UNBC, October 18, 2014).

A recommendation of priority concerns from the PACPENL that are found throughout the report included items such as:

1. Ensuring Native institutions are eligible for direct funding from the provincial government;
2. That there are distinct support services for Native students in post-secondary institutions;
3. That bridging and literacy programs be offered to First Nations students to prepare them for university;
4. That First Nations languages be eligible for academic credit;
5. That cross-jurisdictional [issues] (i.e. Nation, Provincial, and Federal) be resolved;
6. That systems of accountability are enacted and upheld (PACPENL, 1990)

The work done by the PACPENL continues to have influence on provincial policy recommendations into the twenty-first century and there are many examples within mainstream education and APIs where these recommendations are being upheld including the establishment of Senior Aboriginal administrative positions and increased Aboriginal-focused programming throughout mainstream colleges and universities.

Building on the PACPENL (1990) report, the Provincial Government of British Columbia has acknowledged the need for greater support for Aboriginal education in the Province (Coell et al., 2007); moreover, it has made inroads in considering establishing appropriate policy related to APIs in British Columbia. In a discussion paper developed for the dialogue on the development of Aboriginal post-secondary policy in British Columbia, Drs. Joann Archibald and Lorna Williams (2007) said:

There is a notion of two-way decolonized relationships between the academy and Indigenous communities / nations. This implies four dimensions, weavings, and directions; from the academy to the Indigenous communities; Indigenous communities to the academy; internally to the academy; and internally within Indigenous communities. (p. 4)

The anticipation that these relations will facilitate a decolonizing process through and in education that creates the need for federal and provincial governments to provide permanent funding for the higher learning of Aboriginal people which includes funding for Aboriginal institutes (Stonechild, 2006).

A recent change to the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP) in 2014 substantially altered an opportunity that once supported approximately 80 First Nations higher education programs of various types within First Nations communities to continue to function (Stonechild, 2006, p. 119). As explained on the website for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC):

The [ISSP] program was redesigned and re-named in 2013-2014 (formerly the Indian Studies Support Program). It is now a competitive, national, proposal-driven process based on merit and focused on meeting labour market needs. It supports projects that deliver a program of study or develop new courses and programs tailored for First Nation and Inuit students. (n.d., Post-Secondary partnerships program)

It is but one example of the frailty of assurance that the federal government wholly supports community-based opportunities for Aboriginal learners in higher education (Stonechild, 2006, p. 119).

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutions and Partnerships. Before presenting literature about the institutions included in this study, I want to provide more detail from the literature about the role partnerships can have to build on Aboriginal post-secondary policy and the good work of committees such as the Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners (1990). In this section, I frame the presentation of the literature related to partnerships around the “Four Rs” — respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility as presented by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991). Although Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (1991) article

is related to Aboriginal students experiences in university, the “Four R” principles are also relevant to partnerships that an API may have with a mainstream institution. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) realize that:

It is the notion of empowerment that is at the heart of First Nations participation in higher education—not just empowerment as individuals, but empowerment as bands, as tribes, as nations, and as a people. For the institutions to which they must turn to obtain that education, the challenge is clear. What First Nations people are seeking is not a lesser education, and not even an equal education, but rather a better education... (p. 9 - 10)

Examining how partnerships can fulfill empowerment is important.

Respect. Introducing and maintaining respect is important in all levels of Indigenous education including post-secondary education. Haig-Brown (2000) writes about how avoiding a typology of “Aboriginalness” and marginalizing knowledges can establish respect protocols that allow for effective collaboration and engagement so development can include an authentic acknowledgment of the role that IK can have in an API. Sefa Dei (2000) notes that “Indigenous knowledges are experientially based and depend on subjective experiences and the inner workings of the self to generate social interpretations, meanings and explanations” (p. 5). As Indigenous knowledges are holistic and relational, the desire to engage with a mainstream institution is not surprising and the Indigenous position Aboriginal people are engaging with mainstream universities from must be respected. If founded on the premise of mutual respect and commitment, Aboriginal institutes have an opportunity to “help public institutes understand and respect what Aboriginal institutes are doing in the communities and there needs to be a mutual understanding of collaboration and partnership development” (Leighton 2008, p. 18). Respect is key to collaboration.

Relevance of IK. Ensuring that what is being integrated into the partnership arrangements is appropriate for the Aboriginal institutes and the communities that will be affected by the

partnership arrangement is vital to their sustainability. From an examination of the ambition of the Nisga'a Nation to ensure that WWNI is inclusive of language and cultural teaching (Anderson & Nyce 1998; Evans et al., 1999), it is evident that “for some communities the most important aspect of tribal colleges has been the renewal of interest in the traditions and language of the community” (Sefa Dei 2000, p. 115). Like the integration of Aboriginal culture and values in a elementary and high school setting for Indigenous students, this kind of integration at a higher level of education can provide a greater sense of validation and pride for tradition (Robinson, 2007). Relevance must be rooted in an overall betterment of their situation that the community seeks through education in post-secondary institutes.

Reciprocity. In regards to notions of reciprocity, a traditional concept for Aboriginal people (Archibald, 2008; Atleo, 2004; Atleo, 2010), it becomes apparent that the “giving and taking” between Western and non-Western institutions needs to be meaningful for both partners. Striking a balance within the relationship to ensure that partners know where the benefits and challenges may emerge in the relationship is essential for the longevity and the fair functioning of the institutional arrangement. I know from my experiences when working with CCWU that reciprocity was a major factor within the classroom as well as at an administrative level. For example, while the program was still running and had support from the Indian Studies Support Program, UNBC worked hard to ensure that the courses would be offered if students registered, even if the number of registrants were low. It became apparent to me that although it may have been an expensive model for course delivery, the university worked with the CCWU program to not disrupt the progress of the students nearing the completion of their degrees.

Responsibility. The last of the “Four Rs” is responsibility. Responsibilities lie with the Western and non-Western institutions to uphold the agreements and be conscientious of the

positions through which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are coming together for the purposes of higher education. Responsibility is a value that is inherent in IK and within oral traditions (Archibald, 2008). Embracing this quality of IK can enrich and sustain these relations, especially when considering how integral it is to the functioning of the other three “Rs.” Looking at the notion of responsibility as empowerment will sustain the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions for the long-term and create heightened participation of Aboriginal learners more generally.

It is vital that these partnership agreement relationships have checks and balances for all those that participate in education because of them. As stated in the agreement between WWNI and UNBC, the Nisga’a institute is the authority on the Nisga’a and all research and writing about the Nisga’a must go through WWNI. This is vital as many scholars and students see First Nations people as a group to be studied and not assisted. The responsibility rests with both parties in agreements to ensure that all parties associated with the institutes are being responsible in their engagement and respectful in all their relations.

In the article, *Walking in Two Worlds: Engaging the Space Between Indigenous Community and Academia*, Styres, Zinga, Bennett, and Bomberry, (2010) note that when engaging in relationships with Aboriginal communities, “the fact that [Aboriginal people] use [a Memorandum of Understanding] is once again attesting to mainstream dependencies... no matter what lens you look through, the processes result in our being dependent on another system” (p. 627, 628). In their experience of establishing a partnership arrangement to explore student success with Six Nations, there were several key pieces of what existed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that were ultimately contradictory to what the Haudenosaunee wanted to

see. Styres et al. (2010) note that after receiving the first draft of the MOU between the institution and the community they found:

It was very linear and hierarchical in reflecting the standard position in academia... we realized that if we were going to do things differently, then they had to be reflected in the changes we made to the MOU. The MOU was a reflection of our struggles to reflect and represent the two worlds equitably. We reordered definitions and principles to privilege community interests and used the circle metaphor to conceptualize equity in collaborative knowledge building, consultation, and consensus building. Defining terms such as consensus, Indigenous knowledge, and intellectual property rights was particularly complex. (p. 634)

In taking the basis of Haudenosaunee IK and integrating it within the MOU, the agency and power as defined by Foucault (1994) within the document was able to be shifted and reorganized in a way where each institution would realistically be able to meet the expected deliverables.

There is an obvious connection between partnerships, policy, and active support for initiatives like APIs. Building on the brief introduction of the APIs included in this study provided in Chapter One and presenting more information about the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), a mainstream institution that has, or has had relationships with these institutes and was directly referenced in the PACPENL (1990) report,¹⁰ the sections below provide a more comprehensive review of the institutions. The interconnection between all four institutions included in this study will become obvious since they share foundational intentions of welcoming IK and Indigenous programming. All four had partnerships as a result. The contextual review of the APIs will be presented next and a summary of UNBC and its relations to some of the APIs will follow.

¹⁰ The PACPENL (1990) report referenced the establishment of a university on the North (UNBC) many times throughout their report. Aboriginal leaders saw a new institution like UNBC as an important opportunity for First Nations learners to have access, relevant programs, and Indigenous representation throughout the academy.

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes in British Columbia

The APIs briefly described in Chapter One, provide an invaluable opportunity to study how IK is integrated in their academic programming and partnership structures within the contemporary context of policy and support in BC. All three APIs in this study are strong models of making Aboriginal-based higher learning opportunities available to Aboriginal learners through a visible inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge, culture, and values in their structure of higher learning.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. The first Aboriginal institution that I would like to describe for the purposes of this study is the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT). As previously stated in Chapter One, NVIT represents the only Aboriginal-based institution in British Columbia that is fully accredited to offer programs and courses to students (FNESC 2007, p. 8). As the first “type” of Aboriginal institute as characterized by FNESC (2007) that includes IK as an integral academic foundation, NVIT is important to highlight here. Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet (2012) wrote:

I believe that it is time to hear stories about the ways that an Indigenous post-secondary educational institution, such as NVIT has used IK to shape its governance, programming, and student services that contribute to the self-determination goals of Indigenous communities in British Columbia. In Indigenous oral tradition, we tell stories about lived experiences so that others can learn from our difficulties and successes. (p. 10)

I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to include NVIT as a major part of this study and to have become familiar with the campuses in Burnaby and Merritt, BC (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: NVIT Vancouver Campus, Burnaby, BC



(Nicola Valley Institution of Technology. n.d., “Vancouver campus”)

Figure 4: NVIT Merritt Campus, Merritt, BC



(Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. n.d., “Merritt campus”)

Having a history of existing as both a private and public post-secondary institution, NVIT has faced challenges when trying to ensure that the integrity and framework of being Aboriginally-based continues to be met. Tourand (2004) states:

Since its inception as a private postsecondary institution in 1983, the institution has struggled to maintain its uniqueness as an Aboriginal organization. Its challenges were

intensified when NVIT achieved its public status in 1995, and certified as a trade union in May of 1998. (p. 14)

NVIT was founded within the context of the five First Nations communities in the Nicola Tribal Association (NTA) who had Chiefs that strongly believed in the national policy of *Indian Control Over Indian Education* as discussed by Billy-Minnabarriet (2012, p. 59). The NTA communities include the Coldwater Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, Shackan Indian Band, Lower Nicola Band, and the Upper Nicola Band (Billy-Minnabarriet 2012, p. 59-60). Led by Grand Chief Gordon Antoine and Chiefs Percy Joe, Herby Manual, Frances Shutter, and Robert Sterling Sr., NVIT was formed with an educational vision infused with cultural knowledge and Indigenous thought and thus as a symbol of self-determination (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012).

During the 10th Annual Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium, *Indigenous Intellectual Traditions: Re/stor(y)ing Time and Space*, held at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, on March 23, 2012, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to listen to Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet talk about her research on NVIT as “An Eagle’s Gathering Place” for the completion of her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy at UBC. I will provide greater detail about Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet in Chapter Five, but I want to highlight in this introduction to NVIT some of the things I was most intrigued to learn during her presentation. Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet spoke of the fundamental integration of IK as part of the NVIT intellectual tradition and the strong First Nations representation NVIT has within its entire structure, including students, staff, faculty, senior administration, members of the Board of Governors, and the pivotal Elders’ Council (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012). Guided by the 2012 Mission Statement of NVIT which describes it as “a comprehensive public post-secondary institute, governed by the Aboriginal community, [that] leads by anticipating and responding to the educational needs of our learners by providing support, choices, knowledge and tools to build

a better future”, NVIT follows the visions and values of Indigenous Knowledges and Aboriginal experiences (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. n.d., “About Nicola Valley Institute of Technology).

The IK systems rooted within NVIT are from the *Nlaka’pamux* and *Nsilxcn* Nations and the rich cultures and histories of those Nations contribute to the strong and resilient academic structure of NVIT (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012, p. 65). However, even though the *Nlaka’pamux* and *Nsilxcn* Nations have prominent Indigenous Knowledges represented throughout NVIT, it serves and attracts Aboriginal students from other Bands. Data from 2014 in Table 2 shows the number of Bands represented in the previous seven academic years at NVIT as the following:

Table 2: Number of First Nations Bands with Students at NVIT

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Within BC	76	125	127	134	122	129	133	124
Outside BC	8	9	6	6	8	8	9	8

(NVIT 2014, p. 2)

The population trends at NVIT are also encouraging. From recent data made available in 2014, NVIT shows a strong pattern of enrollment that has increased significantly since 2006 (Table 3).

Table 3: NVIT Enrollment Patterns

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Student Populations	777	947	1220	1244	1358	1471	1412	1358

(NVIT 2014, p. 1)

Partnerships with mainstream post-secondary institutions continue to be a pervasive and important part of program delivery. More specific examples of partnering will be provided in

Chapter Five, but Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet (2012) explains that partnerships are designed in several ways and will be based on the needs and desires of the community (p. 124). This can include one-time course offerings for Aboriginal communities or three or four year programs such as language programs, Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Education, or Chemical Addictions (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012, p. 124). Issues of curriculum ownership and faculty hires must be articulated clearly between academic administrative units and NVIT is insistent that institutional values and knowledges be upheld in these endeavours (Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012, p. 124).

In an article written after the conclusion of a partnership agreement between Simon Fraser University (SFU) and NVIT to deliver collaboratively developed degree-completion programs for Interior Salish peoples in partnership with SFU's Integrated Studies Program, Ruth Price and Brian Burtch reflect on what was gleaned from the experience with NVIT. Price and Burtch (2010) wrote:

Partnerships such as the NVIT-SFU partnership can empower Aboriginal communities to work with established accredited institutions to deliver relevant and meaningful programming. By encouraging Aboriginal input into the curriculum, by offering the program at an Aboriginal-operated institution, and by providing support through the presence of Elders-In-Residence and access to personal and/or career counselling, many of the key needs of the community may be met. The program graduates, acting as role models, assume leadership positions in their communities and continue the work toward a better life for future generations. (p. 11)

It is obvious that the Aboriginal-orientated focus of NVIT's program management had an effect on the SFU/NVIT partnership.

Through NVIT becoming the only Aboriginal-based, publicly funded post-secondary institution in British Columbia, NVIT models a unique example of the delivery of Aboriginal-based education in BC. In Chapter Five, the analysis of the interviews that took place at both the Merritt and Burnaby campuses highlight the promises and challenges of integrating IK within

NVIT and exemplify the relentless commitment to see a successful and enduring post-secondary foundation that is embedded in, and celebrates the cultures, traditions, and values of Aboriginal people.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI) is the second institution briefly described in Chapter One that I would like to introduce more fully. WWNI is an example of the second “type” of Aboriginal institute as described by FNEC (2008): a federated institution that has been offering courses and programs to Nisga'a Nation members for over twenty years. Located currently on the beautiful bank of the Nass River in *Gitwinksihlkw* (or Canyon City), the current building that houses WWNI is the second home for this institution (see Figure 2.3) which moved from the original location in *Gitlaxt'aamiks* (or New Aiyansh) in the Nass Valley.¹¹ In addition to serving the communities of *Gitwinksihlkw* and *Gitlaxt'aamiks*, WWNI is used by members from the other two communities of the Nass Valley; *Laxgalts'ap* (or Greenville) and *Gingolx* (Kincolith) as well as any learners outside the membership of the Nation who are from other communities and Nations.¹²

¹¹ It is noted that since moving the primary location of WWNI to *Gitwinksihlkw*, each of the four communities in the Nass Valley has an important building that serves the Nation: *Gitlaxt'aamiks* now has the magnificent building of the Nisga'a Lisims government, *Gitwinksihlkw* has WWNI, *Laxgalts'ap* has *Hli Goothl Wilp-Adokshl Nisga'a* (the Nisga'a Museum), and *Gingolx* has a cultural/interpretive centre on the oceanfront of Front Street.

¹² For example, WWNI had a Saami student who was attending UNBC move to take classes in the Nass Valley.

Figure 5: Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute on the Nass River in Gitwinksihlkw, BC



(Nisga'a Lisims Government. n.d., "WWNI")

My own experience of WWNI began as an undergraduate student at UNBC taking First Nations Studies courses, participating in First Nations Studies program meetings and serving on the Senate Committee for First Nations and Aboriginal People. I learned of some of the initiatives the UNBC Department of First Nations Studies was working towards with this Aboriginal institute, including an educational program which was deeply immersed in principles of Indigeneity. This was the first such Indigenous educational program I had ever heard of in Northern BC and I was eager to learn more.

Then, before I began graduate school, I met the father of my children, Andrew Robinson (who is of Nisga'a ancestry and was raised in the community of *Laxgalts'ap*) and we had two children, Sean (*Yagabax*) and James (*Jagabax*). We as a family began to spend a significant amount of time in the Nass Valley and so I became increasingly familiar with Nisga'a ways of life and educational protocols. I learned of some of the many interconnected benefits and challenges that having a post-secondary institution can bring to a First Nation and how an inter-

institutional relationship can be perceived from a community's perspective. While I do not have the experience of being a WWNI student or staff member, I continue to be acquainted with some of the opportunities WWNI provides to students through my roles on the UNBC Senate, the Senate Committee on First Nations and Aboriginal People, and my continued relationships with the First Nations Studies Department, Regional Operations at UNBC, and the Nisga'a Nation. In addition, I was privileged to be welcomed into the Convocation ceremony that took place in *Gitwinksihlkw* in 2008 when Andrew and I graduated with our Master of Arts degrees in First Nations Studies from UNBC. We were honoured by the late Jacob McKay (*Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*) and Deanna Nyce in front of the community for our perseverance, achievements, and accomplishments. This was a truly meaningful experience.

Even as a student at UNBC, I have long recognized the importance of the unique relationship that UNBC has with WWNI and the partnerships WWNI sought as an Aboriginal institution. The 1997 UNBC *Report of the University Planning Committee* describes how the University, "entered into a unique arrangement of partnership with Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a (WWN) and is in the process of exploring the further development of that partnership into a relationship of affiliation with WWN as an autonomous, provincially funded, Aboriginal post-secondary institution" (p. 11). As Evans et al. (1999) state:

When UNBC was being established, the Nisga'a were already in discussions with the provincial and federal governments regarding the Nisga'a postsecondary institution. UNBC began discussions with the Nisga'a and entered into a protocol agreement that acknowledged the requirements of both institutions and formalized a rich collaborative relationship. (p. 200)

As the Nisga'a people were already in pursuit of establishing a post-secondary institution, the relationship with UNBC would not supersede what was already planned for the Nation and as a result, "WWN is the final authority on all Nisga'a curriculum and research and approves all

Nisga'a curriculum and research undertaken by UNBC faculty or students” (Evans., 1999, p. 200). However the courses offered at WWNI are all in the UNBC calendar¹³.

The Nisga'a people have established a reputation for their perseverance and commitment to seeing their ambitions and goals become a reality. Prominently, the Nisga'a are renowned for their longstanding struggle toward self-determination which resulted in the 1973 *Calder Case* Supreme Court decision. Another significant development related to Nisga'a education was realized through the establishment of School District No. 92, the Nisga'a School District in 1975 (McKay, A. & McKay, B. 1987, p. 74). As Evans et al. (1999) point out:

The new school district manifested the Nisga'a belief in the inseparability of language and culture and in Nisga'a control of education by integrating a bilingual-- bicultural department in the new school district. When the school district opened its doors in 1975, language instruction was implemented in each of the four community schools, with additional adult instruction at night school. (p. 200)

With significant players, such as Alvin A. MacKay, who also assisted in the daunting task of seeing the *Calder Case* come to fruition, the Nisga'a also fought diligently for a Nisga'a operated and curriculum based K – 12 school system for Nisga'a children on Nisga'a lands. In my opinion Nisga'a leaders were able to operate in a Western educational system while still holding on to the cultural values of being Nisga'a because Nisga'a leaders could see how their long-standing struggle for self-government could be realized.

I know from my own relationships with Nisga'a people that many Nisga'a believe that although the *Calder Case* was an important victory related to Land Claims for the Nisga'a Nation which led to the first modern day comprehensive treaty in Canadian history, it is not a stand-alone achievement. The *Calder Case* is noted to have opened the door to over thirty years

¹³ See Chapter Five for Dr. Margaret Anderson's discussion of how (under her guidance) UNBC created the First Nations Studies courses so that they would serve First Nations in the regions as well.

of other hard won milestones including Nisga'a control over health (Kelm, 2004); control over Nisga'a elementary schools; and post-secondary WWNI education for Nisga'a Nation members.

After the Nisga'a Land Claims Agreement in Principle (AIP) was signed in 1992 between the Nisga'a, the Province of British Columbia, and Canada, Nisga'a leaders, such as the aforementioned Mr. Alvin MacKay (*Sim'ooGit Daxheet*), Jacob MacKay (*Sim'ooGit Bayt Neekhl*), and Joseph Gosnell (*Sim'ooGit Hle'ek*) ensured that Nisga'a people could achieve post-secondary degrees in order to increase the capacity to deliver self-government and all of its components. Nisga'a leadership hoped that the milestones achieved would be done in a way to reflect Nisga'a culture and history in a modern and relevant context for the Nation.¹⁴

Indeed, the partnership that has been established with UNBC is a notable modern education arrangement for the Nisga'a. Former UNBC President, Dr. Charles Jago noted in 2004, that:

The first [UNBC] community-based initiative is based on a protocol agreement signed by UNBC and Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a (WWN) - the Nisga'a House of Learning - in 1993 for a five-year term (renewed twice, in 1998 and 2003). The two entities also signed an affiliation agreement in 1998, giving WWN authority to offer UNBC degree-programs in specific disciplines. (paragraph 5)

The offering of such degree programs created the space and autonomy for Nisga'a people to have post-secondary education available in their homelands where Nation members could benefit from, and contribute to, the academy in a way that was previously unimaginable.

¹⁴ Many excellent resources were developed by the Nisga'a Nation even prior to the creation of WWNI. Texts such as *Anhluut'ukwsim Xkwsdaḡsa'askwihl Nisga'a: Wila maḡskwihl ga huwilphl Nisga'a: The treasured legacy of the Nisgha: Social structure* by Alvin McKay, Bert McKay; Nita Morven; Shirley Haynes Adams and School District 92 (1982) and *Nisga'a: people of the mighty river* by Alvin McKay and Nelson Leeson (1992) created a foundation for future publications like the *Nisga'a language instructor's resource guide* by WWN (1994).

On the WWNI website (2015), the mission statement of the API highlights that:

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society recognizes *Ayuukhl Nisga'a*¹⁵ and that this core of Nisga'a wisdom is in the minds and lives of Nisga'a elders. The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society is committed to build an institution on the foundation of Nisga'a wisdom and expertise selecting a majority of its faculty from members of the Nisga'a Nation.

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society, under Nisga'a Government jurisdiction, will be responsible for the provision and coordination of all adult learning programs within the Nisga'a Nation.

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society will establish protocol and articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions encompassing joint certification¹⁶ of diplomas, recognition of Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society certified programs, joint delivery of degrees, cross appointments to faculties, and a creative postgraduate research program.

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society will formalize relationships with all Nisga'a institutions to facilitate adult learning programs.

The Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Society, an incorporated educational institution, is planning the establishment of learning centres in each of the four Nass Valley communities. It also envisages a campus apart from the villages to house its' graduate research department. (Mission Statement)

WWNI is not alone in navigating challenges associated with being a small, remote institution.

WWNI has barriers related to funding, especially as WWNI is not a "public post-secondary institute", but rather a non-profit organization. These economic barriers continue to be a consideration in the relationship between WWNI and mainstream institutions.

Nevertheless, WWNI is able to profile some significant numbers of student completion rates since its inception (see Table 4). Data submitted to Nisga'a Lisims Government for the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Implementation Report* for the 2011-2012 show the following:

¹⁵ The *Ayuukhl Nisga'a* is the traditional laws and practices of the Nisga'a Nation. (Accessed February 22, 2015: http://wwni.bc.ca/?page_id=32)

¹⁶ In partnership with WWNI, these programs are jointly certified through accredited post-secondary schools.

Table 4: WWNI Student Completion Rates Since Opening

Academic Degrees		Academic Certificates	
Program	Total	Program	Total
Bachelor of Arts	38	Nisga'a Studies Certificate	49
Bachelor of Science	2	First Nations Language – Nisga'a Certificate	16
Bachelor of Commerce	1	General First Nations Studies Certificate	44
First Nations Language and Culture Diploma	1		
First Nations Language and Education Diploma	1		
Honorary Doctorate of Laws	3		
Professor Emeritus	1		

(Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, and Nisga'a Lisims Government, 2014)

In addition, WWNI had a total completion of 271 students in various Vocational/Technical Certificate programs (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, and Nisga'a Lisims Government 2014, p. 6).

The history of WWNI and its affiliation with a comprehensive university such as UNBC is a valuable example of Aboriginal-based education that celebrates the inclusion of IK. Greater depth to the role of IK and the partnerships this API engages in will be presented in Chapters Five and Six. This will include a closer analysis of the interviews included in this study from WWNI representatives and a discussion of the partnership agreement between WWNI and UNBC (see Appendix 2).

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University (CCWU) Program. The last API that I would like to provide an elaborated introduction to from what was described in Chapter One is the former Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU). CCWU is the institution that I have the strongest connection to, both personally and professionally. I taught for the CCWU

from 2008 to 2011 and have maintained many long lasting relationships that have become invaluable friendships in my life. As sources of inspiration and guidance, many of the people I met through CCWU have helped me come to know very personally the impacts this institution has had on the people and communities that were involved. I describe this more fully in Chapter Four, but it is important to acknowledge the emotional part of my connection to CCWU before I describe it in more detail here.

The Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU) was managed by the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (NSTC) and operated centrally out of the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) campus in Williams Lake, BC. I was first introduced to CCWU as an undergraduate student when some CCWU students came to UNBC to attend summer courses. I eventually had the privilege to begin teaching for the program in 2008 and continue to be engaged with the communities that participated in CCWU both personally and professionally. The early key players in establishing CCWU (e.g. Sister Mary Alice Danaher) are discussed in greater detail in Chapter One and Six. Here I will provide a review of some of the notable examples of the accomplishments and achievements realized through CCWU (see Figure 2.4) while the interviews profiled in Chapter Five and Six give further documentation of CCWU's achievements.

Figure 6: CCWU Site at the Thompson Rivers University Campus in Williams Lake, BC



(Bingham Hill Architects. n.d., “Projects”)

CCWU began holding the first classes for students in 1997. In 2011 Carol Rooney, a writer for the *100 Mile House Free Press*, stated that “the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council is discontinuing its Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University program, after no funding for the 2011/12 fiscal year was approved from Indian Studies Support Program of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada” (paragraph 1). For me, and the many other students, alumni, staff, and community members who were touched by this program, reading such headlines in a newspaper marked a sad and disappointing day.

Although this program is no longer operational, CCWU contributes to this study substantially. As UNBC was one of the universities involved in the delivery of the associated programming with the NSTC, many UNBC students, staff, and faculty had an important opportunity to become familiarized with this unique program. Former UNBC President, Charles Jago (2004), explains in an article for *University Affairs* that a:

...significant community-based initiative [for UNBC] is the Weekend University in Williams Lake, developed from a challenge that Sister Mary-Alice Danaher, a nun who lived at the Canim Lake Band reserve in the Shuswap Nation, presented to the presidents

of UNBC and the University College of the Cariboo [now TRU] in 1996... The Williams Lake Weekend University has been a great success, serving more than 125 Native students, mostly adults. In May 2003, the first Weekend University student graduated with a bachelor's degree from UNBC, with seven more due to graduate in the spring of 2004. A number of others have received pre-degree certificates. After six years of effective operations, the partners are drafting a protocol agreement. (paragraphs 6 & 7)

Essentially, the protocol agreement provided a documented foundation for the relationship between CCWU and UNBC.

It is obvious that a significant amount of community and institutional collaboration made this API successful and that the late Sister Mary Alice was integral to ensuring that the cultural integrity of the program was upheld. I know from my own experience as an Instructor for CCWU students that Sister Mary Alice was held in high regard. In my research, I came across a story written by a former student, Cindy M. Charleyboy, in 2011. Cindy graduated from the CCWU program and her story shows how IK and humour has been shared through CCWU:

Coyote brings Weekend U: A Tribute to the late Sister Mary Alice Danaher

One day Coyote noticed that everybody wanted their education. She came into the Tribal Council and said "Come on now, we can make this happen"

But everyone said "We're too busy. There so much work to do. We have to drive all around...up Alkali, down Canim Lake. There's meetings in Vancouver. We can't leave our families and go to University."

"It's too far! It takes too long! It costs too much money! Besides, I'm no good at that."

"Pbbhhht!" said Coyote. "Who said anything about going to University? I'll bring University over here. University needs us."

Coyote went up to PG, talk to them guys at UNBC. Coyote went down to Kamloops, talk to them guys at UCC now TRU. Coyote even got a hold of SFU to help teach Tsilhqot'in, Secwepemcstín, and Dakelh (Carrier).

Coyote noticed that everyone with letters sounded important, and so became CCWU – the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program. The idea was that the students would then start getting their letters. BA FNST, maybe even MA FNST. Maybe even be a bunch of Doctah's running around here – PhD's - post hole diggers.

Coyote went to the Tribal Council all the time...said "We gotta get all our people involved. At least 15 bands in the three nations around here. They need us, them universities. They'll be all flat without us."

Coyote caught those presidents and said "You've got the power to change these things. How are you going to make it happen?" Coyote made them presidents sweat.

Coyote caught all those students...said "Hurry up get over here." Coyote grabbed all those papers and said "Aahh! We'll make our own rules!" Coyote grabbed the phone, phone everybody up and said "I'll see you this weekend."

Come Friday Saturday everybody's sitting there learning.

Teaching some of those teachers how to be "culturally appropriate" Passing on their traditional knowledge and recognizing cognitive imperialism. Letting Coyote know what they wanted to learn. Telling themselves "we can do it." Telling their friends "come with me!" Telling their families "I'm right here, you can come too."

Coyote runs around making lots of tracks. Tracking people down, making them do their homework. That one time that guy skipped out of class and Coyote said "SSSinner!"

Coyote says, "See this is fun. Look at this funny western education. Look at how we bent it! Now it fits a little bit better. We'll just keep bending these corners till it's a circle. Then we'll do a hoop dance with it."

After a while Coyote said, "Hey you womins come over here and take it for a little while. It still needs work. I'm tired. I feel really tired. All those ceremonies! All those graduations! All these Honours! All that chasing those presidents and students around!"

Coyote went back East on vacation. Next thing you know Coyote disappears. Gone somewhere else I guess. Somebody says Coyote went to heaven. Guess they need their education up there.

Down here at Weekend U we keep working. Figure maybe that Coyote's watching. Might kick our butts if we get lazy. Gotta keep working on that hoop. Gotta keep bendin' them rules. (n.d., "Coyote brings Weekend U")

This story resonates with me as to how important Sister Mary Alice and the CCWU program are to the students in the Cariboo Chilcotin.

In addition to leaving a legacy with the CCWU, Sister Mary Alice Danaher received the Order of Canada in 2003 and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from UNBC in 2005.

The citation for receiving the Order of Canada (2003), by the Governor General of Canada, reads as follows:

She is held in high esteem for her vision and commitment as a teacher. For over 25 years she has worked in partnership with Aboriginal communities in northern British Columbia to develop a curriculum that respects and reflects the cultural heritage of her students. Her tireless efforts have produced several teaching tools, including learning during the Chilcotin and Shuswap language and a seven-year bachelor's degree program in the reserves. It is to her that we owe the creation of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Weekend University. By promoting community access to learning, she gave to new generations of Aboriginal students the promise of a better future. (Order of Canada investiture ceremony at Rideau Hall Friday, May 9, 2003)

The CCWU program leaders and students have important stories and reflections about the impact of this educational partnership. The CCWU Program is an excellent example of the unique dimensions of relationships that emerge as a result of educational experience that I want to present.

University of Northern British Columbia. The final institution that I want to acknowledge and provide an introduction to is not an API. The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is a public, post-secondary institution that was created on the basis of a dream of Northern residents in BC to have access to higher education closer to home. A campaign began in 1987 by local residents who created the Interior University Society (IUS), to ensure that the energy behind the desire for a university in the North would be sustained. Throughout the evolution and growth of UNBC, the university has always had a stated commitment to Indigenous education and Aboriginal learners and has, in fact, had partnerships with the three APIs included in this study. Therefore, it is important that I provide context and information about UNBC to place the role it has as a partner, an ally and supporter of Indigenous education and Aboriginal institutes of higher learning. By contextualizing both the documented history, as well as my own relationship with the institution, the relevancy of it being included becomes obvious.

Figure 7: UNBC Prince George Campus



(University of Northern British Columbia. n.d., *Tour the Campus*)

UNBC alumni Robert van Andrichem (2008) writes that when a university in the North was being planned, “[IUS] members toured the northern region selling the idea to residents, secured the services of a Swedish academic named Urban Dahllof with expertise on northern universities, and lobbied government politicians and bureaucrats” (p. 87). Then, on June 22, 1990, “the Provincial Legislature passed Bill 40, The UNBC Act, with all-party support” (UNBC History, 1987-1994, n.d.). The news of a new university in BC was unprecedented and captured the attention of people in the province and beyond. The news of such a prospect was printed on the front page of our local newspaper in Smithers, BC, shortly after that announcement was made. In planning for post-secondary education and contemplating moving away from my family and friends news of UNBC dramatically changed my future post-secondary plans.

When I began attending UNBC in 1995, there was an atmosphere that made my transition to university life much easier. As an emerging institution with a small student population, my meeting new people and becoming familiar with the ways of academic life did not seem as intimidating as I had anticipated. Again, van Andrichem (2008) writes:

During its formative years, UNBC aimed to be a university ‘in the north and for the north.’ This slogan was intended to characterize UNBC as a university like every other (with a broad range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs; a strong focus on research, excellence, and scholarly inquiry; and a commitment to community service) and one uniquely situated as a resource for the northern region. (p. 88).

The region that UNBC is committed to serving has a population that is the size of metropolitan Victoria and covers a land mass more than twice the size of France (Jago, 2004, paragraph 1). However, as an Aboriginal undergraduate student, the mantra I came to know and understand at UNBC was the university’s desire to emerge as a leader in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal community engagement. Indeed, the PACPENL (1990) report recommended that:

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology fully support the... recommendation for a division of Aboriginal Studies within the Faculty of Arts and Science within the new Northern university; and that First Nations be represented on the University of the North's Board of Governors and Senate. (p. 16)

Aboriginal students and members of the Aboriginal communities became involved with course development and delivery and many faculty and students in the UNBC community welcomed the opportunity to share and integrate IK in the post-secondary classroom (Evans et al., 1999).

UNBC was the first university in Canada to offer a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts program in First Nations Studies (Anderson & Nyce, 1998, p. 288, Thornton, 1998, p. 90) and the university motto, "En Cha Huna"¹⁷ was adopted in honour and in the spirit of the Carrier (Dakelh) people. The UNBC Prince George campus is built on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation and the motto is intended to celebrate diversity and "to foster the rich cultural diversity of Northern British Columbia and its peoples" (University of Northern British Columbia, 1997, p. 2).

In fact, the 1997 Final Report of the University Planning Committee reads: "UNBC has a special responsibility to serve the needs of the First Nations peoples of Northern British Columbia... the University is deeply committed to making university education available and a rewarding experience for First Nations students" (p. 10). The report also explains that influencing the academic character of UNBC was an initial mandate that included five priority areas: Environmental Studies, First Nations Studies, International Studies, Women's/Gender Studies, and Northern Studies. These emerged as the dominant disciplines that, from my perspective, both faculty and students were encouraged to explore.

Evans et al. (1999) note that, "a crucial direction in UNBC's innovative programming is the area of Indigenous studies, or First Nations Studies, and the institutional desire to make the

¹⁷ *En Cha Huna* means "That person also lives" referring to the interconnection of all beings.

University a place for Aboriginal people” (p. 193). One prominent example of fulfilling this desire, and also meeting the recommendation of the PACPENL (1990) report, is the fact that UNBC established a Senate Committee on First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples (SCFNAP). This sub-committee to the larger body of the university Senate includes membership from university administration, faculty, students, and the community and is a unique example of creating a space for Aboriginal voice in the academic governance of UNBC. It meets on a regular basis to review course curriculum and delivery before being forwarded to Senate for final approval.

This process has given university faculty who might not otherwise be affiliated with Aboriginal programming at the institution an opportunity to see the engagement of the community and hear their perspectives on how particular courses could be operationalized. Evans et al. (1999) understand that “many complex issues are associated with developing and delivering Aboriginal curriculum, including the appropriation of community knowledge into courses and the voice of presentation in the classroom” (p. 194). Having the SCFNAP is one way to mitigate some of those complex situations and I know from my own experience that there is often a major educational component related to Aboriginal knowledge, histories, and values that emerges as a part of the SCFNAP process.

Undoubtedly, universities hold a vital role in regional development and in growing capacity for qualified and skilled graduates. UNBC was, and still is, a prominent source for actualizing this potential in Northern BC (van Andrichem, 2008, p. 81). Although UNBC has struggled over the last decade in meeting its targeted enrolment numbers, and there were and are shifts in academic and community-related priorities, it is reassuring to me that there is still a demonstration of commitment to realizing the goals of the university’s “special responsibility.”

In the 2010 University Action Plan then UNBC President George Iwama stated that UNBC will continue to encourage First Nations content in all programs; develop offerings in Law with an emphasis on Northern and First Nations' opportunities; foster participation from First Nations alumni to transform the communities we serve; increase the number of joint research projects with Northern communities, and especially with BC First Nations; and bring First Nations' interests more effectively to our identity as a Green University (p, 1 - 2). Each of these points deserves individualized attention, and although I personally would like to see more attention on issues and programs for Aboriginal people, I am still grateful that an Aboriginal focus is included in the University's priorities. UNBC continues to articulate its plans regarding relations with First Nations. In fact, since July 2015, I have assumed the position at UNBC as *Senior Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Relations* under President Daniel Weeks and I am a member of the Academic Planning Committee whereby UNBC is undergoing a comprehensive process to renew the academic plan by engaging internal and external people from communities around Northern BC (see: <http://www.unbc.ca/academic-planning>).

Evans et al. (1999) explain that, "one of the roles the University has in the building of northern BC is the facilitation of cross-cultural communication, learning, and understanding" (p. 193). My first encounters with the special partnerships that UNBC held with Aboriginal institutions and programs came when I was a student serving on various institutional committees and then as an instructor when I taught for the CCWU program. While WWNI, NVIT, and CCWU each have their own documented history of the emergence and impact of these inter-institutional arrangements with UNBC, I am aware of the immense learning that has come from the communication and cross-cultural practices as a result of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutional engagements.

References to UNBC will continue to appear frequently throughout this study. Both primary and secondary sources provide important detail when considering the role this institution has in supporting the inclusion of IK in higher education and in supporting of the goals and desires of Aboriginal communities and Nations in the North.

Themes from the Literature Review

The different themes that can be articulated from the literature review of sources available that relate to APIs and how IK is included within the academic parameters of APIs relate to self-determination, Aboriginal policy, prominence of partnerships with mainstream institutions, the benefits of APIs on Aboriginal students and communities, and the necessity of strong leadership to realize the vision of Indigenous-based post-secondary opportunities. These are some of the major areas covered by the literature presented here.

Many areas in the literature surrounding APIs are elaborated on in the chapters to follow through the people interviewed for this study, providing a depth of reflection on some of the areas noted above and a closer examination of some of the particular aspects of partnerships and partnership agreements. From my own experiences with Aboriginal institutions and working extensively with Aboriginal learners, I believe people should be given the opportunity to understand the agreements and arrangements for meeting goals and objectives for the greater good of the community, its members, and the larger society. These agreements and arrangements must be communicated and effectively monitored provincially and federally with fulsome inclusion of First Nations peoples. This research asked those who are intimately involved with APIs how partnerships were articulated and how they meet the community

educational goals. The answers to these questions are presented in Chapters Four and Five and summarized in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

Encapsulating a turning point in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations, APIs and partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions include a rich context that is important to share. Identifying the promises and challenges of weaving IK into an Aboriginal academy may be a tool for the empowerment and growth of IK in academia more generally. As Deloria Jr. and Wildcat (2001) say in their book *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, “Indigenous self-determination begins with attentiveness to the relations around us, whether they be typically understood as economic, political, ecological, or spiritual” (p. 138).

Also, although there are many interconnected complexities in the layers of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions, the characteristics that embody those relations have much to teach about integrating knowledges and realities. Pidgeon (2008) says, “relationships are key to transforming universities into successful places for Aboriginal people” (p. 237). This study will assess whether the “Four Rs” can flourish and provide Aboriginal learners with post-secondary opportunities that will respect their culture, be relevant to their communities, provide a foundation for a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, and be responsible to all learners who deserve opportunities for higher education in the APIs where I did my study. As Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) explain, we “must continue to seek effective solutions, and along the way, we must be prepared to set aside some of our most cherished beliefs and free ourselves to consider appropriate alternatives” (p. 2). For the purposes of being the best place for *all* learners, there is no other alternative to this openness.

People must understand that for the past thirty years Aboriginal people have existed on the periphery of the higher learning system and in the dungeon created by primary and secondary Residential Schools. As demonstrated in the story in Chapter Two of Coyote written by Cindy Charleyboy (n.d., “Coyote brings Weekend U”), the power and deep-seeded meaning of higher learning for Aboriginal people is something to embrace. The Coyote story in Chapter Two exemplifies the important role of the oral tradition and humour in storytelling in a way that shows how knowledge sharing and traditional learning can bring forward a comprehensive and advantageous educational experience. The impact of APIs and their leaders cannot be overstated since education, as a path of freedom, can be enabled through Aboriginal institutions. The importance of such initiatives must be shared.

Chapter 3: Placing the Threads: Theoretical Positioning

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical positioning of this study while discussing how issues of power are inherently a part of the scope of my research. It is important that I intensely review and contextualize the foundations of the theories that I utilize in order to share how I believe the nature of my chosen theories are complementary to my research questions about the integration of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) within Aboriginal post-secondary institutions (APIs). These theoretical positions directly influence the research methods chosen for this work which are discussed in Chapter 4.

As the currents of academic discourse grow and change to be more inclusive of Indigenous theoretical paradigms, I want this study to privilege an Indigenous voice that includes both Western and non-Western principles of research. Battiste (2013) offers us an eloquent articulation of how:

Postcolonialism is not about rejecting all theory or research of Western knowledge. It is about creating a new space where Indigenous people's knowledge, identity, and future is calculated into the global and contemporary equation. (p. 185)

By integrating a comprehensive review of the parallels and distinctions between my chosen theories within the framework of this qualitative research, this chapter places the threads of the theoretical positions to demonstrate how they are inclusive of both Indigenous and Western theoretical positions.

Theoretical Positioning

In this study about IK integration in an API, I bring a theoretical position that represents both Indigenous and non-Indigenous theoretical perspectives. In this section of Chapter Three, I

provide a detailed analysis of these theoretical positions and acknowledge the role of Indigenous and critical theories in my research. Theory, as a tool to shape my own thoughts and belief systems through an academic framework, helps me define my own position and perspectives. Articulating *how* and *why* paradigms emerge and certain theoretical concepts are constructed enables me to navigate my way through including both Indigenous and critical frameworks. Although how one includes theory in one's own writing and research may be considered entirely subjective, I have grown to appreciate the importance of theoretical positioning in academic research and writing.

It was as a student in the First Nations Studies Master of Arts degree program at UNBC that I discovered what theories I was drawn to and why. Firstly, as someone who sees herself as an advocate for Aboriginal education who believes strongly that it is an area in Canadian society that needs and deserves special consideration, I focused on learning more about critical theory. I was easily drawn to this theoretical positioning after reading John Creswell (1998) in a graduate course I completed for my Master of Arts degree. Creswell (1998) makes a statement that, for me, spoke to the relevance of critical theory to Aboriginal education by stating:

Themes a critical researcher might explore include the scientific study of social institutions and their transformations through interpreting the meaning of social life; the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles; and a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities. (p. 80)

As an Aboriginal student in the discipline of First Nations Studies, I immersed myself in learning more about the role of education in the lives of Aboriginal people, from elementary to post-secondary school, and I was drawn to the relevance of critical theory to my interests.

Understanding education as an assimilationist tool which had, and continues to have, a profound impact on Aboriginal communities and cultures suggested a strong "fit" and alignment between my interests and critical theory.

As a university student I became aware of the positionality of Aboriginal people and discourse in higher learning. Eber Hampton (2000) explains:

Most, but not all, university education in Canada today is education for assimilation. Universities typically operate on the assumption that Eurocentric content, structure, and process constitute the only legitimate approach to knowledge. First Nations history, culture, knowledge, and language are largely ignored, and even when they are subjects of study, the perspective is almost always Eurocentric. (p. 210)

Although my research for my Master of Arts degree focused on primary and secondary education, particularly on the topic of Aboriginal choice schools, I took the opportunity to understand the foundation of what defines a critical theoretical perspective and to incorporate it as a foundation for my writing.

At the same time of discovering my preference for the platform of critical theory, I started to understand the effective and embedded relationship between Indigenous theory and critical theory. Indigenous theory felt like a “different” approach to theoretical positioning in graduate coursework and thankfully, I was in the First Nations Studies program at UNBC where this approach was not only welcomed but encouraged by my Instructors. Reading Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, brought an additional Indigenous theoretical paradigm which I was also drawn to and eagerly interested in understanding more about. I immediately recognized that I saw examples of similar qualities between what Tuhiwai Smith (1999) wrote about and what Creswell (1998) explained in his definition of critical theory. For example, Smith (1999) says:

One of the strategies which Indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bind people together politically is a strategy which asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream and set a new vision. (p. 152)

Drawing from the decolonizing efforts of Aboriginal people, it became obvious to me that Indigenous theory has commonalities with critical theory, and that both theoretical positions are

directly related to the “envisioning of new possibilities” statement made by Creswell. I earnestly read and interpreted what Linda Tuhiwai Smith was writing about to provide a foundation for understanding an Indigenous paradigm. Although I am cognisant that there are “gaps” that exist in critical theory when relating it to Indigenous theory, I find the correlation of Indigenous and critical perspectives with each other to be profound. I believe that for this research with APIs, these approaches are especially fitting.

In the pages that follow, I provide an analysis of the perspectives from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars about Indigenous and critical theory and embed the significance of these theoretical paradigms. As I write about Indigenous theory, I integrate the foundations of this perspective through the ontological and epistemological positions found within the philosophies of various Indigenous scholars (Aboloson, 2011; Meyer, 2000; Meyer, 2003a; Meyer 2003b; Wilson 2008) and the important influence of Métissage to this work (Chambers et al., 2008; Donald, 2011; Richardson, 2006). As I write about critical theory, I will reference some of what is included in the theoretical positions of this perspective and will discuss some of the scholars I find useful for my work.

It is important that I provide a descriptive interpretation of these two paradigms so I am able to explain both the relevancy and irrelevancy of critical theory to Indigenous theoretical frameworks, and why such a theoretical perspective is effective in studying the integration of IK within an API. Finally, I reflect on the role and influence of power within such relationships and how a critical-Indigenous theoretical approach can effectively bring together some of the often conflicting dynamics in education.

Indigenous Theory. To begin my overview of Indigenous theory, I would like to provide two understandings of the term “Indigenous” that I find to be particularly useful for establishing

a foundation for my reflections on an Indigenous theoretical paradigm. The first description comes from the United Nations (UN) in a document titled, *Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices* (n.d.). The UN does not align itself with one particular definition of the word “Indigenous”, but does provide some statements associated with a modern understanding of what the term Indigenous may mean to Indigenous peoples (n.d., p. 1). This includes:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and acceptance by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs.
- From non-dominant groups of society.
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (p. 1)

The second description of the term Indigenous that I relate to comes from Lewis Cardinal (2001). Cardinal (2001) explains how important it is that the word “Indigenous” be understood. I agree with Cardinal’s statement and know from my own experiences as an academic and working in a university environment that the meaning of the word “Indigenous” can be misinterpreted.

Cardinal (2001) says:

In Latin it means “born of the land” or “springs from the land,” which is a context. We can take that to mean “born of its context,” born of that environment. When you create something from an Indigenous perspective, therefore, you create it from that environment, from that land in which it sits. Indigenous peoples with their traditions and customs are shaped by the environment, by the land. They have a spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to that land. It speaks to them; it gives them their responsibility for stewardship; and it sets out a relationship. (p. 180)

The understandings presented by the UN (n.d.) and Cardinal (2001) contextualizes the word “Indigenous” and situate it in a holistic and interrelated position that makes room for the diverse Indigenous perspectives and cultural frameworks one will find within this paradigm.

Influences of Indigenous Theory. Unlike my connection to critical theory as a graduate student, my connection to Indigenous theory was not as immediate. Beginning my graduate studies in 2001, the majority of the readings and theoretical positions I was left to interpret and identify with were from scholarship that has an embedded history within academia and did not speak from the ontological or epistemological views of Aboriginal people. Don Fixico (2003) remarks how:

American Indian history, produced by linear scholars, is written from a “window” perspective “about” Native Americans. This characteristic is changing. Within this generation of scholarship since the 1980s, historians and insightful scholars are addressing the dynamics of cross-cultural experiences between Indian and whites. But what is needed is a new bridge of innovative theory and methodology to understand Native methodology from an Indian and/or tribal perspective. (p. 24)

As I mentioned earlier, part of the inclination and reason why I was so drawn to critical theory was because of the fact that it was the first time I was reading something that I could relate my experiences and thoughts to in relation to where I wanted my research to go with Aboriginal education. Many of the Indigenous scholars I was utilizing in my research were acknowledging the lack of methodology, especially in regards to Aboriginal education (see Eber Hampton, 1995). The amount of scholarly resources and scholarly dialogue that I could access in those early years of graduate school made my positioning as a critical theorist much easier.

My introduction to the book that was published in 1999 by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, was a turning point for me in relation to Indigenous theory and was when I first understood, at a philosophical *and* practical level, that traditional methodologies were seeking decolonization! This book continues to be a strong example of Indigenous theory

for me. As a Métis woman who grew up outside my culture and was immersed in a Western school system and framework of understanding for the first eighteen years of my life, I was completely naive about the major gap that exists in much of the literature and research I was utilizing as an Aboriginal student.

To be truthful, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's writing that links the methodologies of research with colonialism was an intimidating piece of scholarly work for me. It made me question my own positioning as an Aboriginal student and reflect greatly on my academic work. I needed to learn and understand more about what Linda Tuhiwai Smith was writing about and in doing so I became acquainted and attracted to the threads within an Indigenous paradigm. According to Ermine (1995a) IKs are:

...experientially based and depend on subjective experiences and the inner workings of the self to generate social interpretations, meanings and explanations. Indigenous knowledges are also holistic and relational. Such knowledge forms relate the physical to the metaphysical realms of life. They connect economic, cultural, political, spiritual, ecological and material forces and conditions. Indigenous epistemologies are grounded in an awareness and deep appreciation of the cosmos and how the self/selves, spiritual, known and unknown worlds are interconnected. The appreciation of the outer self and space is connected to an understanding of the inner sense of self. (as cited in Sefa Dei, 2000, p. 115)

Kathleen Aboloso (2011) writes that an "Indigenous paradigm instigates a paradigm shift in our thinking and approach to Indigenous re-search" (p. 56). The shift from an Indigenous "perspective" to an Indigenous "paradigm" has been an awakening for me.

As the depth of literature discussing Indigenous paradigms and theoretical positions grows, the academic environment and my own research skills and abilities develop too. I have been privileged to learn more about myself and my cultural reflections because of these Indigenous scholarly contributions. As Margaret Kovach (2009) explains, "Indigenous research frameworks reference cultural grounding specifically or generally, and permeate the research in a

manner consistent with the researcher's relationship with his or her culture" (p. 116). My comfort level and familiarity with Indigenous theoretical dialogue continues to evolve, and my experience of the relatedness of an Indigenous paradigm to Aboriginal education becomes more profound and important. Knowing that the principles of Indigenous theory should be included in these educationally related discussions is something I strive to contribute to through my work.

Premises of Indigenous Theory. As with the other dominant paradigms, the Indigenous paradigm is identified with its own unique ontological and epistemological positions. Although still "relegated to the margins" (Haig-Brown 2008, p. 15) in academia, I do hear how Indigenous theoretical positions are referred to more often in disciplines outside of "First Nations Studies" and by non-Aboriginal scholars. Michael Marker (2004) remarks that "there has been a general and significant advancement in the level of cultural responsiveness to Indigenous perspectives in post-secondary education" (p. 102). Haig-Brown (2008) points out that those in the academy who choose to listen and learn from Indigenous people may "find themselves transported in a life-changing process" and begin to recognize their existence in a broader world (p. 15). Indeed, there is much to learn through an examination of the fundamental principles of Indigenous theory.

Ontology. The first position of Indigenous theory to be examined here is that of ontology. Ontology refers to the nature of being and becoming, existence, and reality. I am inspired by the books of Archibald (2008) and Atleo (2004) that relate the ontological positions of Aboriginal people effectively through story and narrative. Shawn Wilson (2008) summarizes the ontological positioning within an Indigenous methodology that is part of Indigenous theory:

In an Indigenous methodology there may be multiple realities... the difference is that, rather than the truth being something that is "out there" or external, reality is in the *relationship* one has with the truth... Thus there is no one definite reality but rather

different sets of relationships that make up an Indigenous ontology.” (p. 73, emphasis added)

Manulani Aluli Meyer (2003b) affirms this principle when explaining how ontology for her “is a synonym for the essence of what it means to be Hawaiian... [it] is tied to cosmology, belief structures and practices that uphold specific values, ways of understanding the world, and ways of engaging” (p. 78). Kuokkanen also (2007) describes how “many Indigenous ontologies, however separate and distinct, share certain fundamental perceptions of the order of things, especially as these relate to the human relationship to and position in the world” (p. 59). The inter-relationship between ontology and worldview is striking (Hart, 2010). Michael A. Hart (2010) remarks that “how people see the world will influence their understanding of what exists, and vice-versa” (p. 1). Remembering to consider the ontological position of Indigenous people and communities is a fundamental consideration within an Indigenous research paradigm.

Epistemology. The next position to be addressed concerning Indigenous theory is epistemology or how we know. Shawn Wilson (2008) says, “epistemology includes entire systems of knowledge and relationships” (p. 74). Marie Battiste (1998) further explains: “the complementary modes of knowing in the tribal world form the essence of tribal epistemology and have been continually transmitted through oral tradition” (p. 18). The concept of “knowing” in the tribal world shapes everything relating to epistemology in an Indigenous paradigm.

Manulani Aluli Meyer (2001) notes:

It is a strange world indeed, to wake up and realize that everything I have learned in school, everything I’ve read in books, every vocabulary test and jumping jack, every seating arrangement and response expectation – absolutely everything -- has been shaped by a Hawaiian mind.” (124)

The linking of and connection between the ontology and epistemology within an Indigenous paradigm should not be overlooked. Indeed, it is reflected through Indigenous-based research on epistemology that the nature of this relationship is intrinsic and necessary.

In questioning through her research what Hawaiian epistemology is, Manulani Meyer (2003b) provides seven themes of Hawaiian epistemology:

1. Spirituality and Knowledge: The Cultural Context of Knowledge embodies that spirituality is a domain of experience that solidifies our personal understanding and interpretation of the world. (p. 154)
2. That Which Feeds Physical Place and Knowing – how land, as a physical place, is an extension of the spirit and cultural epistemology. (p. 158)
3. Cultural Nature of the Senses: Expanding Notions of Empiricism – this third thematic category depicts how integral our senses are as an epistemological theme and how we learn and understand the world around us. (p. 162)
4. Relationship and Knowledge: Notions of Self Through Other – in this category, *relationships* are imperative to the transfer of our knowledge experiences. (p. 167)
5. Utility and Knowledge: Ideas of Wealth and Usefulness – this theme is linked with how purpose and function is tied to knowledge. (p. 170) Finding one's relationship with the natural world helps define what is worth knowing. (p. 171)
6. Words and Knowledge; Causality in Language – in this category, hermeneutics influence how one will learn depending on who is teaching (p. 174).
7. The Body/Mind Question: The Illusion of Separation – the separation of the body and mind is not found within a Hawaiian worldview. In this epistemological theme, Meyer (2003b) relates that feeling something is not strictly emotional. (p. 177) Rather, it is instinctual and part of our embodied knowledge system. (p. 177)

Manulani Meyer (2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b) expresses the depth of the Indigenous epistemological position from a Hawaiian perspective. I believe that her seven thematic categories signify a necessity to take the time to understand the magnitude of importance that *relationships* and *spirituality* hold in this epistemological position.

To further the importance of relationships, Meyer (2000) discusses five integrated areas for understanding our human potential that are related to this epistemological grounding and that

knowledge coming from our five senses has a distinct relationship with the culture we know (p. 31). Meyer believes that we must restore the rift between mind and body and counter the scientifically embedded understandings of intellectuals like Descartes who see mind and body as separate entities; we must understand that our responsibility to the world as knowing who you are becomes a prerequisite for knowing how best you can serve and maximize your human potential (p. 31-32). We must discipline our minds and watch what we say because “we know, we really know, that words hold *mana*¹⁸ and that the origins of how words are shaped, in our intentions, also hold *mana*” (p. 33). Finally, we must develop our sense of deep spirit (our *aloha*).¹⁹ Although challenging, by developing this deep spirit, and understanding how we come to know the world, we expand our human potential (p. 33). The relationship of this development cannot be separated from an Indigenous research paradigm. Because this epistemological and ontological perspective is based upon multidimensional relationships, a distinctly Indigenous perspective emerges (Wilson, 2008).

Métissage as Research Praxis. As a Métis scholar, I use an Indigenous framework with Indigenous ontology. In particular, I will focus on the construct of “Métissage” and use the Métis Sash as the conceptual framework for delivering my findings. As Chambers, et al. (2003) describe:

as a research praxis, Métissage seeks cross-cultural, egalitarian relations of knowing and being...it respects the historical interrelatedness of traditions, collective contexts, and individual circumstances while resisting 19th century scholarly conventions of concrete disciplines with corresponding rhetorics for conducting and representing research. (p. 142)

Métissage and the Métis Sash provide a place for the transfer of knowledge accumulated in my research and represent a blending of cultures, world views, and experiences found within the

¹⁸ *Mana*: supernatural or divine power; authority (Meyer, 2003b, p. 233).

¹⁹ *Aloha*: love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, grace (Meyer, 2003b, p. 232).

relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. Through this framework, a strong Indigenous approach to research unfolds.

I did not know about “Métissage” until recently. UNBC had an opening for a faculty position in the Department of First Nations Studies and when I saw the list of candidates who would be interviewed, I did some research on each of them to see their backgrounds and scholarly contributions. One of the candidates, Métis scholar Dr. Greg Lowan-Trudeau, was noted to have produced articles that included the word, Métissage.

I was able to attend Dr. Lowan-Trudeau’s public presentation at UNBC during his interview. I was elated to watch Dr. Lowan-Trudeau eloquently integrate a theoretical concept and framework that was strongly positioned in Métis culture and tradition. In addition to Dr. Lowan-Trudeau using Métissage as a theoretical positioning, he used the Métis flag as his metaphorical framework in his PhD research. After the presentation, Dr. Lowan-Trudeau gave me several names of authors I should read to learn about the theory of Métissage. Although I had already convinced myself that I was quite comfortable in focusing on the concept of “wholeness” or “oneness” as a theoretical construct (see Atleo, 2004; Atleo, 2011), I have had a completely new and refreshing connection to the theory of Métissage.

Because of the fact that I have always wanted to use the Métis Sash as a metaphorical framework for this research, it is especially fitting to also include the theoretical paradigm of “Métissage.” Its relatedness to Métis people and Métis culture, experiences, and realities makes it the right choice for the integrated, interrelated approach I took with this research. As a research praxis, “métissage seeks cross-cultural, egalitarian relations, collective contexts, and individual circumstances while resisting 19th century scholarly conventions of discrete

disciplines with corresponding rhetorics for conducting and representing research” (Chambers, et al., 2008, p. 142).

As a research practice, for me, Métissage invites a blending of an array of knowledges and ways of being that can be transformed to become distinct and uniquely valued as a scholarly paradigm. My own struggles with first trying to understand how an academic theory could be relevant for my life and my own academic experiences make sense to me using the practice of Métissage along with the framework of the Métis Sash. I am connected to this paradigm on a very personal level, so I do not feel as though initially having had an absence of cultural knowledge about myself and my family displaces me from utilizing this Indigenous paradigm. I believe Métissage to be a welcoming of integration and experiences that will continue to contribute to the evolution of this theory in academia and beyond.

As a theoretical foundation that I identify with and can relate my own identity to, I feel fortunate to be able to use Métissage as representative of my own history and culture. Similar to Robinson’s (2008) use of *Sayt-K'il'im-Goot* or “Of One Heart” to represent his identity as a Nisga’a man born into a Nation where culture and identity is part of that holistic premise of oneness, Métissage allows me the freedom and flexibility to integrate my own knowledges and experiences as a Métis woman who continues to grow and learn about myself and the rich history I am part of. So while non-Indigenous positions are acknowledged in my work, Indigenous theory and an Indigenous framework take a prominent and important position. I continue to respectfully and meaningfully privilege the Indigenous voice while noting the important complementary parallels to non-Indigenous scholarly work.

As this research relates to the study of APIs in British Columbia, Indigenous theory and Métissage provide an invaluable platform to begin integrating the ideologies, the knowledges,

and cultural relevancies of the words of my research participants as well as the scholarly literature. I believe that by using an Indigenous theory such as Métissage, the complementary aspects of the critical frameworks described below are both ideal and practical for this work.

Critical Theory

John Creswell's work provides a basic introductory foundation to qualitative research. However, digging deeper into other scholars interested in analyzing methodological approaches and theoretical paradigms provides a more comprehensive picture. The work of scholars like Paulo Freire (2009/1970) and Jan Fook (2002) (to be discussed more specifically later in this chapter) provides useful examples of these perspectives as "living" paradigms that provide concrete illustrations of how critical theory is embedded in Indigenous theory. Also, it is important to acknowledge in this analysis the influence that the decolonizing efforts of Indigenous people have on critical theoretical positions.

There are many definitions of what critical theory is, but for the purposes of this research, I will include the definition provided by Shawn Wilson (2008). Wilson is an Indigenous scholar who has written material on Indigenous methodologies and, although I initially had difficulty building a relationship with his text, rereading *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* a few times has allowed me the opportunity to reflect on all the relevant and important information being explored in his text.

Wilson (2008) notes "critical theory... holds that reality is more fluid or plastic than one fixed truth... critical theorists contend that reality has been shaped into its present form by our cultural, gender, social, and other values" (p. 36). As a paradigm, critical theory is an alternative

to positivist and post-positivist research foundations (Wilson, 2008, p. 36) and critical theorists work to diffuse the universalization of marginalization that has emerged in the era of “‘post’ theoretical positions (i.e. postpositivism, postcolonialism, postmodernism)” (Kovach, 2009, p. 75) since by universalizing marginalized peoples, the important and unique circumstances can be overlooked and neglected.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) explain that the ontology of critical theory is inclusive of historical realism and is a virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethical, and gender values affirmed over time (p. 165). The epistemology behind research that is driven by critical theory is that the researcher influences the subject and the inquiry through interaction while at the same time shaping the reality because of this (Wilson, 2008, p. 36). It is important that researchers acknowledge the power that they hold when using critical theory and that the methodological positioning in critical theory is “to use transactions between the researcher and the subjects to have a more informed consciousness, with the final goal of seeing how to change and improve the fluid reality” (Wilson, 2008, p. 37). Therefore, acknowledging how dialogue and interaction affected the research process and how those experiences led me to utilize Indigenous and critical theory became pivotal in creating my research framework.

There are many philosophers of higher education who are influenced by critical theory and apply the foundation of critical thought to their scholarly work (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 228). Habermas (in Elias & Merriam, 1995) writes his critical philosophy from a foundation of “technical, practical, and emancipatory forms of knowledge.” That stance has attracted other scholars such as Griffen, as explained in his text *Curriculum Theory in Adult and Lifelong Learning* (1983). For Griffen, an adequate theory of adult education looks at “the issues raised in philosophy, sociology, and politics” (Elias and Merriam, 1995, p. 228). This is representative

of how critical theorists who work with community, “are painfully aware of the necessity for members of the community, or research participants, to take control of their futures” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 175).

As explained in Elias and Merriam (1995), Collins (1991) also provides an argument for adult learning based on more than psychology or technical rationality. Collins (1991) believes that “Habermas’s fresh approach to dialogue as communicative action and praxis as a dialectical process adds an important element to Freirean theory” (Elias and Merriam, 1995, p. 229). As this chapter turns towards a discussion of Paulo Freire and Jan Fook and their tenants of critical thought, it is important to reiterate that Lincoln and Guba (2000) explain that, “critical theorists... [and] inquirers take their primary field of interest to be... subjective and intersubjective social knowledge and the active construction and co-creation of such knowledge by human agents that is produced by human consciousness” (p. 176-177).

Paulo Freire. As an Indigenous scholar who has been intrigued by the critical theoretical paradigm, I am particularly fascinated by the work of Paulo Freire. Freire’s work was first introduced to me when I was a graduate student in a seminar course, where we were discussing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2009/1970). While initially being challenged with some of the language and terminology used in his writing, the premise of what he wrote about resonated with me in meaningful ways. His concepts of “liberation education”, “education for critical consciousness”, “the practice of freedom”, and “conscientização”²⁰, made sense to me as I navigated the world of Aboriginal education and attempted to articulate some of the thoughts provided by Freire (1998, 2005/1974, 2009/1970) to where I was positioned as a Métis scholar

²⁰ The term *conscientização* represents the *development* of the awakening of critical consciousness (Goulet as cited in Freire, 1974, p. 15). Freire used this term to capture the complex ontological, epistemological, and ethical political features of education as a practice of freedom (Glass, 2001, p. 19).

and instructor working with Aboriginal students and communities in Northern British Columbia. Interestingly Freire was not Indigenous himself but someone who grew up with Indigenous people around him and who was concerned for their education and welfare.

The legacy left by Freire helps shape and inspire innovative educational initiatives throughout the world. Ronald Glass (2001) writes:

Nearly four years after his death, a world still mourns Paulo Freire. Freire's theory about the relationship between liberation and education has inspired and informed countless efforts to make life more humane for those oppressed by economic and ideological structures that deny them their dignity, rights, and self-determination. (p. 15)

In the introduction of the 30th Anniversary Edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, 2009), Donald Macedo (2009) writes about Freire's relentless commitment to highlight the tensions and contradictions embedded in the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor while Macedo debunks any criticism of Freire's philosophy (p. 11-29).

Paulo Freire's work arose in concrete historical circumstances as a method and then as a philosophy to bring oppressed people to both literacy and political consciousness (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 164). He believed that "theory and practice must exist in dialectical unity" (Pihama as cited in Barker, 2005, 196). By philosophizing about the deficits within education and bringing forward the complexities that exist as to why certain groups in our society are marginalized, Freire enlightens the reader about the layered nature of the relationship the colonizer has with the colonized and the role education can have to liberate and free humanity (Freire, 1998, 2005/1974, 2009/1970).

Ambitions to liberate, to become free, and to become totally human premise all of Freire's desires, and he uses education as his tool, his anchor to imagine a new reality and beginning for oppressed peoples. Freire's work is significant for my research on relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions because Freire's liberating

and self-determining thoughts are powerful for Aboriginal communities, especially when considering the vision for an API.

Jan Fook. In her book entitled *Social Work: Critical theory and practice* (2002), Jan Fook has developed some relevant tenets of thought through critical theory that can be considered alongside Indigenous theory and education more generally. Fook (2002) explains that “critical reflection... is both an approach (a way of understanding knowledge and its generation) and a process (‘a way of creating knowledge’ that can help one respond to power dynamics in a ‘relevant and effective way’)” (p. 157). Some of the tenets that Fook (2002) draws from include the notion that critical theory involves knowing in new ways, language, power, discourse, and identity. I will draw on some of these tenets in the analysis below.

Fook (2002) argues that critical theory challenges positivist and scientifically objective measurements of knowledge through the following ways:

- by asking what constitutes ‘acceptable’ knowledge, and whether and why some forms of knowledge are valued over others;
- by focusing on how we know, as well as what we know;
- by drawing attention to different perspectives on what and how we know;
- by drawing attention to the perspectives of the knower, and how it influences what is known and how it is known (reflexivity). (p. 34)

The undertones of this same line of critique of positivist notions of “knowledge” is found in premises of Indigenous theory as well.

In relation to Fook’s tenets of thought on language, power, and discourse, she acknowledges that “because there must necessarily be a gap between what we think, see, feel, experience and how we express it, then it implies that there is a choice (whether or not we are aware of it) about how to convey what we think, see, feel or experience to other people” (p. 64).

How language is used to express this becomes a crucial component of discourse and of how we are expressing experiences (Fook, 2002, p. 64).

Ultimately, Fook (2002) argues that language is not a neutral part of expression, and that language must be acknowledged as an issue of power. It is through the language we use that the world views and value systems of the dominant group are expressed (p. 66). Fook (2002) states:

Power, in this sense, is exercised through control of discourse. This accounts for why dominant meaning systems often go unquestioned, and even subordinate groups act against their own self-interest, because they unwittingly comply with the dominant discourse. (p. 66)

Echoing what Freire (2009/1970) describes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, particularly when he states that “the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires” (p. 47), Fook integrates the issues of language, power, and discourse as a part of critical theory.

The final piece I want to bring forward from Fook is her position on identity, the critical components of identity and how it influences critical expression. Quoting from Best and Kellner (1991), Fook explains that identity politics bring forward the possibility of “resisting domination through the recognition of difference and the creation of new identity categories as a result” (p. 84). Fook (2002) believes that identity construction plays an important role in the empowerment of disadvantaged groups and for Aboriginal people, and control over their identification of themselves and society at large is a fundamental part of liberation and freedom.

Critical theory therefore has an important place in my positioning for research regarding the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions. Freire and Fook both bring forward ideals of how APIs and the knowledges and Indigenous foundations of these academic bodies are symbolic of challenging and stretching the academic boundaries to show

that there are other ways of seeing and knowing the world we live in. Aboriginal institutes are physical spaces for flourishing and sharing knowledge that are contesting traditional higher education expectations. The integration of spirituality, culture, languages and traditions that may not “fit” Western ideals profoundly exemplifies the self-determining nature of Aboriginal education and the resiliency of their ways of knowing and being through learning. Through critical theory, these ideals are welcomed and celebrated.

When contextualizing and understanding the relatedness of Indigenous theory and decolonizing methodologies to critical work, it is important to understand their relatedness as well as the gaps that inherently exist between them. The next section will explore the relationship between Indigenous and critical theory and why they are important for a study on APIs.

Describing the Relationship Between Indigenous and Critical Theories

As described above, Indigenous and Critical theories emerge from two distinct premises of worldview and therefore distinct knowledges that shape how the theories are normally utilized and contribute to the understanding of a particular phenomenon or issue. In the sections below, I will describe the relevancy and irrelevancy of the theories to each other and to this study as a whole. It is important to articulate how and why these two theories are utilized in order to share the story of IK and APIs most effectively and respectfully.

Relevancy. Now that I have had an opportunity to provide a glimpse into the realms of Indigenous and critical theory and position their significance in academic research, I turn towards discussing the relationality and relevancy of Indigenous and critical paradigms to each

other, and why it is important to consider these perspectives together. Kovach (2009) draws parallels in her study of Indigenous methodologies on how critical theorists see commonalities within Indigenous methodologies (including Indigenous theory). She explains:

Non-Indigenous critical theorists are strong allies for Indigenous methodologies. They can assist in making space for Indigenous methods (protocols, ethics, data collection processes), but also for the epistemic shift from a Western paradigm that Indigenous methodologies bring. In this effort, critical theorists will be asked to consider a worldview that holds beliefs about power, where it comes from, and how it is manifested, which will, at times, align with Western thought and at other times not. (Kovach, 2009, p. 86)

The alignment, or misalignment, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous thought can be a site of struggle and also a disruption to the general applicability of critical theory across the spectrum of education, especially when it involves working with an Aboriginal community. It is important that Western theoretical perspectives do not become the dominating source of positioning without adequate space and recognition of IK systems.

Examples of Indigenous Scholars Using Critical Theory. Part of my reasoning for choosing a critical framework with Indigenous theory is because of the many highly respected Indigenous academics who have also integrated a theoretical perspective, particularly the work of Paulo Freire, into their scholarly work. In explaining the nature of Indigenous theory, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that in addition to shaping a moral space that aligns critical theory with Indigenous research, an Indigenous theoretical perspective has the “same values as critical theory – namely, to resistance and struggle at the local level” (p. 9).

A value-laden perspective is necessary to consider when one thinks about the historical roots that Indigenous people, research, and world views have held in the academy. Battiste et al. (2002) write that the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal people declared that Aboriginal people must continue to “negotiate an ever widening space to implement their vision, pushing

against the confines of such restrictions” (RCAP 1996 as cited in Battiste & Henderson p. 83).

Battiste & Henderson (1996) further explain that:

The injustice of this situation is aggravated by postsecondary institutions that persist in offering a fixed menu of European heritage programs and courses toward which everyone is expected to gravitate “naturally” or be force-marched in the name of “real” knowledge and intellectual nourishment. (p. 83)

Indeed, universities as a site where Aboriginal people are still navigating through resistance and their struggle cannot be underestimated. Much of the important work done by Indigenous scholars has decolonization and change as its goal. For example, Margaret Kovach (2009) identifies a tribal methodology with theoretical positioning as having a “basis in critical theory with a decolonizing aim in that there is a commitment to praxis and social justice for Indigenous people” (p. 47). She states that “as long as decolonization is a purpose of Indigenous education and research, critical theory will be an allied Western conceptual tool for creating change” (Kovach, 2009, p. 48). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) connects her version of Indigenous inquiry, Kaupapa Maori research, with critical theory, as well as cultural studies, suggesting, like Graham Smith (2000a), that Kaupapa Maori research is a “local theoretical position that is the modality through which the emancipatory goal of critical theory, in a specific historical, political and social context is practiced” (p. 9). Taking the situated knowledge within an Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous theory and transforming it into something that it is relevant to a Western-based framework (i.e. critical theory) can contribute to an interruption of the cycle of colonial knowledge thus breaking of the parameters of a Western worldview.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) acknowledge how critical theorists like Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez (as cited in Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008) argue that “Indigenous knowledge is a rich social resource for any justice-related attempt to bring about social change” (p. 136).

Indeed, there are other Indigenous scholars who recognize and relate to specific aspects and

qualities of Paulo Freire's theory, specifically the notion of "conscientização." Manulani Meyer (2003a) asks: "Can the experience of hermeneutics escort us into Paulo Freire's 'Critical Consciousness' phase in his Theory of Conscientization?" (p. 54).

In an interview with Marie Battiste, Lynne Belle, and L.M. Findlay (2002b), Linda Tuhiwai Smith remarks: "I guess for us we have probably taken Freire's term of *conscientization* and Indigenized it for Maori... We have done that through a number of programs, very specific programs that did come out of Freire" (p. 177). It thus becomes clear that the relational aspects of Freire's critical consciousness are acceptable to many Indigenous scholars.

In fact, Graham Smith, in an interview with Margaret Kovach (2009), says, "I prefer to use the term and talk about *conscientization* rather than colonization because such a term is more positive... it puts a focus on us at the centre rather than the colonizers and it also centres concerns about our development" (p. 91). This creates a shift in power relations and the agency of thought and knowledge where there is room for self-determining motives to emerge and have a voice. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that "most discussion about Kaupapa Maori is also located in relation to critical theory, in particular to the notions of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation" (p. 185). Indeed, in reference to the Kaupapa Maori theoretical positioning, some of the elements of Paulo Freire and critical theory are pivotal.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) provide the eight principles originating from Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000b, p. 239) that the Indigenous critical researcher needs to ask:

1. What research do we want done?
2. Who is it for?
3. What difference will it make?
4. Who will carry it out?
5. How do we want the research done?
6. How will we know it is worthwhile?
7. Who will own the research?
8. Who will benefit? (p. 9)

By being grounded in community and localized knowledge, one is able to include the prominent aspects of both Indigenous and critical theories and have a respectful and meaningful research engagement. The relevancy of critical theory to an Indigenous framework comes from examining the fundamental principles of what scholars such as Freire want to achieve (i.e., liberation and humanization) and include an engagement of the human consciousness. Being localized and justice-orientated makes room for the Indigenous and critical theorist to come together in a research endeavour. Scholars who problematize this are cited below.

Irrelevancy of Critical Theory. It is also important to note that there are many scholars, from multiple paradigmatic perspectives, who argue that critical theory fails as a theoretical concept. For instance, Denzin, and Lincoln (2008) point out how poststructural and postmodern feminists believe that critical theory neglects issues related to “biography, history, emotionality, sexual politics, gender, and patriarchy” (p. 9). Perspectives of the white male theorist (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 209 as cited in Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith 2008), the feminist scholars of colour (Darder et al., 2003, p. 17 as cited in Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith 2008, p. 9), and working class educators find that critical theory in its essence is unable to address all the issues and complexities that exist in all perspectives, and is often saturated in language that is so elitist it can be interpreted as oppressive (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 9). This criticism from a breadth of disciplines shows that critical theory will not necessarily meet the needs of all scholarly perspectives.

For Indigenous researchers, there are some obvious prominent gaps and inconsistencies to consider when contemplating the integration of the two theoretical paradigms. As the premise of critical theory is still founded and developed from a Western framework, there are some areas where critical theory falls short when being compared to Indigenous theory. As explained by

Shawn Wilson (2008), the dominant paradigms, and this includes critical theory, all have a common thread of thinking that runs through them in which “knowledge is seen as being *individual* in nature” (p. 38).

For example, Leonie Pihama (2005) explains that Kaupapa Maori theory is not constructed in the competitive hierarchy that is often the case in the assertion of Western theories (p. 201). Pihama notes that “Kaupapa Maori is not dualistic or constructed within simplistic binaries... [it is] not about asserting superiority of one set of knowledge over another or one worldview over another... it is asserting the right for Maori to be Maori on our own terms and draw from our own base to provide understandings and explanations of the world” (p. 201). This perspective is renescent with the necessary and all-encompassing interrelations that exist within an Indigenous paradigm.

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999) notes that “Bishop goes further to suggest that critical approaches to research have in fact ‘failed’ to address the issues of communities such as Maori, and that the development of alternative approaches by Maori reflects a form of resistance to critical theory” (p. 186). This resistance can be seen by other scholars, such as Sandy Grande (2008) who suggests that “abstract theories belong to the academic elite (Eurocentric) and [are] thereby contradictory to the aims of Indigenous education” (p. 236). Essentially, Grande believes that since the roots of the pedagogy of critical education are found within a Western framework of knowledge, it is inherently in tension with IK and praxis (p. 238). She explains: “in particular, the root constructs of democratization, subjectivity, and property are all defined through Western frames of reference that presume the individual as the primary subject of ‘rights’ and social status” (p. 238). Reflecting on the “individualistic nature”

of critical theory, which Shawn Wilson describes as a fundamental tension, Indigenous scholars like Grande do not perceive it as compatible with Indigenous theory.

According to Urion (1999, p. 7), academic discourse concerning Indigenous education has largely been shadowed by the larger, more acceptable Western framework of thought.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) note that:

While committed to [liberation] critical pedagogy's key values of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation, critics nonetheless take issue with how these values are implemented into practice. Indigenous scholars argue that some versions of critical pedagogy under theorize and diminish the importance of [I]ndigenous concepts of identity, sovereignty, land, tradition, literacy, and language. (p. 8)

Tensions arise between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal discourse (Urion, 1999, p. 7) and as Kovach (2009) explains, "while critical theory and postmodern analysis have created space within Western science for representation, voice, and a multiplicity of truths, the essentialism of Western thought pervading research has not been fully challenged in the academy" (p. 28). I agree that this has not been fully challenged in the academy; however, through an increase in dialogue and engagement in respectful understanding, I believe Indigenous researchers will have greater influence and ultimately alter the standardized academic discourse and research frameworks and can usefully include critical theory in their work.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) note that major issues confront all paradigms. The issues they examined that were most often in contention were: "inquiry aim, nature of knowledge, the way knowledge is accumulated, goodness (rigor and validity) or quality criteria, values, ethics, voice, training, accommodation, and hegemony" (p. 164). For many Indigenous scholars, critical theory falls short in one or more of these areas and fundamentally is misaligned with the essence of an Indigenous paradigm. Consideration must be given to these misalignments by any Indigenous scholar and finding ways to weave both theories together is important for this study.

Using Both Theories. Having provided an analysis of Indigenous and critical theory, I ask: “why incorporate both paradigms if they are not entirely relevant to each other?”

Ultimately, the reasons for using both theories in a study on partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions is layered with multiple objectives of reaching both types of institutions.

First, I am drawn to the critical theoretic framework to highlight some of the fundamental principles of how I see education initiatives bringing forward a liberating, decolonizing opportunity for Aboriginal people and their communities. Engagements between Western and non-Western institutions are impacted by the historical struggles Aboriginal people have experienced in Canada and continue to experience in our contemporary society; critical theory, and in particular some of the principles of Paulo Freire, provide a foundation for emphasizing this aspect of these post-secondary institutional relationships. I believe that the necessity for such opportunity and inclusion cannot be understated and a critical theoretical perspective can address colonizing and decolonizing issues in analyzing the benefits, the challenges, and the role of IK in these relationships.

The inclusion of Indigenous theory is something that I see as not only important as an Indigenous scholar, but also as absolutely necessary in conducting strong and relevant research for the people and communities I worked with by creating space for the integration of diverse IKS and perspectives in this study. The differing cultural perspectives, knowledges, and contributions to the existence of these partnerships are important to this research, and having an Indigenous theoretical position is important. Nichols and LaFrance (2006) say that “conducting culturally competent evaluation in Indian Country requires an understanding of the rich diversity of tribal peoples and recognition of Indian self-determination and tribal sovereignty... if an

evaluation can be embedded within an Indigenous framework it is more responsive to tribal ethics and values” (p. 33). The utilization of Indigenous theory is a respectful and meaningful way to include the values and goals of APIs. As an Aboriginal person conducting this research, it is of great significance to me that I appropriately and respectfully represent the voices and interests of all.

Sefa Dei (2000) asks: “How does one arrive at meaningful and genuine theories (discursive frameworks) that take into account different philosophical traditions (e.g. Western and Indigenous thought)?” (p. 119). Considering that the dominant theoretical, knowledge, and research-based frameworks traditionally practiced in an academic setting are not born from an Indigenous paradigm, this is an important question to ask. Sefa Dei (2000) explains:

To integrate Indigenous knowledges into Western academies is to recognize that different knowledges can coexist, that different knowledges can complement each other, and also that knowledges can be in conflict at the same time. A falsely dichotomous thinking between ‘Indigenous’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ knowledges can be avoided by understanding that the ‘past/traditional’ and the ‘modern’ are not frozen in time and space. The past continues to influence the present and vice versa. (p. 120)

It is difficult to know if paradigms can ever be commensurable (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 174) or if Indigenous and critical theory should ever be measured against each other. Instead, I see that there is a *relationship* and a *relevance* that can harmonize with each other, and this is what I have integrated in this particular study.

Symbolic throughout my research is my position as an Indigenous scholar who utilizes an Indigenous approach to research while also integrating Western tools of thought (i.e. critical theory) to articulate research questions and goals. The relationship and relevance of the theoretical foundation I draw from enables a distinct and important inclusion of the gifts that come to us from the spheres of an Indigenous intellectual tradition that is inclusive and meaningful while also having space for Western ideals that complement, and relate to, the

ideologies of Indigenous theory. Métissage prevails throughout this work as an ideal since blending the principles of knowledges and ways of being in this paradigm undoubtedly makes the varying perspectives and philosophies included here fitting and relevant. Indigenous post-secondary institutions are influenced by non-Indigenous post-secondary Institutions in the world we live in. We live in a dual world.

Power. Now that I am coming to the end of my discussion of Indigenous and critical theoretical perspectives, I want to conclude by underlining some of the issues of power that are embedded in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions. It is important to highlight some of the realities that Indigenous communities and Aboriginal people face in areas of higher learning.

Overcoming Issues of Power in Education. Jessica Ball (2004) discusses how “one of the main avenues for subjugating Indigenous peoples to colonial culture and governance has been through the imposition of education, most powerfully through the ‘Indian Residential Schools’ program, that denies the legitimacy of thought, lifestyles, religions, and languages of First Nations people” (p. 457). It is evident through the material already discussed in this chapter that although such assimilationist tactics no longer exist in the form of Residential Schools, there is still much to be done in order to permeate the mainstream academic world that is grounded in a Western philosophy of education and knowing with an acceptance of Indigenous philosophy and knowledge.

Eber Hampton (in Castellano, 2000a) explains that “[a]n examination of any university’s research budget will show that very little is spent on issues of direct interest to Aboriginal peoples, and almost none is conducted by Aboriginal people” (p. 14). This is especially significant when considering the governance and capacity commitment necessary for an

effectively functioning relationship. As APIs are more vulnerable to having a lack of financial resources than mainstream universities, these kinds of issues can position people differently in the academy and affect their interaction.

Since mainstream universities and APIs are essentially representing two different world views and have different commitments to the local communities they serve, Sefa Dei (2000)

notes:

There is potential for resistance within the structures of power and knowledge (Foucault 1980, 1983, Prakash 1992, Moore 1997). A knowledge of how power relations are articulated in societies, rather than the mere maintenance of power for itself, illuminates Indigenous forms of colonial resistances and how such knowledge retains relevancy in understanding contemporary social relations and social change. (p. 116)

Even though Aboriginal people have generally not benefitted from mainstream post-secondary education (Ball, 2004), Aboriginal communities and people are in a position where they are

working to:

Revitalize their cultures, assert the legitimacy of their culturally-based values and practices as integral to the fabric of Canadian society as a whole, and foster... positive identities with their Indigenous cultures of origin... Indigenous groups are seeking ways to use education, training, and other capacity-building tools in order to maintain, revitalize, and re-envision cultural knowledge and ways of life. (p. 456)

Coming from a history and experience where colonization continues to influence each of these endeavours, Indigenous communities work towards mitigating the power relationships embedded in Canadian society so as to find ways to transform the academy. Facilitating their knowledge and theoretical approaches so they can be used by APIs is an excellent way to facilitate this revitalization.

Reflecting on some of the notions of power as described by Foucault (1994), a foundation can be created for more effectively overcoming these issues, especially through education and

the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary schools. As described by Sawicki (1991), in Fook (2002),

- Power is exercised, not possessed
- Power is both repressive and productive
- Power comes from the bottom up (p. 52)

Indeed, Marie Battiste (2013) points out that those who hold the “power” have the authority to control the diffusion of knowledge and knowledges that exist in educational systems (p. 96). It is important that APIs are included as just one example of how Indigenous people are utilizing their own ways of being and knowing to educate and integrate multiple knowledge systems and perspectives to construct a more meaningful and fulfilling academic experience.

My study relied on a strong, relevant, and meaningful theoretical position that was vital for the success of my research. I used Graham Smith’s (2005) starting point for the minimal set of conditions I considered for “Indigenous theorizing” (p. 10). Smith (2005) says the theory should have the following characteristics:

- i. It is connected to a specific cultural location and site (contextual); it is tested in practice;
- ii. It is organically connected (made with the people, not just in the academy and is reflected on and grown through praxis);
- iii. The person proposing the claim to ‘theory’ has some cultural skills and is able to connect with the epistemological foundations of the knowledge, language and culture related to the people to whom the theory is applicable; (cultural skill)
- iv. It is transformative (status quo is not working – must focus on change)
- v. It is portable (rather than universal)
- vi. It has the flexibility to critique and renew itself (praxis)
- vii. It is engaging of other theory, able to justify its existence (movement toward theory not away)

- viii. It is critical (able to critically engage new and traditional formations of colonization – colonization from external forces and internal colonization already working within and through ourselves)
- ix. It is responsive to multiple sites of struggle and engagement (flexible)
- x. It is easy for the people to understand (speaks to people) (p. 10)

Using these characteristics created my Indigenous foundation with a critical theoretical perspective as a powerful ally in this research concerning the integration of IK in APIs.

Conclusion

How and why a researcher chooses to use a particular theory for his/her study is an important point to articulate. In this chapter, I have described why I chose to use both Indigenous and Western theoretical concepts and how they complement one another, but also how they are different and do not always have the same goals. Ultimately, premising my research on using Métissage as a framework to use the Métis Sash to talk about the qualitative portion of this study, my theoretical choice embodies principles and values of inclusion and harmony where I have utilized the relevance and relationship that theories may have to create an overall paradigm. Chapter Four describes in more detail how the integration of Graham Smith's (2005) conditions does indeed contribute to an authentic and respectful approach for this research where I honour community and the knowledges of the participants that I was fortunate to have included in this study so I may share more of the story I want to tell about APIs in BC.

Chapter 4: The Contextual Tapestry: Research Methods and Study Framework

Shawn Wilson (2008) uses writing letters to his children in positioning his presentation of Indigenous research methodology. In a similar format, I use the letter below to extend my humble appreciation for being able to meet the students, staff, and Elders of the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University (CCWU) program. As a life changing experience, I cannot express enough gratitude for being afforded the opportunity to work with the CCWU program in Williams Lake, BC. Here I dedicate the letter to the students, staff, and Elders of CCWU who I came to know and learn from. This letter contributes to the foundation of my methodological description and the strong and ever-lasting reasons for me completing this work:

Gratitude to the Students, Staff, and Elders of CCWU

April 3, 2015

It feels like it was yesterday when, in 2007, Dr. Blanca Schorcht asked me if I would like to teach for the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (a.k.a “Weekend U”). I had recently completed my Master of Arts degree in First Nations Studies and had been teaching for the Northern Advancement Program and the School of Education and I was in the midst of negotiating an employment contract to work in the Office of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

To be honest, I was extremely nervous about teaching at Weekend U. In addition to planning and coordinating time away from work and my children, I had what felt like a hundred questions mulling around in my mind. Would I do a good job? Is it too far of a drive for me to do every two weeks? How will things work with my children (who were only toddlers at the time)? And **what exactly is Weekend University?** It was interesting to me that even though I had taken a class with some of the Weekend U students in 2006 when they were in Prince George over the summer for one of their courses, I still did not completely understand the program and more importantly, I had no idea how incredibly unique and special Weekend U was.

After talking with my family about taking the teaching contract, I decided that it was something that I would really like to do. I was excited about the new challenge and experience and eagerly awaited the start date to begin teaching First Nations Studies 100 for CCWU (Caribou Chilcotin Weekend University) at the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) campus in Williams Lake, BC

I clearly remember the first day of that class. I had over 20 First Nations students who represented the diverse Bands around the Williams Lake area who were meeting me (and me meeting them) for the first time. It was awesome. The students were excited to be there and eagerly shared with me some of their background and post-secondary experiences more generally. Although I knew that many of the students already knew each other, they warmly welcomed me and expressed interest in me personally and how I structured the course. I cannot articulate in words how that day marked a transformative and powerful higher learning experience. Throughout all of the courses I taught for the CCWU Program (4 in total) the value of Indigeneity and the principles of Aboriginal knowledge infused each and every aspect of my entire experience. Here, I humbly share my gratitude:

To my former students - the stories and wisdom you shared in the class discussions, your presentations, and your papers defined a relationship of reciprocal learning I could have never imagined as a young, junior Instructor. Thank you.

To the staff who coordinated the Weekend U program - your time and commitment to ensuring that this program was successful, meaningful, and had an impact on the Aboriginal learners and their communities was unmistakable. Your support for me as an Instructor was greatly appreciated and I deeply value the relationships I was able to build with you.

To the Elders and all of my guest speakers who came to the classes – the wisdom you shared is invaluable. The generosity of your time, knowledge, and experiences had an immense and instrumental impact on me and the Aboriginal learners of Weekend U. Thank you for everything and for contributing the profound shaping of the presence of Indigenous Knowledge in higher learning at the Weekend University.

In closing, after teaching four semesters at Weekend U, I finally came to understand what Weekend U was. It was a gift of academic presence that includes Indigenous Knowledge that I longed for in my own journey in the walls of the academy. It offered a rich experience that, for me, is likely irreplaceable. Thank you again for providing me with a foundation of inspiration for not only completing my PhD, but being able to honour the good work of all of the people who have been a part of the program from its inception until its closure. The legacy of Weekend U will carry on and will continue to epitomize the resilience of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal knowledges.

Rheanna

(Robinson, 2015)

Fundamentally, the letter defines how my experiences with the CCWU impact my perception of APIs and the value of IK in this academic setting. Truly blessed to have had the

opportunity to work with the CCWU and the community members I met over the years, this research has provided me an opportunity to go back to the people I worked with, as well as many others who are involved in APIs, profiling the wealth and contributions of their knowledge in the API setting. From the theoretical positioning I have taken in this writing, to the chosen methodologies, research framework and research practice used, my chosen methodologies are intended to be representative of research that is respectful, reciprocal, relevant, and has relevance for the students who participate in APIs and the communities they are from, in appreciation of the 4 R's articulated by Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991).

This chapter discusses qualitative and case study design and my specific case study definition for this research. I describe the methods undertaken to complete this research as well as the conceptual framework of the Métis Sash used in this study. I explain how the participant's responses align with the colours of the Sash as I breathe my own identity and research experience into the structure of this work. Through an examination of all of this, the methodology in this research will become clear and a dynamic research design that is meaningful and important to this study is presented. Like the intersectionality of the perspectives of Indigenous and critical theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Three, the methods for this research also present an intersection. The methodology, in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal influences come together, is crucial for shaping the work, and reflective of the weaving of threads that make up the Métis Sash that also contributes to the theoretical foundation of this research.

Qualitative Methodologies

This research represents a process that includes Western and non-Western research methodologies and shows how some of the elements from each methodological perspective can be used collaboratively. By doing so, I reinforce how important it is to me that I embrace tools that represent Indigeneity in this work and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people I worked with in the case study of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), the former CCWU program, as well as the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).

To begin discussing the major considerations for designing this study on the role of IK at APIs in British Columbia, I acknowledge the role of qualitative research in the overall design and how I have situated myself within the context of the study. Using a case method qualitative design, I enable a research method that involves multiple data sources and experiences to describe APIs in British Columbia and promises and challenges of integrating IK therein (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Through both an Indigenous and Critical theoretical lens, I gained comprehensive insight on my research questions.

In the collection of empirical materials within this case study, the premises, principles, and practices defined by Charmaz (2004) were used in my qualitative research design which reflect some important characteristics I have found that all qualitative researchers should consider, especially those who want to counter the potential colonial nature of qualitative research that may be encompassed through the utilization of normative qualitative research methods, as noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005).

Premises & Principles of Qualitative Research

Drawing from Charmaz (2004), the first premise to acknowledge in this qualitative research is that “a deep understanding of life means entering into it” and entering into the phenomenon being studied (p. 980, 981). I am fortunate that I was able to work with CCWU as an Instructor and was fortunate to engage more closely with WWNI and NVIT to understand their perspectives on my research topic. As part of the UNBC community in a variety of ways, I also have some understanding of these partnerships from the non-Aboriginal institutional position. This includes being a long time member on the UNBC Senate, the UNBC Senate Committee for First Nations and Aboriginal People, and in my capacity as a Research Project Officer in the UNBC Office of Research where I work directly with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutional representatives involved in some of the partnerships included in this study (i.e. WWNI and CCWU). From my experiences, I know there is much to learn to obtain a deep understanding about these relations and the role of IK in an API.

In that process of “understanding,” it is important that I consider some of the other premises that Charmaz (2004) believes are of value in qualitative research. These include: knowing what things mean to participants; not taking for granted the tacit or implicit statements or actions; being conscious of the fact that the questions we ask shape the answers we obtain; and that truth is always subjective (Charmaz 2004 p. 981, 982, 983). One of the principles of qualitative inquiry that emerges is that one is familiar with their area of study and that “respect for research participants as persons supersedes research objectives” (Charmaz 2004, p. 984, 985).

I am fortunate to have some familiarity with APIs as well as within a mainstream institute that engages in specific partnerships with Aboriginal-based institutions.

Following these premises and principles led me to have a research practice that offered me the best “route” to take with my method (Charmaz 2004, p. 987). Charmaz (2004) recommends that one needs to open herself/himself up to the experience to allow for the unexpected to occur, ensuring that sufficient knowledge is gathered to make the study credible and that the researcher pays attention to the language of participants while looking beneath the surface. The emergent nature of qualitative study may lead one into an unexpected area, but in the end it is all of value and all relevant in the nature of qualitative inquiry. Through the careful and articulate analysis of each institution under study and having respect as a foundation for the research, a space and opportunity for a flexible and reflexive research process was created.

The presentation of each institute will be described in more detail later in this chapter, but for this study, being permitted to situate myself in a natural setting (Creswell 2007, Denzin & Lincoln 2005) was necessary to gather sufficient data and have the methodology, as a site of struggle, work itself through the points of contestation. Through the description of individuals, sites, and philosophies welcomed in this research, my situatedness becomes obvious and points of contestation and limitation are acknowledged.

Case Study Design. This section provides the context for the influences of this case study design. This research uses case study methodology to examine the promises and challenges of implementing IK in the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), and the former Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU). Also included in this research is a reflection on the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) as each of the APIs in this study have had a relationship with UNBC

and some of the research participants are affiliated with this mainstream institution in varying ways. As a result of these institutional inclusions, this research also reflects on the role of partnerships for APIs and the impact of policy, or lack of policy, for Aboriginal-based institutions.

A case study approach was ideal for this study since, as explained by Yin (2003), a case study “allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs” (p.543). Since I had specific questions about IK in an API I wanted to have answered, a case study paradigm was a practical and appropriate way to use research techniques that were most appropriate for this work (Neuman 1997, p. 57).

For this research, I was drawn to Yin (2009a, 2009b, 2012) and the case study designs and formats he offers for researchers to follow. Yin has also provided extensive literature in regards to building and carrying forward effective, high quality case studies. Yin (2003) says a case study design should be considered when:

- (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions;
- (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study;
- (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or
- (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Baxter and Jack 2008, p. 545).

Yin (2009b) provides four steps for doing a quality case study that researchers should consider:

1. Define and select the case(s) for a case study.
2. Use multiple cases as part of the same case study.
3. Strengthen the evidence used in the case study,
4. Analyze case study evidence (p. 254).

All four of these steps were considered in this research process and in this study, I followed the design formats offered by Yin (2009a, 2009b, 2012) to shape a relevant and meaningful examination of IK in an API.

Types of Case Studies. There are four typical case study types and all four were important to consider (see Table 4.1). They include:

Table 5: Types of Case Studies

Explanatory	This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life situations that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies (Yin, 2003).
Exploratory	This type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the question(s) being assessed have no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003).
Descriptive	This type of case study is used to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003).
Multiple-case studies	A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar outcomes across cases, or predict contrasting outcomes based on a theory (Yin, 2003).

Baxter & Jack (2008), p. 547 – 548

For the purposes of my study and the selection of several sites for examination, my case study research consisted of a ‘multiple case’ analysis. A better understating of the phenomenon has come forward with the examination of more than one API. For reasons that include the availability of literature and relevance to my particular research design, a ‘multiple case’ method defines this research.

While it could be argued that a multiple case-study is more difficult to conduct than a single case design (Yin 2012, p. 7) I feel that using multiple sites (i.e. multiple cases) allowed me to broaden the analysis and analyze both within each setting and across settings so that the

similarities and differences can be better understood, as noted by Baxter & Jack (2008, p. 550). I believe that the breadth of representation allows for a deeper understanding of the topic and a greater understanding than would have been achieved if I had chosen to use a single case design.

This was a significant consideration in choosing and designing the method of the case study of IK in APIs. It is important that the experiences between different Aboriginal institutions are acknowledged and that the Indigenous foundations of all three of the Aboriginal institutions are explored. Kovach (2009) explains that, “the expectation that the majority of findings will be presented in some categorical way...[in] qualitative research concerns itself with uncovering knowledge through human subject research via observations and inquiry into phenomena” (p. 132). In providing a research scope that brings forward different perspectives and experiences, the researcher provides an honourable and respectful way to acknowledge and represent the diversity and differences among and between APIs and Indigenous Knowledges. Ultimately, choosing multiple cases in this research brings elements from the different types of institutes such as a full-fledged college, an affiliated institution, or a community learning centre, as noted by FNEESC (2008).

Usefulness of Case Studies. Achieving the most beneficial information was a goal for this study and as Kovach (2009) explains, “a powerful method for achieving this desire is the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experience on their terms” (p.82). Inductive research is commonly used in Western-based research approaches but it also relates to Indigenous epistemologies and the decolonizing process (Kovach, 2009, p. 82). As I include representatives from Indigenous institutions including administration, Elders, faculty and staff, and students as research participants, it is necessary to acknowledge that I bring forward diverse perspectives in this

work. Robert Stake (1995) says that, “the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the *multiple realities*, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening” (p. 12). The “multiple realities” aligned with the different stake holders in this research thus emerged.

Fulford et al. (2007) describes how the case studies of Aboriginal schools brought forward some important conclusions as a result of including multiple perspectives. These cases, including Band operated and provincial and territorial schools made, as Fulford et al. (2007) notes, “an important contribution to understandings about promising practices, policies and approaches in Aboriginal schooling” (p. 14). For me the utilization of the case study methodology was important for two reasons. First, I believe that case study was the best way to capture the multiple perspectives and experiences of IK integration in APIs, and second, I believe that conducting a case study inclusive of multiple sites and multiple perspectives was effective and important for my own learning process in this research.

By bringing forth the unique consideration of Elders, administrators, instructors, staff, and students who are a part of the APIs, the depth of the study is maximized and the reflection and results of the research can be situated and contextualised within each partnership. This means accountable, transparent, and reflexive voices of truth are represented and meaningful and relevant information is created. Ruddin (2006) notes that, “often case studies... have been criticized because of the assumed difficulty with generalizations” (p. 798). However, as I have experienced with my previous utilization of a case study model with my Master of Arts graduate research on the topic of Aboriginal choice schools (Robinson 2007), multiple cases can generate, “practical and context-dependent knowledge” that will result in some cross-case relevancies (Ruddin p. 801). The remaining Chapters of this dissertation are evidence of the effective theoretical categorization used in this work to avoid one case only limitations.

Placing the Threads in the Research Design – Data Collection

This research is inclusive of both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was primarily derived from the library, internet, and sources available to me from UNBC while qualitative interviewing was the method for gathering primary data. These methods were carefully used to answer the overarching research questions for this study as presented in Chapter One. In the sections below, I provide more precise details around the data collection for this study.

Secondary Data. The inclusion of secondary data in my dissertation comes from scholarly and government-related literature available from the library, internet, and publically available information from UNBC.

Library Materials. Two academic libraries were used to access secondary sources: the *Xwi7xwa* Library at UBC in Vancouver and the Geoffrey R. Weller Library at UNBC, Prince George. Staff at both libraries provided me with an immense amount of support during my search for relevant secondary source library materials.

I used search terms at the libraries for both library catalogue and on-line database searches. The library catalogue search terms I used were: Indigenous Education, Aboriginal Education, First Nations Education, and Aboriginal-based education. These provided starting points for receiving general information related to Aboriginal education and higher learning in Canada and beyond. In regards to searches for theoretical and methodologically based literature for the library catalogue, I used the following search terms: Indigenous theory, critical theory, and case study method. Due to the large amount of literature that came forward as a result of

these search terms, I utilized additional methods to qualify and limit some of the results. For example, once I had some resources I felt were relevant to my search area, I would include the names of authors I wanted to obtain more information on through an advanced search strategy. Also, the use of Boolean operators were effective in narrowing some of my results (e.g. Indigenous AND critical theory).

In addition to the library catalogue, I also searched online databases through search engines. Such databases included Academic Search Premier, EBSCO host, and ERIC. The same search terms that were used for the catalogue search were also used for the database searches.

My PhD Supervisor, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, referred me to several secondary source materials that were extremely useful for me to read throughout my PhD. Also, over the years that I have been both a student and teaching university classes, I have accumulated my own personal collection of secondary source materials related to Aboriginal education and many of those books were also referred to in this work. Once I had the source materials and completed the readings, I referred to the bibliographies in many of the books or journal articles to enhance my understanding of the topic area by finding literature I missed through the database searching.

Internet Resources. In addition to using materials made available through the use of library resources, I also frequently used general library search terms to obtain useful online materials that were relevant for this study. Though a standard *Google* web-based search, there was an immense amount of resources that became available to me on the topic of APIs, Indigenous theory, critical theory, and case study method.

The online available resources from organizations like the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (AIC), the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), and the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA), were extremely instrumental in

providing me with up-to-date information about APIs and government-based documents surrounding Aboriginal education.

Also, the internet was invaluable for me being able to obtain information about NVIT, WWNI, and the CCWU as many of the resources reflected throughout this dissertation were not available through a library search.

Other Publically Available Literature. The last area of accessing information that has been useful for discussing the role of IK in an API has been through other publically available resources available to me through UNBC. In particular, I was able to read one of the agreements signed between UNBC and an API because of my role as a staff member at UNBC and a Senator on the UNBC Senate when the agreement was passed through a Senate motion (see Chapter Six). Since I also sit as a Senate Committee member on the UNBC Senate Committee for First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples (SCFNAP), I have been fortunate to also possess some of the institutional knowledge that came through discussions related to the APIs included in this study through SCFNAP.

The secondary data has been useful in the preparation of my primary work to reflect and draw upon the related literature that is relevant to the people I worked with as Weber-Pillwax (2001, p. 171) also notes. In addition to the interviews, the inclusion of relevant secondary material documents brings forward a comprehensive complementary research paradigm. Fulford et al.'s (2007) document titled, *Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling* describes how in addition to the interviews completed for the case study the:

findings were triangulated with the specific contexts within which the schools operated and relevant documentary evidence such as school policies, mission statements, codes of conduct, organizational charts, budgets, parent and community involvement programs, and professional development records. Available evidence relating to both standardized and non-standardized aspects of student achievement over time was reviewed. (p. 18)

The secondary source analysis completed for this work strengthens the theoretical and methodological positions of this research.

Primary Data. I will explain the primary research method of interviews used for this study. Beginning with a profile of the geography covered for this study, I describe how I used interviewing as a method. Then, I describe the ethical reviews and consultation processes involved in this research and how I recruited participants for this research and their institutional affiliation. In its entirety, this section provides an overview of the primary data included and why it is important to case study research.

Geography of Research. My research journey including visiting many different communities in British Columbia. This included: Prince Rupert, *Gitwinksihlkw* (or Canyon City), Prince George, Williams Lake, Merritt, and Burnaby. I travelled to each community either by air, car, or train, and spent at least one day at each site while I conducted the interviews and spent some time familiarizing myself with the campuses.²¹ Since I live permanently in Prince George, I am in a central location and was able to make travel plans at different times during the year when I could avoid certain weather circumstances (i.e., snow) that could make my travel unsafe. The differing locations of each institution made this experience rich and unique as I included more participants as part of the study.

The Use of the Semi-Structured Interview. A semi-structured interview was an excellent way to capture responses from the interview participants in a way that was comfortable and convenient. According to Berg (2004) the semi-structured interview is located somewhere between the extremes of the completely standardized and the completely unstandardized

²¹ I am indebted to the University of British Columbia and the Irving K. Barber Society for their financial support during my doctoral research. My travel and time away from employment could not have happened without the scholarship, fellowship, and bursary funding I received.

interview structures (p. 80). Yin (2009b) explains that the “diminished structure permits open-ended interviews, if properly done, to reveal how case study interviewees construct reality and think about situations, not just giving answers to specific questions” (p. 264). Seidman (2006) believes that:

the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institutions, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process. (p. 10)

The insights in this investigation are strengthened by the fact that the people interviewed were “key” individuals or members of the API community and were often selected on the recommendation of the institutional leaders.

When using interviewing as a method, Weber-Pillwax (2001) explains “trust is crucial to this method, and the researcher must have a deep sense of responsibility to uphold that trust in every way” (p. 170). With the semi-structured process, the words that formulate the questions must be familiar to the people who are participants and therefore must be articulated from the subject’s perspective (Berg 2004, 81). Therefore, the interview questions I asked reflect and respect Aboriginal voice and experience throughout. Wilson (2008) acknowledges that:

Interviewing or questioning in Indigenous research cannot really take place without... a level of deep listening that leads to meaningful exchanges. It’s a matter of forming a relationship that goes beyond the informant-researcher duality to becoming co-learners. (p. 113)

In their case study of ten Aboriginal schools in Canada, Bell, Anderson, and Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (2004) also explain that, “from the outset it was determined that the research should undertake to contribute something of value to the Aboriginal community and that the Aboriginal voice and ways of knowing should be honoured in the findings” (p. 21). Since interviewing is a way of gaining insight into how a person might think and feel about a certain topic, it was imperative that this was done with great care and

consideration. It was important that the interview be flexible, iterative, and continuous so that there is a comfort for change and delineation from the original topic (Rubin & Rubin, p. 45, 1995).

There were some key techniques that I considered in this semi-structured interview process. In addition to ensuring that as a researcher, I followed particular community protocols²², it was necessary that I gained and sustained rapport with the participants invited to be interviewed in order to put the participant at ease during the process and be respectful in the context of working with Indigenous communities (Leech, 2002; Meyer, 2003a; Meyer, 2003b). Simple courtesies during the interview showed I was listening and understanding what the respondent was saying, and it was important that I did not have “presuming” questions. Although as a researcher I had some insights as to what I *thought* the answers could be to the questions, it could have been uncomfortable if the participant thought that I already knew the answer to what I was asking (Leech, 2002, p. 666).

Semi-structured interviews are an opportunity to have the respondent, rather than the researcher, be the experts and this allows for their presence and inclusion to shape the knowledge being produced (Leech, 2002, p. 668). According to Denzin (2001):

I want to re-read the interview, not as a method of gathering information, but as a vehicle for producing performance texts and performance ethnographies about self and society.
(p. 24)

To be able to reflect on the interview as more than simply a data gathering process and interpret it within a holistic framework leads towards a more comprehensive and respectful inclusion of the participant’s words.

²² With the exception of the *Research Protocol with Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a* document and the necessary review of a Research Ethics Board application at the University of Northern British Columbia, there were no written consultation protocols. Rather, I utilized a respectful practice of initiating contacts with leadership of the institutions involved in the study to tell them about my research and begin the process of participant recruitment.

Interviewing Methodology and Questions Asked. The interview style was semi-structured with open-ended questions and all interviews were digitally recorded. As presented in Chapter One, there were three participant “groups” included in this study. The first group was the group representing the institutional leadership of the API. The second group included representation from the community and could include those who hold, or have held, the role of an Elder, staff, or Instructor. The final group included current or former students at the API.

During the interview, participants described their role at the institution²³ and answered several other questions presented in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. I received either written or verbal consent from each participant and all interviews were completed face-to-face with the exception of two participants that preferred to have the interview conducted via the phone. The interviewees had the option to remain anonymous or have their real names used for the purposes of this study. With the exception of one interviewee, all participants chose to have their real names used.

Data Collection Questions. Each of the groups of participants was presented with a set of questions that were answered during the time that we spent together. Tables 6 and 7 below show the questions that were asked of each group:

²³ Many of the individuals interviewed for the purposes of this research held more than one role at the API. For example, one of the Instructors for WWNI and for CCWU also has a history and played an important role with UNBC and the formation of partnerships with the APIs, and this is important to acknowledge. Participants were selected to be interviewed as a member of a particular category but the multiple roles they may hold will become clear in Chapters Five.

Table 6: Questions asked of the Institutional Leaders

Please tell me how you have been involved with _____ institute?

Can you tell me how you think IK is implemented and celebrated in your institution? What is the benefit and impact of implementing IK in your institution?

What is the most challenging aspect of implementing IK in your institution? How does your institution overcome these challenges?

Does your institution have partnerships with any non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions? If so, can you describe the nature of those partnerships? What is the best thing about these partnerships? What is the most challenging aspect of these partnerships? If you could start your partnership over, what would you do differently, and why? What would you keep and why?

Can you tell me how you think IK is being embraced or not between Indigenous institutions and the universities with whom agreements have been signed? Think back 5 years ago, what differences existed between these institutions regarding IK? What has contributed to any changes? What has created barriers to change?

Can you describe for me, as a representative of _____ institution, how you feel _____ institution impacts Aboriginal students, staff, and the local Aboriginal community? Are there any particular memorable stories you would like to share?

Think ahead 10 years from now, how would you envision IK within your institution and your partnership agreements? How would other public post-secondary institutions use IK 10 years from now?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Table 7: Questions asked of Students, Elders, Instructors, and Staff

<p>Please tell me about your involvement with _____ institution.</p> <p>Why did you choose to be involved with _____ institution?</p> <p>What have been some of the most memorable and rewarding experiences of being involved with _____?</p> <p>Do you feel Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is celebrated at _____? If so, how? If not, why? Can you think of an example of how IK has contributed to your learning (if a student) or to students' learning (if a community member)? Has the role of IK changed over the last 5 years at this institution (if a community member)? If so, how?</p> <p>From your perspective, have there been any challenges that _____ has faced in implementing IK? What may have contributed to these challenges? Have these challenges been overcome? Please elaborate.</p> <p>How has this experience of IK impacted your perception of higher education?</p> <p>Is there anything more you would like to see at _____ regarding IK? Why?</p> <p>What would be your ideal vision of how IK would be part of this institution? What would be your ideal vision of how IK would be part of other public post-secondary institutions?</p> <p>(For community member) Think ahead 10 years from now, how would you envision IK within your institution?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to add?</p>

On two separate occasions, and due to the convenience and comfort for participants, the interview included more than one participant at a time, but the same interview structure and format was followed consistent to the original methods. The interviews that included more than one participant were the Elders from NVIT and the students from WWNI. Each participant interview took approximately 30 – 60 minutes in length, so if I was interviewing more than one person, the interview took 60 – 120 minutes to complete. Therefore, the interviews with the Elders took approximately 120 minutes to complete and the interview with the WWNI students took approximately 60 minutes to finish.

Following the interviews, each recording was transcribed by a paid transcriptionist I hired through the Computer Assisted Telephone Inventory (CATI) lab at UNBC and each transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement. I reviewed all recordings and transcriptions as presented by the transcriptionist and made changes where necessary. Primarily, there were many issues with how the names of Nations and/or places were interpreted as well as whenever participants used Indigenous languages in their responses. Each document was slightly copy-edited and then forwarded to all interview participants for their review and approval prior to including their words into this dissertation. There were no substantive changes requested from the original transcripts by the participants.

Ethics and Consultation

I received ethics approval from the University of British Columbia (UBC) Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB). This was acquired on October 16, 2012 and approved on an annual basis. Once this was obtained, it was necessary that I also receive approval/support to

include representatives from the four institutes discussed in this research. From NVIT, I received approval from President Ken Tourand by e-mail correspondence on November 29, 2012. From the WWNI, after visiting *Gitwinksihlkw* (Canyon City) November 30, 2012 and presenting my PhD proposal to the WWNI Board of Governors, I received approval from WWNI on that same day.

For CCWU, since CCWU is no longer in operation, it was important that I discuss my project with the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (NSTC) since the NSTC operationalized the CCWU program. I also presented my research to the Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG) since it is a governance body had their Nation communities represented within the CCWU programming and I utilized interview participants from TNG Nations. I verbally consulted with representatives from the NSTC on December 12, 2012 and received support via e-mail January 2, 2013. I also consulted with representatives from the TNG on May 10, 2013 and obtained verbal support on that day. For UNBC, since I was interviewing UNBC faculty in my research, I brought an application forward to the UNBC Research Ethics Board in January 2013 and received approval to include UNBC representatives on February 1, 2013.

The principles of ensuring that there were transparent and open processes of communication about this research were fundamental to the recruitment of research participants and the success of the project in general.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment was initiated following ethics approval and appropriate consultation needed (e.g. NVIT, WWNI, CCWU, and UNBC) for this work. I was able to contact many participants because I already had a relationship with them, but others were

referred to me on the recommendation of institutional leaders or were recruited through opportunistic events.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. Participant recruitment from NVIT was initiated after I received approval from President Ken Tourand. He referred me to Dr. Vera Billy-Minnabarriet (Bonaparte First Nation/*Secwepemc*), Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships, and John Chenoweth (Upper Nicola Valley First Nation), Dean at the Merritt Campus. I sent Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and Dean Chenoweth a letter of invitation via e-mail and interview dates and times were agreed upon that way.²⁴

An interview date was established to visit the NVIT Burnaby, BC campus on February 27th, 2013 and the Merritt, BC campus on March 15th, 2013. Following the establishment of these dates for my visit to the NVIT Burnaby and Merritt campuses, I began to inquire through Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and Dean Chenoweth who else I might be able to interview while I was on site. However, before I even had heard back from Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and Dean Chenoweth, my friend and UNBC colleague, Tina Gillanders (Little Black River First Nation/*Ojibway*), a Master of Arts graduate student in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies and UNBC Recruitment Officer, offered to help me contact more participants at the NVIT Burnaby campus since she was formerly employed by NVIT and had a history with the Elders and students there.²⁵

²⁴ In addition to having a referral made by President Ken Tourand, I want to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Byron Robbie to assist me in my meeting with John Chenoweth. Byron and I were teaching a course for the School of Education at the same time in 2012. Although we taught our courses in different communities (I was teaching in Burns Lake and he was teaching in Williams Lake), we collaborated together over the phone and Byron graciously did an e-mail introduction of me to John Chenoweth. Byron Robbie has experience as a secondary school principal and superintendent and titled his dissertation, *BEYOND INCLUSION: Transforming the educational governance relationship between First Nations and School Districts in British Columbia* (2005).

²⁵ Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet was made aware of my connection through Tina Gillanders and welcomed her support for my research.

Tina Gillanders made a telephone call to NVIT Elder Betty Gladue (*Saulteu* Cree) to see if she would be interested and available for an interview while I was in Vancouver at the NVIT Burnaby campus. She agreed. I then called Elder Gladue myself and forwarded her a letter of invitation for my research via e-mail and arranged to meet with her and her husband Phil Gladue (*Métis* Cree) on February 27th, 2013. At the same time, Tina Gillanders also connected me to Instructor Dr. Catharine Crow, Instructor for Academic and Indigenous Studies University Transfer in areas of Social Work, and Criminology courses at the NVIT Burnaby campus. I communicated with Dr. Crow via e-mail with a letter of invitation for my research and she agreed to be interviewed on February 27th, 2013 as well.

More participant recruitment at the NVIT Burnaby campus occurred through opportunistic events while I was there. On February 27th, 2013, following my interview with Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and Dr. Catharine Crow, I proceeded to interview NVIT Instructor, Dr. Eric Ostrowidzki (Odanak Band/*Abenaki* Nation), Instructor for Academic and Indigenous Studies University Transfer courses. Dr. Eric Ostrowidzki's interview was unplanned, but he offered to participate in my research when he learned of my research topic when I was visiting the campus on that day. He received a letter of invitation that I reviewed with him in-person before the consent form was signed and the interview began.

Another fortuitous event happened when I was visiting the NVIT campus on February 27, 2013. I had planned to interview Elders Betty and Phil Gladue, but February 27th turned out to be the same day when *all* the NVIT Elders were having a meeting and they all wanted to take part in my project! Therefore, the Elders that participated included: Margaret George (*Tsleil-Waututh*), Betty Gladue (*Saulteu* Cree), Phil Gladue (*Métis* Cree), and Theresa Neel (*Kwagiulth*). The Elders preferred that they all be interviewed together, so after reviewing the letter of

invitation and the consent form, each Elder took a turn to answer the questions presented in the “Student and Community Participant” consent form. Being able to meet all of the Elders together was truly a gift and an immense surprise.

The final NVIT Burnaby campus representative included former NVIT student Corrine Hunt Jr. (*Namgis*, Alert Bay). I had met Corrinne Hunt Jr., also referred to me by Tina Gillanders, while she was living and working in Prince George in 2013 and asked her if she would like to be a part of my research. She agreed, so after forwarding her a letter of invitation via e-mail, my interview with Corrine Hunt Jr. took place on April 5, 2013 in a coffee shop in the City of Prince George. Indeed, the NVIT Burnaby campus representation made an immense contribution to my study.

Moving to the NVIT campus in Merritt, BC, I had arranged via e-mail to interview Dean Chenoweth while I was visiting Merritt on March 15th, 2013. Dean Chenoweth and I were unable to arrange for me to meet with additional participants before that date, but on March 15th, 2013, I interviewed John Chenoweth in the board room of the Merritt campus. Following that interview, Dean Chenoweth suggested that I interview Marti Harder, Department Head and Instructor for the Health Program being offered in Merritt so he asked her if she would be interested in participating in my research while I was there. Instructor Harder was pleased to be a part of my research so after reviewing my letter of invitation and consent form, we completed an interview on that same day.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. For WWNI, recruitment of participants followed approval by the WWNI Board of Directors. Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage), Chief Executive Officer of WWNI, was instrumental in my participant recruitment efforts and we communicated via telephone and e-mail. She referred me to several people to interview

while I was visiting the WWNI campus located in *Gitwinksihlk* (Canyon City) on March 18, 2013. These interviews were prearranged with the assistance of Deanna Nyce and included: Elder and Language Instructor Irene Seguin (*Hagwilook'am Saxwhl Giis, Nisga'a*) and Instructor and former Chief Executive Officer, David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*). Both interviews took place at the WWNI campus on the banks of the beautiful Nass River and the invitation letters and consent forms were reviewed in-person.

Following my visit to the community of *Gitwinksihlk* (Canyon City) on March 18th, 2013, I travelled to Prince Rupert to interview Dr. Margaret Anderson who was referred to me by my PhD committee member, Dr. Antonia Mills. Dr. Mills introduced Dr. Anderson to me via e-mail and I communicated my research information to her that way. The interview with Dr. Anderson took place in her office in the combined Northwest Community College and UNBC campus in Prince Rupert, BC on March 19, 2013.

My final WWNI participant recruitment included interviewing Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage), Chief Executive Officer of WWNI, on April 23, 2013. Deanna Nyce offered to participate in my research following the WWNI approval. Since the timing did not work while I was in the Nass Valley in March 2013, this interview took place at a restaurant in Prince George in April 2013. Following this, Deanna Nyce suggested I interview two additional WWNI representatives who were in Prince George at that same time so Kathryn Kervel (*Nisga'a*) and Lori Nyce (*Haida*) were interviewed in my office at the UNBC campus in Prince George on April 24, 2013. They were all visiting the city for meetings and made themselves available for my research. Invitation letters and consent forms were reviewed in-person before the recordings of the interviews commenced.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University. Given my role and relationship with CCWU, participant recruitment took on various forms. I sought consultation and approval from the NSTC and TNG before I recruited any participants. Beginning with Carla Anderson²⁶, and following NSTC support, this participant, who I had a previous relationship with when I was an instructor for CCWU, agreed to be interviewed at a restaurant in Prince George on July 24, 2013. An invitation letter and consent form had been forwarded previously, but they were reviewed again in-person on that day. Also, former CCWU Instructor Dr. Titi Kunkel (*Yoruba*, West Africa) who taught some of the introductory and Business-related courses, and former staff member Crystal Verhaeghe (*?Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation) who is the current Executive Director for TNG were recruited because of my previous relationships then through my employment at UNBC Office of Research. My interview with Dr. Kunkel took place in Williams Lake, BC on July 2, 2013 and my interview with Crystal Verhaeghe took place over the telephone on September 26, 2013.

The additional UNBC representative included in this study, recruited through my personal relationship with her, was Dr. Blanca Schorcht, Dean of the College of Arts Social and Health Sciences at UNBC and former Regional Chair for the UNBC South Central Camps in Quesnel, BC. I have known Dr. Schorcht for many years and she provided me with the great opportunity to become involved as an Instructor for the CCWU. This interview took place in her office at the UNBC campus on October 2, 2013.

The last participants I recruited for this study are two former CCWU students, Cindy M. Charleyboy (Williams Lake Band, *Tsilhqot'in/Secwepemc*) and Cathy Verhaeghe (*?Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation). I came to know Cindy M. Charleyboy when I was instructing

²⁶ Note that this name is a pseudonym as this participant chose not to have her real name used.

for CCWU where she participated in my class as a guest speaker and student tutor. I personally asked her if she would be interested in being a research participant and she was eager to be a part of this STUDY. After reviewing the invitation letter and consent form, this interview took place at my home on May 31, 2013. Finally, Cathy Verhaeghe, the very first “Weekend U” graduate, participated in an interview over the phone on September 30, 2013. Cathy Verhaeghe was recommended to me by her daughter, Crystal Verhaeghe, and her reflections on the experiences in the classroom during the early days of CCWU are important.

I am very grateful for the individuals who took the time to participate in this study. Indeed, the inclusion of their words and voices in Chapter Five give meaning and purpose to the importance of this study and IK integration in an API.

Métis Sash as a Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I have chosen relates to me as a Métis woman, an Indigenous researcher, my theoretical positioning of Métissage, including Indigenous and critical theory, and my case study method, is grounded in the traditions and philosophy of the Métis Sash. With this choice of framework, it is essential that I provide information relating to the following:

1. How this framework contributes to my identity in this research.
2. How the Métis Sash, as a conceptual framework, complements a case study method.
3. Why this approach is relevant when, as an Aboriginal framework, it is not representative of all cultures/institutions involved in the study.

It is important to detail how, as Kovach (2009) says, “Indigenous research frameworks have a decolonizing agenda that involves healing and transformation” (p. 125) and that, “explicit

conceptual frameworks allow an opportunity to be honest about our perspective as researchers and to illustrate how this perspective impacts the methods chosen” (p. 42). I continue to privilege the Indigenous voice by using a framework that symbolizes a cultural representation that is grounded in a non-Western tradition and represents a unique method of research engagement. Ultimately, the role I have chosen as an Indigenous researcher to use something from my culture and background is, as Stake (1995) says, “an ethical choice, an honest choice” (p. 103). It is an authentic way for me to offer an important part of my identity to the research process.

I would like to recapture a summarized version of the metaphorical alignment of the colours of the Métis Sash and the research from Chapter One:

- Red – represents the presentation of history, including the “history” as described in secondary sources, the institutional history as described by research participants, as well as their role within their respective API.
- Green – this colour represents the perspective provided by participants in regards to the benefits, celebration, and impact of integrating IK at an API, including students’ learning, and the memorable and rewarding experiences they have had.
- Blue and White – these colours represent the participant’s responses to the role that partnerships play in the API.
- Black – this colour encompasses the description of the “challenges” of integrating IK at an API as described by research participants as well as other challenges participants note.

The role of partnerships will be included throughout all of the colours and in various contexts as presented by participants. See Figure 2 in Chapter One for a visual display of the Métis Sash and its colours.

I have witnessed an increasing number of Indigenous scholars using metaphorical frameworks as part of their research (Archibald, 2008; Billy-Minnabarriet, 2012; Canada, 2012; Martin, 2014; Parent, 2014; Robinson, 2008) to honour part of their identity while making a

unique contribution to academic discourse. Peter Cole (2002), who uses the framework of the canoe in his work, describes in *Aboriginalizing Methodology* how:

our frameworks are not frames nor are they works
they are the movement of forest and relations through mind hand and spirit
they shape our minds around themselves
bring it into organic functioning sometimes retroactively
fashioning themselves into us through our co-optation. (p.13)

The inclusion of Aboriginal metaphors and conceptual frameworks is an interdisciplinary, intercultural gift. Iwama, Marshall, Marshall and Barlett, (2009) describe:

with happy gratitude, we read Coles's (2006) determined paddling beyond conventional boundaries of form and "academ(entia)"... (p. 23). We appreciate Fels's (1998) daring with performative inquiry, a methodology that also explores the in-between of intersecting worlds." (p. 8)

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to infuse the words of my participants into a framework that is meaningful, both culturally and symbolically.

Relevance of the Sash to the Study. The Métis Sash, as a framework, is born from an epistemologically grounded combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worldviews, ideas, and experiences. Therefore, for this case study, the Sash emerges as a relevant and complementary design for the inclusion of all perspectives as belonging. As Rains, et al (2000) explain, "while our numbers in the academy remain small, the epistemologies, paradigms, scholarship, and research interests we bring to the academy offer fresh and insightful perspectives grounded in different traditions than the mainstream" (p. 339). The Métis Sash will contribute to that fresh perspective.

Although the Sash is not something that is reflective of all of the cultures that are included in this study, I do believe that it is still fundamentally relevant and inclusive of honouring and acknowledging an Indigenous approach to research. Typically in Indigenous research work frameworks are used to represent the interconnectedness of life, being, and

knowing (cf. Aboloso, 2011; Atleo, 2004; Archibald, 2008; Donaldson, 2011; Kovach, 2010; Meyer, 2000). For example, Atleo (2004) explains that “*Heshook-ish tsawalk* is a Nuu-chah-nulth perspective that is inclusive of all reality, both physical and metaphysical” (p. xi). The Métis Sash, as an interweaving representation, provides opportunity and space for many Nations, many cultures, and many world views to be interconnected and relevant to each other so that the Sash is complete and useful for all.

As Métissage is “committed to interdisciplinarity and the blurring of genres, texts, and identities” (Donald, 2011 p. 142), using the Sash in relation to this theoretical approach is relevant to all the cultures and backgrounds that are presented in this study. As the case study design will demonstrate, the necessity for multiple realities will not only provide a necessary breadth of perspectives, but will strengthen the rigour and validity of the work.

Conclusion – Literature, Theory, and My Research Experience

Through an examination of my perspective as an Aboriginal scholar and the case study design being utilized for this research, the sections presented in this chapter demonstrate that my methodological approach was not only useful for the research questions, but also for myself as an Indigenous researcher. The methodology and framework will contribute to the practices of Aboriginal scholars by showing the relevance and potential for integrative approaches to bring forward unique positions and perspectives. In conclusion, I would like to recapture the role that the literature and my chosen theory had on my methodological approach and research experience.

Role of Literature. Yin (2012) points out, “the design of the research steps according to some relationships to the literature, policy issues, or other substantive source” is essential for understanding the implications and applications, and for discussion of how the method was chosen after obtaining results (p. 28). Chapter Two provides a detailed analysis of the literature related to this topic and specifically as it relates to the three institutions included in this study. From the literature, it became obvious that there are multiple layers to be considered in designing the scope, boundary, and limitations of this research that include identifying the most appropriate protocols for engaging in the research as well as the questions that were asked of participants. Ultimately, the literature review held a key role to understanding the history and contexts of APIs in British Columbia but also their role in facilitating IK at an academic level. As such, the research methodology and thorough processes of consultation emerged from an effective literature analysis and contributed to the type and design of this research study, its method and theoretical premises.

Role of Theory. Using a theory, model or concept can help guide research (Vaughan, 1992, p. 175) and aid in defining the case(s) to be part of the case study. For me, my Indigenous and non-Indigenous theoretical perspectives created the opportunity to consider examining Indigenous post-secondary institutions and the promises and challenges of integrating IK. The steps I took in this research process are undeniably a result of the theoretical platform I utilize in this work. Chapter Three goes into great detail to present the Indigenous and critical theoretical position of this work and outlines why the theoretical position of Métissage is complemented by some of the key features of critical theory. Yin (2012) explains, “elaborating on the theoretical issues related to the objectives of study also can provide useful guidance when you are selecting the case or cases to be studied” (p. 32). Having theoretical and philosophical underpinning in

both a Western and non-Western perspective from varying positions, influences the multiple layers embedded in this work and allows for the distinct research methodology to unfold. The use of the Métis Sash added to the theoretical platform this study is drawn from and encapsulates a blended Indigenous framework fitting for this work.

My Research Experience. Undeniably, the experiences I had conducting this study had a tremendous impact on me personally, as well as the data that was collected. I discuss concepts of research validity and trustworthiness in more detail in the final chapter of this dissertation (Chapter Six), but I feel extremely satisfied and fortunate to have had such a powerful academic experience that celebrates and privileges IK and the voices of the research participants.

There were both benefits and challenges that took place in relation to the interviews for this study. The major benefit I felt from the research experience was the tremendously enthusiastic response I had from participants to be a part of the research. I was elated to experience the rich dialogue I had with participants about their perspectives on APIs and the role of IK within their respective institution.

Challenges related to the interview process were minimal, but the one obvious challenge that I faced was the wording of some of the interview questions and in particular, the use of the word “Indigenous.” Therefore, shortly after beginning the interviews, I also included the word “Aboriginal”, or in the case of my interviews at WWNI, I included the word “Nisga’a.” This eased the initial challenges I noticed when I asked interview questions. The other challenge associated to the interview method came after the interviews and transcriptions were complete. I was challenged with simply not being able to include all of the direct responses from the 22 participants that were a part of this study due to the transcriptions being 165 pages and the limitations I faced with the expected length of this dissertation. Instead, responses form the

interviews are summarized with the inclusion of some direct quotes. I hope more of the responses from participants in future publications.

For me, qualitative research emerged as an ideal way for me to capture the important words and thoughts related to the promises and challenges of integrating IK into the academy from the perspective of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes in BC. In precise detail, Chapters Five and Six present the thoughts of the research participants included in this study and integrate their words into the conceptual framework of the Métis Sash in a way that I think is meaningful and powerful. As a result, a substantive contribution to this area of scholarship is realized and the goals of this study are met.

Chapter 5: The Sash Created by Presenting Perspectives from Leaders, Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors

This chapter presents the results of the interviews I completed with the perspectives from the institutional leaders, Elders, students, staff, and instructors from each of the Aboriginal post-secondary institutions (APIs) in this study aligned as the thematic categories with the colours, red, green, blue and white, and black of the Métis Sash. Since some of the participants are also involved with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), reference to the roles and relationships of UNBC with some of the APIs is included as well. Therefore, in the pages to follow, responses from participants representing the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), and the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU) are profiled. It is important to note that these institutions each represent a different “type” of API as described by FNEESC (2008) and explained in more detail in Chapter One. Since some of the participants are also involved with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), reference to the roles and relationships of UNBC with some of the APIs is included as well

NVIT represents the first “type” as a full-fledged college; WWNI, a federated institution that has affiliations with other institutes, represents the second “type” as an affiliated institution; and the CCWU represents the third “type” as a community learning centre. There are areas of description in this chapter where the impact of the “type” becomes evident in the participants responses since they relate to the promises and challenges of integrating Indigenous Knowledge (IK) at each of the APIs.

Given the richness and quantity of the interviews, it was not possible for me to present everything that the interview participants said during the discussion.²⁷ Therefore, in the pages to follow, I have carefully summarized what the participants told me and give credibility and strength to these summaries by supporting their voices through some direct quotations. I have, as much as possible, let the participants' words speak for themselves.

Please note that this chapter is long, but it has been intentionally structured this way for coherence. The integrated relationship of the responses from participants are included within the framework of the Métis Sash.

Red

I am using the colour red in the Métis Sash as a symbol of the rich history of Métis and other Indigenous people and the unique culture they hold. I use the colour red to align the history of my interview participants with the respective institutions to which they are, or have been, involved. I start with the reflection of leaders and moves to the integration of perspectives from Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors. Sometimes, as participants recalled their history with the institution, they recalled some of the history of the institution itself. This history has also been added and bolsters the institutional representations provided in Chapter Two.

History and Positioning of Leaders. In this section of the chapter, the institutional history of each of the individuals I interviewed holds is discussed and a description of their current or former position is presented to provide greater context to their views about the

²⁷ Having to make the choice to not include *all* the words of the interview participants was a very hard decision for me. It is important to me that the participants know that each word they shared made an immense contribution to this research even though I could not include all their words here.

research topic and the research questions. Like the richness of the colour red of the Métis Sash, the words of experience from the institutional leaders are significant and I believe the presentation of individual histories is important for contextualizing some of the responses provided by the interview participants.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. Dr. Vera Billy-Minnabarriet (Bonaparte First Nation/*Secwepemc*), Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships, has a long history with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and has been a leading supporter of NVIT even before she began working there. In 1984, while employed as the Band Manager for the Bonaparte First Nation, the late Grand Chief Gordon Antoine (Coldwater First Nation) asked her if she would be willing to send Bonaparte students to an Aboriginal institution to complete certificates, diplomas, or degrees, if one was available and she enthusiastically supported the concept (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). As a result, when NVIT was still a private institution, Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet became a board member for NVIT for approximately three or four years when Nicola Valley and Okanagan communities were supporting the initiative of having an API²⁸ (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

After a few years, Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet went back to school and completed another undergraduate degree at the University College of the Cariboo (UCC) and then two Master's degrees at Simon Fraser University (SFU) (V. Bill Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). In 1996, she was asked to return to NVIT to lead the Continuing Education Department, but she was told that she would have to find the funding to support her position with

²⁸ Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet recalled that when NVIT was a private institution the tuition for each student was approximately \$8500.00 per year, but the Band found the funding to support their education successfully in a Social Work program (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

NVIT. While searching for such funding to support her position, Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet explained:

It was interesting because my former boss at Community Futures Development Corporation in Kamloops (CFDC) and NVIT are very closely connected ... she maintained my salary for three months while I went to work at NVIT. So that's the belief in NVIT. That's the belief in what their mandate is, what they believe in, what they do. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet eventually secured a multi-million dollar contract to train frontline workers for Canada Employment and she began being paid by NVIT first in the position for Continuing Education, then she became the Dean for four or five years, and then moved to her current role as Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet recognizes that she has “a long history with NVIT, a long belief in it, a long commitment, a very strong commitment to Aboriginal Education” (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

The second NVIT individual included in this research from a leadership position is John Chenoweth (Upper Nicola First Nation), Dean of Community Education and Applied Programs at NVIT. Dean Chenoweth explained that:

I was on the board for six years as a representative of my Band, Upper Nicola Indian Band. Then I was off the Board for about three years and then I saw an opportunity up here as a Dean of Community Distributed Learning so I applied for it and got it. I've been employed here for five and a half years. The title has changed but it's a Dean of Community Education and Applied Programs. About anywhere from 40% of what we do is in community. (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Although his title has changed, Dean Chenoweth's primary focus continues to be related to work that is by, for, and with Aboriginal people.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. The next presentation of institutional leadership is from the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI).²⁹ In this section, I include the interviews with Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage), Chief Executive Officer for WWNI and David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*), instructor and former Chief Executive Officer at WWNI.

Deanna Nyce began her history with WWNI with the Nisga'a Tribal Council's Industry Adjustment (IA) Committee since her undergraduate and graduate degrees were a strong fit for assisting in setting the context for an API in the Nass Valley (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). Deanna recalls that in the early days, the Nisga'a leadership included the late Jacob MacKay (*Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*) and Father Ian MacKenzie, Chair of the IA Committee, who were:

Very, very frustrated, trying to get the government to recognize them and to establish a college, a university college in the Nass. [She] remembers [they were] being very emphatic saying at the meeting, "If we wait for government, it's not going to happen. We have to just do it." (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

At the time, she was working for the School District as District Principal, but she was seconded for a three year term beginning in 1993 to set up WWNI (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

Soon after, WWNI was set up as a provincial society so they could deliver educational programs in BC, and they began their negotiations with UNBC. Deanna recalls that this was an interesting time because federally, there were negotiations going on with Nisga'a Fisheries and UNBC and:

The federal government had promised [Nisga'a] Fisheries a million dollars to do some work [but they] didn't give it to them. They gave it to UNBC. The Nisga'a knew that and so they went up to UNBC and said, "You have a million dollars of ours [and] we need to forge a relationship." That was when Dennis Macknak was the Regional Operations Director and Dr. Margaret Anderson was the Chair of First Nations Studies

²⁹ Please note that the acronyms WWN and WWNI for the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute are used interchangeably throughout the interview responses since it is often referred to as WWN rather than WWNI.

and Geoffrey Weller was the President of UNBC. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

During the time this relationship has grown, Deanna has been CEO of WWNI with the exception of when she took a sabbatical. The agreements between WWNI and UNBC have moved from being a Memoranda of Understanding to an Affiliation Agreement, to the current Agreement of Federation (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). In the early days, the institute started as Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a, the "Nisga'a House of Wisdom." When it moved to being renamed the Wilp Wilxo'oskwahl Nisga'a Institute, Deanna recalls that "some of the people on the committee thought it would be too hard for people to say and I said, 'No, they'll rise up to it.' And they have" (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*) has had different experience in a leadership position with WWNI. He began as an instructor with WWNI in 1998 and was CEO in 2006/2007. He continues to teach courses for WWNI and before becoming CEO, he sat as a WWNI board member (D. Griffin, personal communication, March 19, 2013). Both Deanna and David have a long personal and professional history with WWNI and can offer keen insights into the promises and challenges of integrating IK in the setting of an API.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program. For the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU), I am pleased to be able to present some of the insights provided to me by Carla Anderson.³⁰ Carla Anderson is an individual who held a leadership position with CCWU and believes in the principles of community, Elders, IK, and student support and success. Her insights are an important contribution to this work.

History and Positioning of Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors. Now that the leadership for the APIs has been introduced, the section of the colour red will include more of

³⁰ As she requested, Carla Anderson is a pseudonym in place of the real name of this participant.

the history of the APIs with the introduction of all of the other participants in the study. This includes Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors at each institution. It is important to note that while there is a representation of Students and Instructors at each institution, NVIT does not have a Staff member represented and the CCWU does not have an Elder included in the interviews. However, both NVIT and CCWU have made a deep contribution to the research through the individuals I am able to highlight here.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

The section below focuses on the history and positioning of NVIT Elders, student, and instructors.

NVIT Elders. I was privileged to have the opportunity to interview four Elders from NVIT when I visited the Burnaby campus on February 27, 2013. The Elders were Margaret George (*Tsleil-Waututh*), Betty Gladue (*Saulteu Cree*), Phil Gladue (*Métis Cree*), and Theresa Neel (*Kwagiulth*). The interviews with these four Elders included much laughter as stories were shared.

Margaret George was nominated to sit as an Elder for NVIT by her community after her Elder coordinator saw an advertisement for Elders at NVIT and encouraged her to be involved. Margaret came to NVIT after being an Elder with Simon Fraser University (SFU), but she knew Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet since she was her course instructor for the Adult Native Education Program³¹ (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013). When Margaret reflected on the Elders group at NVIT she is involved with, she said:

Considering our backgrounds, we're all educated in different areas. We all have our own little invisible degrees that [we] worked at, we've done in our time. Like myself, I

³¹ I want to acknowledge the tremendous regard all of the Elders had for the work and role of Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet. There was a deep appreciation for her time and commitment to NVIT and Aboriginal Education in its entirety.

worked in the Downtown Eastside as a community service worker for over 21 years without an education, which was, I think, the biggest university training I ever got was working right on the street with people. When I came here, having that street knowledge made it easier for me to understand what the students were going through with having to get an education because of social services cutting programs and the different policy changes with the government. (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

She views her role as:

Talking with the students and explaining to them what it's like to go through a big institution like UBC and be a continuous starving student. What it's like to be worried when it comes to holidays, how to make things work for children, and just getting to know the students. (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Margaret has known the other NVIT Elders for many, many years through their various roles and experiences with the community.

The next two Elders I would like to introduce are Betty and Phil Gladue. Betty and Phil are originally from North/Central BC and have spent a considerable portion of their lives working in supportive roles in education institutions and hospitals before they were asked to become a part of the NVIT Elders' Circle (B. Gladue & P. Gladue, personal interview, February 27, 2013). Betty described that:

What interests me is the [NVIT] Elders are all different and I think that's a power house we have. It's very interesting listening to the students, sometimes I tell the students 'I'm just a resource Elder. I try to put all these things here and advise you and coach you to use the resources here, because I don't have that kind of degree, but I'm concerned.' They really listen, I'm a happy person and that's one of the things that I really enjoy. I'm not only [here] for the students. The staff too. I check on them and have a little tour and just see what's going on and they tell me and I have fun with them. (B. Gladue, personal interview, February 27, 2013)

Betty and Phil participate with the NVIT community in many ways. They provide classroom presentations but are also available for emotional, social, and spiritual support. Phil described that:

We have many nationalities of students here from different Nations and my perspective is to be able to work with all of them. Not to segregate each one and that is my passion, even in the school system today where I work in a classroom setting. We have so many different Nations in those schools and to be able to support them, I don't know that much,

but I try my best to share my knowledge, history, language and any craftwork or arts that needs to be done. (P. Gladue, personal interview, February 27, 2013)

Both Betty and Phil talk about how much they enjoy meeting the students and instructors at NVIT and being able to be there in a supportive capacity which is like a family where everyone is making contributions and working together (B. Gladue & P. Gladue, personal interview, February 27, 2013).

Finally, the remaining NVIT Elder is Theresa Neel. Theresa has a long history of working or volunteering in support and advocacy roles and this includes a deep commitment to Aboriginal Education. She said:

My original connection to NVIT was actually the Indian Studies Support Program that was administered through the Department of Indian Affairs. But that was really before Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet and I got working on it. We managed to move that committee out of Indian Affairs and see quite a bit more First Nations control over that money. It was, I think, 2.2 million dollars, so it wasn't a lot of money but it basically seeded, I would say about 30 Aboriginal institutions in British Columbia, so it was a very exciting time for Aboriginal education in the province...

Then I did work for about 30 years in a few institutions, but mostly the University College of the Fraser Valley where I lived in Chilliwack. I retired from there a while ago, and my friend Mia said, "Oh you know, we're really hoping to, to find a few more Elders at NVIT." And I thought, "You know, like I don't think I'm the Elder type." [Laughs] Wrong, because look at the group I'm with. It was only last year that I was interviewed by Margaret and Mia and accepted into the NVIT Elders group. I'm just having a great time. I think to myself, 'You know, that's what life should be like. You know, you go along through life and you plant some seeds and then later on in life you pick some corn and the end of the day you've done good,' so that's my involvement currently with NVIT. (T. Neel, personal communication, February 27, 2015)

Theresa's connection to her *Kwagiulth* traditions was obvious as she carried her knowledge about forging respectful and reciprocal relationships with the students and communities with whom she works.

NVIT Student. On April 5, 2013, I was privileged to have the opportunity to interview Corrine Hunt Jr. (*Namgis*, Alert Bay) while she was living and working in Prince George.

Corrine enthusiastically described her history with NVIT:

I went to school there [NVIT Burnaby Campus] for two and a half years, I sat on Student Council and I participated in all the events they had, so I helped with that. I just loved the school, so I support and I always talk about NVIT and my experience and how good of a school it is. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

She also explained why she chose to attend NVIT:

Because I am First Nations and that's really important to me. I think with education having that support is what I was looking for. The fact that the institution is small and it felt like a home feeling, a community feeling, because it was small and integrated with First Nations and First Nations teachers and the teachings. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

As a student representative, Corrine's experiences about the integration of IK at an API are important.

NVIT Instructors. There were a total of three instructors from NVIT that were interviewed for this research. From the Burnaby campus, I interviewed Dr. Catharine Crow and Dr. Eric Ostrowidzki (Odanak Band/*Abenaki* Nation). From the Merritt campus, I was able to interview Marti Harder.

Dr. Catharine Crow has been an instructor at NVIT Burnaby campus for more than eight years in the areas of social work, psychology, and criminology to name a few of her areas of expertise (C. Crow, personal interview, February 27, 2013). She came to NVIT after being a frontline Social Worker and then a senior bureaucrat with the Ministry when she was offered a job to work with the Institute of Indigenous Governance (IIG)³² and ultimately, NVIT. Dr. Crow was eager to become involved in First Nations education and she is committed to education related to learning and learning disabilities (C. Crow, personal interview, February 27, 2013).

³² NVIT took over the IIG in 2007 (Union of BC Indian Chiefs. (n.d.). *Historical timeline: From 1700s to present*).

Dr. Eric Ostrowidzki also came to the NVIT Burnaby campus after the closure of IIG. He primarily teaches in the areas of English and First Nations Studies (E. Ostrowidzki, personal interview, February 27, 2013). Dr. Ostrowidzki explained why he chose to come to NVIT:

I have Native status. I reclaimed my status when my mother was able to because of Bill C-31. I came to school, I went to McGill, and I did my BA, MA, and PHD as well as a diploma in education there. My Band paid for my school. I wanted to pay back so that's why I got into Native education and NVIT and I have to admit, this is one of the healthiest organizations in terms of professional and interpersonal relationships. (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

In addition, he is wholly committed to the academic *experiences* of the students at NVIT and has a keen interest to engage in education in innovative and collaborative ways (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

The final instructor from NVIT who teaches at the Merritt campus is Marti Harder. Marti, who is a registered nurse, described the beginnings of her career at NVIT:

I was hired at NVIT about four and a half years ago, originally as a healthcare Assistant Instructor and since then my role has evolved and I'm now the coordinator of the health department. Currently, this year, we run four Healthcare Assistant programs here in Merritt, and then three in outlying and remote communities. What we're working on right now is developing and getting our access to practical nursing program approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education. (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Always wanting to teach nursing in some capacity, Marti was able to begin as an instructor at NVIT for a healthcare systems program and it marked the beginning of what she describes as "an amazing journey" (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013). All three NVIT instructors bring unique experiences to complement their positions with this API.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

The following section describes the history and positioning of the WWNI Elder and instructor, former instructor, and staff and former students involved in this research.

WWNI Elder and Instructor. WWNI only has one full time instructor at the campus in *Gitwinksihlkw*, BC who is also a community Elder. Irene Seguin (*Hagwilook'am Saxwhl Giis, Nisga'a*) has a history with WWNI that began long before she was ever a teacher at the institute.

She described:

Many, many, many years ago, we saw the need in the valley after the 1989 population training needs study done by the Nisga'a Tribal Council... We found out that we need a lot of education like upgrading and there really wasn't anything like that here [and] we formed a committee, it was a working committee where there was education administrators from each village, [including] Social Workers, and people involved with education and we tried to come up with different training to meet people's needs... So that's how WWNI got formed. When we formed, it wasn't called that, it was a learning [centre] and we ran some upgrading programs but then we formed a Board. I was a founding Board Member. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

She explained that about 12 years ago, she began working for WWNI as a language instructor and has been employed in that position ever since then,

I've lived in the valley most of my life. The only time I've been out of the valley is when I went to school and when I first got married I married a non-First Nations and we couldn't move into the village because this is back in the day where they didn't allow that to happen. So we lived in Nass camp. I was always involved here and was always concerned about education. A long time ago, living here as a child, our Elders here were so wise because we weren't a very big village and we used to always have these get-togethers and they'd talk to us and talk to us about if we wanted to be in control of ourselves, we had to be those people. We had to be the Indian agents.

The sad thing about that was they'd say we'd have to go and steal the white man's knowledge. That was the exact words my Elders used. They were always preaching about this need. I've always been involved with education, having four children and always looking for ways to better things. When I started to work with the village, and I really got in charge, involved with everything, from education, to nursery all the way up to post-secondary trying to find ways to make it more successful. The best way is to have it here. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Her commitment to education with her Nation and working with Nisga'a language and culture is obvious.

WWNI Instructor. The other instructor included with this study for WWNI is Dr. Margaret Anderson. Dr. Anderson brings forward not only her experiences as working as an

instructor for WWNI, but also her role and responsibilities as a founding faculty member for UNBC. She explained:

I became involved with the WWN through my role at UNBC. When I first started in 1992 I had two roles. I was the Chair of First Nations Studies and I also did the job as what was then the Coordinator of First Nations Programs... and I drafted the curriculum for First Nations Studies. I consulted with communities across the North and, in drafting that, my sense was that if we were going to teach First Nations Studies then it had to be taught in partnership with communities. So I drafted [a BA] to include both language and culture courses. (M. Anderson, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Dr. Anderson talked about how she was enthusiastic to become involved with WWNI because of the “energy, interest and the ability [WWNI] had really offered... for UNBC to do what it should do with First Nations Studies” (M. Anderson, personal communication, March 19, 2013). Dr.

Anderson elaborates more about the areas she worked with in her time with WWNI:

I’ve taught a number of courses at WWN because we developed the First Nations Language Certificate and First Nations Language Diploma in response to a policy change by the BC College of Teachers. At that time, First Nations Studies was not a teachable subject so you couldn’t do a degree in First Nations Studies and go into Education and there was a lot of interest in Education ... That was a goal very early on and we developed it under a new policy from the BC College of Teachers...

We worked with people like Marianne Ignace... and developed the Developmental Standard Term Certificate program. They specified the requirements for that and so we developed a program at UNBC that slotted those courses into several sequential credentials. So we offered a certificate in First Nations Language where people would get a credential and then a diploma in First Nations Language and the third year was the Developmental Standard Term Certificate program. Then they could do a BA to complete a level five [teaching] certificate, which is still required. (M. Anderson, personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Dr. Anderson recognized that the Nisga’a Nation, who had been negotiating a treaty for well over 25 years, were clear about knowing the parameters around the partnership with UNBC and sought the success of this long-standing relationship with a vengeance (M. Anderson, personal communication, March 19, 2013).

WWNI Students and Staff. The final two participants from WWNI made contributions to this study represent positions as both students and staff members. Kathryn Kervel (*Nisga’a*)

completed a Bachelor of Arts degree taking courses at both the WWNI campus and at UNBC.

Lori Nyce (*Haida*) was the first graduate of the Master of Arts degree program held through WWNI.

Kathryn described how she was first introduced to WWNI:

I was a victim of circumstance to start off with. I came to UNBC in Prince George fresh out of high school. I ended up going on academic probation. I had no idea about University.... It's not that I wasn't attending. I was there and doing my work but I didn't know the ins and outs, I didn't know about full registration or this is who I need to see if I need help or the supports that were available here because it was so large especially coming from Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (NESS), that's small compared to UNBC. It wasn't a culture shock but I didn't feel I knew where to get the support. I ended up on academic probation and they were trying to pull me because I didn't know that I should maybe take four courses versus the five...

What ended up happening was I was so distraught thinking, "Oh no, I'm a failure, I have to go home," and all this. Deanna [Nyce] and Lori [Nyce] at WWN, they fought for me to go back and so I used to have to meet with Deanna every week. I had to meet just so they ensured that I was on task. That went for about a semester and then, you know, just learning the ropes of, "Okay, this is what I need to do. This is how I fill this out." I went to school [at WWNI] for maybe two years then I came back to UNBC and finished. Then, being employed, a position came up and I had worked at WWN while I was a student, filling in. I'd fill in at reception or fill in for the executive secretary or whatever. Or little language projects, they really helped me just transition. When a position came up I applied for it successfully. I've been employed here since 2007. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Lori, on the other hand, did not begin her time with WWNI as a student. She explained:

My involvement started with the beginning of WWN. I did half my schooling in Victoria so when I moved up [to the Nass] I started as a Registrar for WWN right off the bat. I've been the Registrar throughout all our years with WWN. I was Registrar for maybe 10 years, then I became a student and finished my degree. I received the Nisga'a Studies certificate, the general First Nations certificate in First Nations Language, Nisga'a, and got my degree all in the same year. I started my Master of Arts now so I'm a student as well. It's great because we can relate to the students. Almost every employee at WWN has been a student of WWN so that we can converse with them and so it's been great.³³ (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

³³ On Monday, June 1, 2015, I had the pleasure of witnessing the graduation of Lori Nyce on the completion of her Master of Arts degree in First Nations Studies through WWNI and UNBC at the *Ts'oohl Ts'ap* Memorial Hall in *Gitwinksihlkw*, BC

Lori noted that although she had begun her schooling and work at the Registrar's Office at Camosun College, when she moved to the Nass with her husband, Harry Nyce Jr., she thought:

It came to a point where it was, like, we [employees of WWNI] should practice what we preach... We started taking the courses. Me and another co-worker were in the same boat and said, "Well, let's do this degree." We took the courses, we completed, then, when the Master of Arts came up, she called me up and she said, "Let's do this" and my son was just born and she said, "Let's do this course. I'll do it if you do it." It was kind of a challenge and it still is today with our writing... That's how we started the Master's degree. It's a really interesting cohort because the majority of us were grieving when that came about, so it really helped us through that. It really helped get out of the house, just having my son then, as well. (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Having the experiences of being both staff members and students enriches the perspectives Kathryn and Lori brought to the interviews.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program

In the following section, the history and positioning of CCWU students, staff, and instructors is presented.

CCWU Students. The Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University³⁴ (CCWU) program had participation of students from at least three Nations and 15 Bands around the Williams Lake region. For this study, I interviewed two former CCWU students who became CCWU graduates. The first former CCWU student was Cathy Verhaeghe (?*Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation) who was the very first graduate of CCWU. Next, I interviewed Cindy M. Charleyboy (Williams Lake Band, *Tsilhqot'in*, *Secwepmc*, and Norwegian).

Cathy Verhaeghe wanted a degree from university, so she decided to be involved with the CCWU program. She explained:

I was working at the Tribal Council and the late Dr. Mary Alice Danaher was hired to be the Education Coordinator. From her consultation with the Bands, she knew we wanted the same type of program as the Gonzaga University so my involvement with the CCWU

³⁴ Note that within the context of the interviews with the CCWU participants, CCWU is sometimes referred to as "Weekend University" or "Weekend U."

in the beginning was as a part-time student. I had been taking accounting courses at the time and was a long way from getting the Accounting Diploma. I was also interested in taking the Chilcotin Language courses that were offered. In the beginning, the CCWU started out by offering upgrading courses in English and Math so that students could pass the entrance exams to enter University, then the first courses started in 1997. (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Cathy noted the remarkable relationship building that happened between students and instructors at the CCWU program and the immense influence that had on her post-secondary experiences.

Cindy M. Charleyboy is the second former student at CCWU interviewed for this study.

Cindy's role as a student was broadened with the other opportunities she engaged in with CCWU. She explained:

I was a tutor and a student representative on the coordinating council of the Weekend University. After I had graduated, and was no longer a student, I would go back and still tutor and sometimes still act as a student representative and as a guest speaker. So I was very involved and did lots of volunteer work to help to set up celebrations and be an MC for the grads and all kinds of things. (C.M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Like Cathy Verhaeghe, Cindy had a keen desire to go to university and CCWU provided an ideal place for her to access post-secondary education. She described:

I started with the program because it was within our community and I really wanted to go to university. I'd already tried a couple of different times with a couple of different local programs and I felt uncomfortable. I felt marginalized and there was a lot of racism and not a lot of awareness within the classroom and because I'm not visibly First Nations, like some people would easily recognize me, others wouldn't. There was a lot of times where I felt that I was overhearing conversations within classroom that made me really uncomfortable. When I started going to Weekend U, I just felt a lot more comfortable. I felt I didn't have to defend, like, who I am or what my perspective is, and I didn't have people, you know, making assumptions about me or my background. It was a lot better. My grades improved a lot. It was good just to be within my community and to feel good about the delivery and everything. (C.M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Both CCWU students interviewed for this research provide important contributions to the history and impact of this API.

CCWU Staff. The staff member representative included in this work is Crystal Verhaeghe (?*Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation), the daughter of Cathy Verhaeghe. Crystal describes her history with the CCWU:

I started working as a summer student with the CCWU when I was younger. One of the main things that I started working on was data entry and assisting Sister Mary Alice Danaher to create a database of the students and their success rates... This included information about how the individuals are doing, what is the success rates and also where they live, that type of stuff. Then I went on to work with Jo-anne Moiese and Mary Alice as a summer student again. I helped them have their summer children's program. It was called and the "Summer Children's Program" for when the students went to the UNBC campus in Prince George or they went to the TRU campus. (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication, September 26)

Crystal talked about how her mom was very involved with CCWU and "she was one of the first students to sign up. [My mom] graduated after eight years with her bachelors" (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication, September 26). Crystal continued to remain involved with the CCWU and worked with Sister Mary Alice Danaher while she was finishing her own undergraduate degree. Once she had finished her degree, her roles with CCWU began to change:

As soon as I finished, [Sister Mary Alice Danaher] really wanted me to teach some of the courses and so she asked me if I would teach. The first course I taught was with the TRU program. Then I went in and started working and doing some of the UNBC classes as well ... They asked me if I would be the representative on the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Coordinating Committee. So I was the *Tsilhqot'in* representative... for a number of years until it was shut down. (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication, September 26, 2013)

Crystal's breadth of experience and history with CCWU, including the reflections on her mother's involvement, are important contributions to understanding the role of IK at CCWU.

CCWU Instructors. There are two instructors included in this research that represent CCWU. This includes Dr. Titi Kunkel (*Yoruba*, West Africa) and Dr. Blanca Schorcht. Both Drs. Kunkel and Schorcht had a relationship with UNBC while teaching for the CCWU and they continue to have a relationship in their current employment capacities, which is reflected in

much of their interview responses. Dr. Kunkel³⁵ remarks about her instructional time with CCWU:

I first came across the Weekend University program in 2005 and I was actually teaching a Business Ethics course for UNBC and that was the first time I actually met First Nations people. I was new to the country, new to the area and Blanca Schorcht, that was the Regional Chair, asked me to teach the course. I had no idea about First Nations people or First Nations ongoing issues or anything... I had no idea what [CCWU] was, I just wanted to teach, wanted to teach for the university and it was based more on my expertise than wanting to be involved.

After that first class, I understood because in that classroom I had Chiefs from different communities, Chief and Council members from different communities. I had leaders from the communities, and they actually taught me about a lot of the issues that their communities are facing. Then that made me want to become involved in developing and delivering programs for their communities. So it was like a firsthand experience in terms of learning about the issues that our communities faced. I wanted to become involved from that point onwards, and actually went back to school to learn more about First Nations people as a result of my meeting those students. (T. Kunkel, personal communication, July 2, 2013)

Dr. Blanca Schorcht, in her capacity as Regional Chair of the UNBC Southcentral campus at the time, had a different introduction to the CCWU Program:

When I started my position as Regional Chair in Quesnel, it was a completely new institution and the whole concept of anything like that was totally new to me when I got to Quesnel... As Regional Chair for UNBC, I was sort of thrown off the deep and what I was doing with Weekend U in my capacity's Regional Chair was academic programming, working in conjunction with the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council and the various management and advisory and academic committees of Weekend U... I taught for Weekend U because I really felt that in order for me to get a sense of what it was like and to get a sense of the students and the community, I needed to try it... my area of teaching was First Nation literature and oral and written traditions. Having come from Simon Fraser, I hadn't actually taught Indigenous students.

The first time it was very scary because I felt as if I was going into a classroom, I wasn't going to tell them about their culture, but here I am teaching First Nations literature and the other piece is that the delivery format of the courses was quite different. Alternate weekends, Friday evenings or well, Friday's twelve to seven or all day Saturdays, every alternate week to make up the thirty nine credit hours. I had never taught in that kind of a format before either...

³⁵ Titi Kunkel recognizes herself as an Indigenous *Yoruba* person from Africa, and found working with First Nations at CCWU all the more rewarding because she could relate their issues to those of her Native people in Nigeria.

I have to say though, the teaching was a choice and the first time I taught, it was primarily so that I developed a sense of the students and the pedagogy and the whole approach of teaching in that kind of a [community-based] way... Quite honestly, they were some of my favourite groups of students to teach and still are. I just taught one [course] before I took this position [as Dean of CASHS at the UNBC Central campus] and they're just the best. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Drs. Kunkel and Schorcht bring a rich representation of the CCWU/UNBC collaborative experiences through their words.

Green

This next section moves from a presentation moves from a presentation of the history of participants and the APIs into discussing the benefits and impacts of IK integration at the APIs included in this study. This section also provides examples of memorable and/or rewarding experiences reflected by participants. The thematic categories of benefits and rewarding experiences are well aligned with the colour green of the Métis Sash since the colour green can represent growth and prosperity for Métis people, and is an enduringly positive symbol so I find it most appropriate to represent it with the positive impacts articulated by participants in this regard.

Benefits, Celebration, and Impact of IK Integration. At all three APIs, the leadership, Elders, students, staff and instructors all spoke about the benefits of integrating IK at their institution. For all participants the responses most closely aligned with this category came from the questions around the integration and celebration of IK at the API. For students, some of the responses included here aligned with questions around how IK benefitted their learning experience. An overarching common theme was that IK integration was not only beneficial for

the institution and the student's learning, but it was important to reinforce the validity and rightful place IK has in higher education.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. Reflections regarding the benefits, celebration, and impact of integrating IK at NVIT come from all NVIT participants in this study. This includes: Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships, Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet (Bonaparte First Nation/*Secwepemc*); Dean of Community Education and Applied Programs, John Chenoweth (Upper Nicola Valley First Nation); Elders Margaret George (*Tsleil-Waututh* by marriage but originally from Upper Fraser Valley), Betty Gladue (*Saulteu Cree*), Phil Gladue (*Métis Cree*), and Theresa Neel (*Kwagiulth*); former NVIT student Corrine Hunt Jr. (*Namgis*, Alert Bay); and instructors Dr. Catharine Crow, Eric Ostrowidzk (Odanak Band/*Abenaki* Nation), and Marti Harder.

Benefits and Celebration of IK Integration at NVIT. There were many common threads about the benefits and celebration of integrating IK at NVIT. Having the presence of Elders, inclusion of community and being able to share IK formally in the classroom were highlighted as making Indigeneity an obvious and integral part of NVIT's identity. Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet noted:

We had Elders involved with NVIT right from the very beginning of its essence, Elders were part of that structure. They always brought us back to understanding that being Indian, being Indigenous, wasn't about the beads and the blankets. It was about the knowledge we kept, the relationship to land, the relationship to ceremony, and the relationship to learning. It was that relationship to learning that really built NVIT. So the knowledge that learning in an Indigenous way is about, one, understanding your Elders, understanding your kinship systems, understanding your ceremonies, all intricately. They weren't one and they weren't segregated, they weren't separate. So, the value for NVIT around that was having the Elders very comfortably enshrined in the institution... It's just the way that it was set-up with those two fantastic men, [the late] Robert [Sterling] and [the late] Gordon [Antoine]. Their strong belief, and the leadership at that time, their strong belief about what this institution should be.

There was always a dream that NVIT would become a University, our Indian University having those values intrinsic in it... One of the things that I was charged with

when I came back as an employee at NVIT was to 1) pay my own wages, 2) make NVIT a household name, and 3) never to lose the Indigenous-ness or, at that time we called it the Indian-ness, never to lose the Indian-ness of our institution. So those are pretty tall orders but whenever I think I'm going off the rails, I think about those. How does that make us, how does that make us Indian? How does that fit into our philosophy of being Indian? Really, how does, how are the students leaving this institution? How are they going to walk in both worlds and be successful and respected and be really those people who are going to make the change? They're the change agents, right? So, to make that solid foundation for them here so that they can go out there with all the confidence that they need and want, and to move forward and do whatever they choose to do. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Likewise, the Elders also noted the celebration of having IK at NVIT by its presence at the institution and how having IK at NVIT helps students. Phil Gladue said:

It's practiced here. It's going on every day. I've went into classrooms, like we get assigned to different classrooms whenever the instructor wants us there for particular things, the knowledge we bring with that. Some of us, the students in different classes, they want to get smudged. Especially if they're going through some hard times in their lives. They need that grounding, so we do that. We look after each other here. Not only Elders but as a group of educators. I'll give you an idea. We had a person pass away, we had a ceremony here to honour that person and that family. Those are the kind of things that's taking place within this institution that come from Aboriginal perspective and knowledge. (P. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

From the perspective of students like Corrine Hunt Jr., the benefits from integrating IK have significant personal importance. She said:

I think I can better understand why First Nations struggle so much through the past. I didn't know much about Residential Schools... you learn why things are the way they are and treaties and how the government works... I think I've learned most of all that through NVIT because they really make sure they're touching every area and not just one area. They not just focusing on the bad things, they're focusing on the positive as well... and finding ways to help our people move forward. I think that's important, probably one of the biggest things that I've learned is learning how to help my people. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

From the position as instructors for NVIT, Dr. Catharine Crow, Dr. Eric Ostrowidzki, and Marti Harder acknowledge that as an Aboriginal institution, NVIT has integrated IK as a foundation and it is beneficial to the future careers and a shared understanding of the importance to learn with each other. Catharine Crow said:

It is celebrated because we are a First Nations institution and the First Nations side of it is meshed in everything we do. So you can't really separate it... It is celebrated and we do have some special opportunities. Like when we were talking about counselling, I do throw in the Medicine Wheel. I usually bring Betty and Phil (NVIT Elders). Sometimes we've actually made Medicine Wheels and the class for students to use as tools for their future careers in Social Work, for example. It's celebrated. It's there. It's a foundation. (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Marti Harder explained:

There's a lot of Indigenous events that go on, cultural events, speakers that come in, things like that. Even just the people that work here, the larger number of Aboriginal people that work here in itself helps to establish the culture and celebrate the culture... For me, as a non-Indigenous person, that's been very important to me because it's helped me to learn the culture. I know that any event that I attend or any speaker that I listen to or any staff person that I meet, I can ask questions, honest questions and not feel judged by my lack of knowledge. People understand. 'She's white. She doesn't know things. Let's just be patient and tell her stuff.' So, indeed, it's celebrated. (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

The celebrations are an important part of the experience of IK integration and sharing.

Impact of IK Integration at NVIT. In regards to the presentation of the impact of integrating IK at an API, the responses from institutional leaders most closely aligned with the interview question related to the impact they felt it had on students, staff, and the local community. For Elders, students, staff, and instructors, the interview responses presented here primarily emerged from questions related to how having IK integrated into an API impacts their perception of higher education. John Chenoweth explained:

How does NVIT impact Aboriginal students and staff and the local community? Well, three ways. For Aboriginal students, we got all kinds of students here, we've got students that are like I'll say "born-again Indians," and students that are grassroots, students that are, just want to wear Nikes and Levis and "get out of my face." I mean, all kinds. We've got 18 year olds and 60 year olds and I think that, one thing that NVIT does, it lets you be you. That's kind of a nice thing.

We do a lot of feasts and seasonal feasts, things like that. That's for students. Staff, same thing. We've got all kinds of staff. Like I mentioned, I don't need to teach the Indian students how to be Indian, that's not my job. I'm here to teach Chemistry or whatever. And that's fine. I guess we just can't be, we don't want to judge people, that's

all. For the local Aboriginal community we have five founding Bands. Our new President has made it kind of a priority to really build back that relationship with those five Bands³⁶ because I think it's been lost for 10 years... (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

He continued to describe how at a local level he sees an opportunity to provide appropriate programming for *all* learners including those students who may not think they could have an opportunity to attend post-secondary education (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

For the Elders at NVIT, their responses related more to how they were able to witness the transformation of the students and how, as Elders at the institutions, they do indeed make an impact on the learners. For example, Phil Gladue explained:

You know, the other day, I don't know where we were, and Betty said, "The student graduated here, hey? Working up there. I recognize them. I recognize her." We didn't recognize the student. He said, "I graduated here." Sometimes because we've been in the school, even the elementary, the high schools, sometimes we see, when we're in the mall, one of them, some of our non-Aboriginals will come up to you and you don't recognize them. "You remember me?" They'll say. "You remember me? I made a little canoe in your presentation" and "I still have it at home." He's graduated and I'm now working out there. You know, that's the gift that we get as Elders. When you see that out there happening and when you see them it makes you feel so good. (P. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

For the students themselves, Corrine Hunt Jr. described how her time at the smaller institution of NVIT has impacted her:

I think it's given me a lot... I know where I want to go now. I'm very clear on that, on First Nations issues. I'm a little bit nervous coming from a small institution to a big University. I think that's probably the scariest thing for me but I don't think academic-wise I am nervous at all. I think that, if anything, I think NVIT has prepared me. It would just be the size and the one-on-one time I won't get. The social events. I know they probably do them at Universities but it's just not the same as a small institution. I think that would be the biggest thing but academically they have prepared me. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

³⁶ The five Bands are: The Coldwater, Shakan, Nooaitch, Lower Nicola, and Upper Nicola.

For both the Elders and student at NVIT included in this study, they note the impact of IK integration carries forward beyond their time at the institution.

For the instructors at NVIT there was essentially one major response and this included the impact teaching at an API has on the individuals working there. As Dr. Eric Ostrowidzk said, “there’s no way you can teach at a place for 18 years, or among Indigenous culture, without not changing yourself” (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013). He explained:

It starts from the notions of respect and sharing. I think that in the West and liberal institution, we teach notions of citizenship. In, a citizenship, however, possibly more abstract and dry. But IK in terms of its place within the college, I would say it’s not less analytical by any means, but it is less instrumental. It’s far less instrumental. I find western schools are more instrumental and their quality, you have to achieve this, and there’s much more enriching qualitative dimension to living. There’s more soul nurturing here and that’s the truth. There’s a depth and level of candidness that you won’t find anywhere else. (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Dr. Dr. Catharine Crow further elaborates on this further:

I didn’t do an Indigenous higher education. Mine was mainstream. I’m finding that teaching it and having to do the research to be able to support the mainstream stuff with the Indigenous stuff has really increased the depth of my knowledge and I can now apply it to other courses. Some of the stuff I’ve learned in, maybe, teaching Social Work, I can apply to my Psychology classes, which I can then apply to some of the Criminology classes. It’s really been helpful for me. (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Essentially, the impact is personal and it touches instructors in a way that has depth.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

The next section presents interview responses related to the benefits and celebration of IK at WWNI.

Benefits and Celebration of IK Integration at WWNI. At WWNI, the interview participants had very positive responses in regards to the benefits and celebration of IK at this Nisga’a institute. Deanna Nyce, CEO of WWNI, provided many examples of this. She said:

It's been just phenomenal... on our 10th anniversary I asked some students for their testimonials, that graduates were off doing things and one of the people who became a lawyer said, "I got my grounding there and I continue to use all of the information from the culture courses in my work." That seems to be sort of the theme of what students have said. Also, students who are from other cultures who studied here said the same thing. Like, for example, we had a Wet'suwet'en student. I said, "So, tell me about, about your experience, you know, in taking all of these courses here" and she said, "I know that it's same with Haida and same, exactly the same thing in Cree," and they've all said the same thing as others as well and they said, "Even though it's wrapped around Nisga'a and Nisga'a culture, I learned a lot about myself in all of that" and some very poignant stories in there where people have relearned about themselves using the Nisga'a frame. That's been a tremendous benefit.

I don't know that when we were putting it together, we just thought that this would be really good information for people to have. But it really helped them get a handle on their culture... IK being brought into the world of academia is incredibly valuable. You just cannot put a value on that. It has allowed the University access to that information. A relationship is being built. It's also brought IK into the world of academia like no other time in our history around the globe. From New Zealand, the Maori, you know, with their treaty. Their school which is recent, it's not that old. With Hawaiians, IK all around the world, I think that it's these kinds of relationships that allow IK to grow. We have to continue to believe in it. If we don't, then we lose it.

(D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

WWNI Elder and instructor, Irene Seguin believes the celebration comes from the institution being structured around Nisga'a knowledge. She said:

I think every single Nisga'a should take courses here because there is so much of our history that our people don't know about and they are all taught here. The courses that are here aren't traditional First Nations Studies. They're Nisga'a so that, when you're taking Anadromous Fish, you're talking all about the Nisga'a fisheries. You can take several levels of Nisga'a culture and learn the language. There are many of our courses that are Nisga'a and, as much as I thought I knew a lot, I learned so much more from taking, especially things like Anadromous Fish, one of the ones you wouldn't think you'd learn anything in. But it's all Nisga'a. People can learn so much about us. That's another thing that our Elders used to say. If you have to know about yourself and your past before you can move forward. I think maybe that's probably part of the problems we're having now is not enough of our people know where we came from. Know what the stuff was back then. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

WWNI staff and former students Kathryn Kervel and Lori Nyce had similar thoughts in regards to the benefits and celebration of IK at WWNI. Lori Nyce said:

I think it's huge because a lot of our Nisga'a courses, our language, our culture, is written by the Nisga'a people themselves. So they're learning their history, they're learning,

they look at the four volumes and they're like, "That was my aunt. That was my aunt." Like, how many people can read a book and relate to it at that level? It's really neat to hear that in the hallway. I think that is really good. Most of the instructors are Nisga'a and a lot of them did have to go to school elsewhere. To have them come back to us and teach for us is really amazing. They share their experiences, "This is what it was like when I went to school. If I had this when I was going to school, I would've stayed home." (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

This is empowering for the students who come to university often intimidated and unsure.

Kathryn Kervel remarked that the celebration is always there and is "the way things are" (K.

Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013). She said:

I didn't grow up on Nisga'a core lands because I grew up in the city, I grew up in the lower mainland. When I turned, like, grade eight, my mom says, "Okay. We're moving. We're moving home to your grandmother's." We didn't have a lot of this background or culture that a lot of kids already had. We gained some through high school but, I mean, how much do teenagers really listen to what is going on. It helped me as a student and a part of the world that I'm learning about, our *Ayuukhl* and all the volumes and the histories and the Clan histories that way. Learning how things happened. If I were to go and talk to my uncle, who's the Chief, I'd say, "Well, this is what I learned" and he'd just, "Well, that's our story" or, "This is how things are." There was the parallel there. I could say, "This is what I'm reading" and he says, "Well, I didn't read that. I had my uncle who told me that story." And vice versa. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

As noted above, WWNI instructor Dr. Margaret Anderson believes that IK "is celebrated at

WWN with a vengeance" (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013). She

explained:

They've gone way beyond the original shell curriculum and we had a sort of, shell of courses. First Nations language level one, level two, level three, level four, and the culture courses. They've added areas where they found that they had knowledge to convey that wasn't included in the curriculum. So, for instance, they have courses on anadromous winter fisheries, which is *oolichan* fishing. Which, who knew you'd need a course on that but they did and UNBC, I'm proud, incorporated that into the calendar and it's a regular course and successful. I think that they've done a tremendous job of building on the partnership and, and taking the opportunity and offering what really is a very strongly Indigenous curriculum. (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013)

It is obvious that the integration of IK at WWNI has benefits that make the engagement of IK important to the curriculum and community.

Impact of IK Integration at WWNI. Following the notable benefits to the community, participants provided responses about the impact of the API and the presence of IK in this academic structure. Deanna Nyce, CEO of WWNI explained:

I think it's had a definitely huge impact on the community. When it first opened, the doors first opened September 1994 for students to come in, we had students but this was more formal. With a lot of the students that came, they were the very first in their families, real scared, real nervous, the very first in their families to go to University. It was a really big thing. We've watched students come through that are the first generation to graduate from University, first generation getting off of welfare because they got hired right out of there, you know, and a lot of people got hired right out of WWN, or went to higher education, one of the two. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

In addition, she said:

One of the things WWN has done is taught the community about post-secondary education. It takes time. Even when UNBC moved here into Prince George there was not a lot of understanding in the community about what a university does and how it can serve the community. It's taken a number of years and it is still a work in progress. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

For David Griffin Jr., the impact is centered on the fact that people can learn while being in their home community. He explained:

I think the greatest impact is that people can learn at home. You can come, in the community for example, there's no house that's more than five minutes away. You can walk from home to school, take your classes, and you're home again. That for me is the best thing. You can get a quality education without having to leave. (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Staff and former students Kathryn Kervel and Lori Nyce speak about how IK has impacted them in their capacities as both staff and students. Kathryn Kervel explained:

I think it's just been wonderful. Just being able to learn your own language and culture. I mean, for some of us, some of our grandparents passed away when we were young so you kind of miss that portion of your life. That, you know, "Well, my grandmother should be saying this." Even though I have extended grandparents, it's not the same as having your own that are able to sit there and tell you or speak with you. I mean, my

grandmother passed away when I was in high school and I had no idea that my grandmother spoke Nisga'a. I had absolutely no idea before she passed. She talked to another Elder and I heard her. "You speak Nisga'a!" I had no idea. It was never spoken and we lived with her. They didn't teach their children because they didn't want them to get in trouble because they were used to the residential [school] ways. It was still hard for me because I didn't grow up hearing it so I still can't pronounce the sounds. It'll sound good in my head but when it comes out it's something entirely different. My son can probably say words better than I can and he's just turned four. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

For Lori Nyce, who is from the Haida Nation, the integration of IK at WWNI is profound:

Well, not living on Haida land and being around, I know the culture, I know a lot about the Haida culture, but I know more Nisga'a language and I, obviously, participate a bit more in the Nisga'a culture than I do my own. (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

She noted:

You have a lot of mature students, some are 40, 50 plus, and they'll come back and they're still learning about the culture. They'll come back and say, "I didn't know that." They'll read something in the book and they wouldn't have read those culture books if they didn't take the course. They wouldn't know about these new publications and books - we've been talking to students about the new Frank Calder book that's supposed to be released and we have students that are asking, "Well, can, can I order it through you? Will this be used in the course?" So it's nice that they're coming to us. A lot of them wouldn't read books like that, they wouldn't know so much about the treaty if they didn't take these courses. (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Dr. Margaret Anderson witnessed that the impact is evident with both the students as well as the other institutions the API may be in partnership with. She explained:

A number of the graduate students I work with and taught in the graduate cohort, had gone through the undergraduate program and, in their papers, they referenced the knowledge that they had gotten from some of their instructors who taught IK content in their courses. Dr. Bert McKay and Rod Robinson, I've read a lot about what they say about Nisga'a knowledge, and it's been fascinating, and I think the students have gotten tremendous rewards from the ability to study. Those two men happen to both be gone now, but there's been a great impact, I think, of that involvement of community-based knowledge holders in the curriculum. Some of them have credentials, you know, degrees, but some of them don't, but they've been accepted as knowledge holders and transmitters of knowledge, so that's something that we can be proud of...

It's reinforced my sense that, that this is an area of knowledge that has a legitimate, important place in post-secondary education and that it can only be done by communities in partnership. You know, there are places that do it as stand-alone

institutions which is hard because of the funding and infrastructure issues. But, I think, more than anything, for UNBC, we've been enriched by the fact that students can go to the Nass, and they've accepted students from other areas and they've accepted researchers from around the world, Japan, and I think Norway, and different places have come to the Nass and having the partnership has facilitated that. So I think it's enriched the University's experience more than, you know, more than the Nisga'a's experience... (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013)

Because of this, the impact of IK at the API in the Nass Valley touches lives at an individual, community, and institutional level.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program

This next section presents the responses from participants in regards to the benefits and celebration of IK at CCWU.

Benefits and Celebration of Integrating IK at CCWU. At the former CCWU, Carla Anderson recalled that the benefits and celebration came from working closely with the Elders when integrating IK and it ultimately benefitted the entire community. She said:

They [the Elders] sort of guided the process... if there were presentations that instructors wanted, than the Elders would come in and do that or guest speakers, the experts on the community. So always having community involvement within the classes was really important and we loved to celebrate. Every year we would have celebrations, maybe once or twice a year we would celebrate. Students who not necessarily had the best marks, but students that were trying really hard, students that you know, were single moms and that, made it through four entire semesters and passed all their courses. We celebrated everyone and would include everyone... I think that was really important, just acknowledging all the strengths that the students had. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Ultimately, the Elders, as the knowledge holders with the Indigenous PhD's were a critical part of the foundation of the structure.

Crystal Verhaeghe, former summer student coordinator, instructor, and representative on the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Coordinating Committee, realized that by having Aboriginal instructors who could be there in a teaching capacity with the CCWU students was important. She noted:

When students finally get [to post-secondary] and they finally walk through the doors, it's still intimidating because you still have to go to that classroom and sit down with that teacher and when that teacher's smiling back at you and you can tell that they hold the same culture as you then it feels more comfortable. There's a difference in that too, it's when we hold something we make sure that at our organization we make sure there's coffee, there's tea, there's snacks and there's conversation and comfortable conversation...

It's an intimidating process if you've only had a certain level of schooling, you leave your reserve, and you've done nothing in that type of a way before, it's intimidating. It could make people stop on the first day and say, "I don't want to be here." It's nicer when they have a good first welcoming experience and then all the way through. So I noticed one of the main things that CC Weekend University did was they would try to hold potlatches where people brought in food or always have coffee and snacks so at least somebody was getting a little bit of something to eat and it wasn't only about the food of getting to eat something, but it's about the comfort in that. I liked that about CCWU. (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication September 26, 2013)

As students, both Cindy M. Charleyboy and Cathy Verhaeghe had fond memories of the benefits and celebration of IK at CCWU. Cindy said:

We had a lot of Indigenous instructors and they were very outspoken about their views of IK being just as important as any other type of knowledge. So just knowing, for example, our own names and where we came from and the place names. Just kind of like knowing ourselves a little bit more was just as valuable as cracking open a book. It was even more so. It was very ingrained in us to be able to say who we are and why we were named what we were named and to understand that about ourselves.

The other thing was that we were, I believe, given more leeway than most students in the type of knowledge that we included in our papers and in our presentations. Our teachers really would encourage us to go ahead and talk about how it is that we knew something... there was times where I would hear the students talk about that they were learning how to skin a moose and tan a hide in a certain class. Or they were going out camping and they were picking medicines and telling stories and I know the language was involved all along so there was plenty of IK included in the program. (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Cindy M. Charleyboy realized that there was a mutual understanding amongst students about appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and etiquette and that this was beneficial in an Indigenous classroom. Cathy Verhaeghe recalls the benefits of integrating IK during her time as a student at CCWU:

We learned IK from the First Nations Studies courses that were offered. Through these courses we learned how the government interfered in our education and set up

Residential Schools in Canada. CCWU brought in guest speakers to speak about traditional practices: berry picking, language, preserving food, tanning hides and making clothing. Many of the traditional education has been lost in our generation but many of the communities are teaching the young people traditional education. We learned from what the Shuswap, Chilcotin and Carrier brought to the classroom. (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal communication, September 30, 2013)

Like the instructors at NVIT and the WWNI, former CCWU instructors Drs. Titi Kunkel and Blanca Schorcht felt the benefit of the immense learning opportunity for them in an Indigenous Setting and saw how it enriched the entire program and courses and made them more holistic.

Dr. Titi Kunkel noted:

When I started up, I had no idea what IK was. Because my teaching experiences were different, they weren't from this country I was coming in with zero knowledge of IK. Then in that classroom [the first class I taught], I started to learn and to see the differences [in types of knowledge]. In fact, if I had come in with a lot of knowledge behind me of First Nations people and of how things are done in this part of the world, I think I may not have noticed it. But because I came from a totally foreign environment where that [IK] wasn't even talked about, I came to see [perceive IK]... (T. Kunkel, personal communication, July 2, 2013)

She continues to talk about how the benefit of this knowledge integration has infiltrated into many of her former student's professional careers where the knowledge is called upon, especially in the Chilcotin area where there are several significant resources-related issues to consider.

Dr. Blanca Schorcht recognizes that one of the benefits of including IK is being able to have a space for students to realize that they already know a lot and that they have a lot to bring into a classroom. As an instructor that came from Simon Fraser University (SFU), Blanca had her own learning experience of working with students who were comfortable working outside the traditional Western classroom and wanted to be engaged collaboratively to learn together. She didn't face the same challenges of having students try to work together as in some of her previous teaching experiences. She said:

The group work was, they were always helping each other and working together and I think that really contributed to their learning experience because if you can do that it

stops you from feeling bad or inadequate. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Indeed, the benefits and celebration of IK at CCWU are significant and long standing for the interview participants in this study.

Impact of IK Integration at CCWU. As a former coordinator, Carla Anderson has been able to witness how the impact of IK at CCWU assisted in the success of many former students who are now the educational champions (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013). Former students, Cindy M. Charleyboy and Cathy Verhaeghe felt that being at CCWU, where IK was incorporated and celebrated was an empowering experience. Cindy noted:

It really helped us feel that we've had knowledge all along and now we're just incorporating other types of knowledge in with our knowledge. It helped us feel like our identity and that we can come to the university and we can meet the President or meet various esteemed guests and not feel that we're out of place or something. We absolutely felt the identity piece and then it really helped me to not be intimidated by big words. To just go ahead and learn what they mean and learn how to use them in a sentence... (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Cathy Verhaeghe believes that, “the success of the program was being in the presence of other Aboriginal students and making sure that everyone was moving through the programs together... as we took these courses, we began to see growth in ourselves and our fellow students. Suddenly we each had a voice. Our vision was broadened. That is what higher education accomplished in all of us (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal communication, September 30, 2013).

For the former CCWU instructors, Drs. Titi Kunkel and Blanca Schorcht, the impact of the integration of IK had a definite influence on perceptions of higher education. In particular, Drs. Kunkel and Schorcht mention how there are some very traditional Western ways of participating in a university environment that are not necessarily evident in a setting like an API. Dr. Kunkel noted:

A lot of what we do in academia is kind of governed by the Western ways and I feel, I mean, this is my perception. I know that it changes, but my perception is the changes are very, very slow. I feel like, as most institutions, I mean we're supposed to be at the forefront of change but I think we're kind of stuck. Or it's taking us much longer to actually catch up with change. I think IK should be embraced at all levels in education, but I think right now we're kind of relegated to the First Nations Studies program and it's kind of very hard to take it out of that program and have it everywhere else. (T. Kunkel, personal communication, July 2, 2013)

Dr. Schorcht stated how she believes:

I think we still live in an era where education is not seen as multidimensional as it really is. We impose in some cases, in too many cases some very narrow standards over what constitutes education and what is appropriate learning. I think that's problematic... Our individual course has to be perfect and disseminate all this knowledge and maybe the students are learning something from that course that isn't even on the syllabus. (T. Kunkel, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Both Dr. Kunkel and Schorcht see that change is happening, but just not as quickly as they would like.

Memorable and Rewarding Experiences. All participants in the study were asked to reflect on memorable or rewarding experiences they have had at their respective API. While the longer versions of these stories is not included here, I have captured the examples of these experiences in shorter form for each participant.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Participants from NVIT each remarked about some of the most memorable or rewarding experiences they have being a part of this API.

NVIT Leaders. At NVIT, Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet speaks in high regard of the rewarding success of community relationship and some of the programs NVIT is engaged with in high regard. She notes that she believes it is the community that has the power and drives the agenda. Different programs like the Chemical Addictions, the economic development program built by the Canadian Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO), the Social

Work program, the Sexual Abuse program, were all developed by community and are integrated within NVIT. She described a particular success story with the *Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en* Education Society (GWES):

We as NVIT, we're reciprocal. Our job is to help community be successful. Whether that is around building capacity in their organization, in their community, resource sharing, human resources or financial resources, that's our job. That's always something that has been intrinsic in NVIT from its beginning... I want to talk about a success story with GWES.

We've been involved with GWES, I think, for maybe 10 years now in different ways. I remember going up there and meeting with the individuals there and talking about what it is we could do as NVIT to help them. At that time they had very little funding but a lot of issues and wanting to move on those issues. One was around getting grade 12. The other was around life skills. But we didn't call it life skills, it was about professional development at the time. They were working with some other institutions that were not very open to the ways they wanted to do things but charged a lot of money. When we went there, I said, "Well, what can we do? What do you want us to do?" and, at that time, they wanted, they were building their language programming but they were also building their traditional ways of knowing their culture and running it into their system, into their education.

I came back and I met with our President and our Deans and said, "This is what they want to do. How are we going to do it?" "Well, I don't think we can do that." I said, "Oh yeah, we can." I said, "Just let me do it." [and they said], "If you can make it work, make it work." I said, "Okay." I went back and said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do. These are our courses. You're going to take some time with your faculty, your instructors. Take a look at these courses and tell me how you could fit what you want into these courses." So we did that. And then, I said, "Okay. Who do you have in your community that can teach these?" [They said], "Don't you guys send up teachers?" "No. Who do you have that can teach these?" So they had some people that were working in other [capacities but were all actually Native Indian Teacher Education Program] students. All Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) grads. So we said, "Okay, let's bring them on board." They brought them in and then they taught the courses and we credited them. That's how our partnership began.

The other component to that was that we said anything, any courses they delivered with their content is theirs. We don't own them. We will credit them, we will run them through the system, but we will not deliver them. You own your content and that's how we've been able to do that. One of those students was a young lady who dropped out of grade 10 and today is teaching in that very program. She went from there, right into that program, went into University, got her Master's degree in Education and she's now home teaching. She said she would never have done that if she hadn't been able to do this and understand her ways of knowing. One of the courses they had was walking the land. It was like an Anthropology course but they walked the land and told the stories, the fishing stories, the place names and everything, which is very relevant to their territory.

Another one was about ceremony around their Houses, right? Would that fit in mainstream society? No. But we made it; we made it relevant for them. We were able to fix it so that they could do that. That's what we do, right? That's how we do things to make it relevant for community. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet speaks positively about the power and resilience of community within the construct of NVIT. As NVIT continues to move forward with even more programming such as one related to Aboriginal governance that involves many different individuals including Elders and Ministers, the power and effectiveness of such initiatives prevails (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

John Chenoweth told a moving memory of the late Grand Chief Gordon F. Antoine that he believes needs to be shared:

Oh, memorable story. This goes way back. The building itself here is called the F. Gordon Antoine building. He was the Grand Chief of Coldwater, passed away a number of years ago. He's been, when it was started back in '83, he's been on the Board, was Board Chair until it became public in 1995. There were times where it wasn't a public school where they had their campus downtown because everything was done by contracts. His wife told me that he used to go take mortgages on their ranch just to pay faculty a number of times. (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

The legacy of institutional champions is a driving force to continue with the perseverance they had at the beginning of NVIT.

Elders at NVIT. For the NVIT Elders, their memorable moments had particular focus on working with the students, staff, and instructors as well as being part of the celebratory and ceremonial events at NVIT and with each other as Elders. Margaret George described:

I think the first one that really got me was going to the first NVIT grad ceremony in Merritt. I just couldn't explain my feelings to see all those First Nations students graduating. It was just, somebody had opened the door and let all these little kids grow up and go to school. It was great and it made my graduation ceremony more real, because I had graduated before that and being the only one in my family, in my age group to get something that said that I had gone to a university and graduated, regardless of what the marks were or anything else, it was like I won a million dollars in stars. It's something you just can't really put into words. Like when I went to my first grandson's

graduation, I had mentored him from grade one to the day he graduated. I was with him, helping with homework, meeting with the instructors, with the counsellors, with the principals... (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

She continues to talk about the important meaning being with the Elders has to her:

I always said we should have an Elders gathering, meeting, just [NVIT Burnaby campus Elders]... We need to be by ourselves. I was really glad that today came through because it was just a couple days ago we had asked for meeting. This is really special for us. To get together and share food and laugh, and talk about our learning Elders' experiences. It's always sort of a special moment all the time, and being able to spend a little bit of time with Verna [Billy-Minnabarriet], being able to spend a little bit of time with the guys from Merritt when they came down to visit. It's always sort of a good feeling.

Also to see some students that I have seen their mothers on, during my journey through the Downtown Eastside, to see their children here it's again hard to explain. It just brings all this little bubbly, fuzzy stuff up. [Laughter] It was really very good when I saw Betty and Phil because I'd met them downtown years ago and I don't think they even remembered ever meeting me, but I remembered meeting them downtown at a church meeting and they were talking about people doing music. That was sort of the one meeting and I never saw Phil and Betty again. Heard their names come up every once in a while, but then they came in, "Oh, you there." But that's my experience of having good memories. (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Theresa Neel recalls some of the work they have been doing with NVIT students but also the times she participates with other Elders in community. In recalling her memories with Elders she said:

The other incredible memorable time for me was when we go to Merritt. To me, those are just incredible Elders 'cause they are 80 years old. A lot of them are still working on the ranch, you know, at 80. They're getting up at five o'clock in the morning and I tell this story everywhere I go, that I was having a good visit with one of the Elders from Merritt. I was talking about jam, because they make a lot of jam. I said, "Oh, yeah. I love making jam. You know, I make jam." They go, "Oh, you know, where do you find berries around there [Fraser Valley] anyway?" So I said to this one Elder, "Oh, I just, you know, I, I go buy them." She went like this, "Hey, hey, she buys her berries." They all started laughing. They thought it was the funniest thing. "Oh, an Elder buying berries. Did you hear her?" To me that was so precious because it really showed me that this group of Elders that I'm sitting with as an Elder, that they have had life experiences that I would never even think about. Like child birth when it's 50 below and there's no hospital, you just have your baby and calving and having to put an animal down if they're hurt.

I mean, all of these things that are just so attached to the land. So for me, having spent my younger years growing up in the Downtown Eastside, and now working in Chilliwack, it's just a whole new concept to me of Elders that still remember being in a horse and wagon. Not having a car and all of these things are kind of new concepts to

me, but I'm trying really hard to wrap my mind around that. (T. Neel, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

In regards to coming together for celebration, Betty Gladue also makes reference to the memorable experience that brings to her as an NVIT Elder. She said:

You know, coming from the [primary/secondary] schools and seeing adults, degrees and seeing graduation, it's overwhelming... One of the incident that I saw here was a gentleman sitting quietly on the floor. He wasn't quite sure of himself had his head down pouting away to himself. I said, "What's happening to you?" "Oh Betty, I'm having some trouble." He says, "I don't think I can finish this, this education because what happened," he says "I got an English problem... And also, I don't like the city," he says, "Too many people, too many things going on." I asked him "So what do you think? Do you want to stay here or what do you want?" He said "I want to go home." I said, "I don't think it's a good idea... You know what? I only had grade four education and I'm here." Well anyway, I said, "Do you need help? What kind of help you want?" "I don't know." "Do you need a tutor?" "Oh yeah. I got trouble with my math too, I don't understand a lot of it." "Okay, that's good, we can decide that. Come on, let's go. Let's go to the library and go see a lady over there." I said, "See what the problem is and what they can help you with." (B. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Being able to support the students to achieve success are important memorable experiences for Betty. For Phil Gladue, his memorable and rewarding experiences most closely align with the response from Margaret George. Phil Gladue explained:

The graduation is my most memorable time, every year when there's a graduation, how it's growing. We're getting more every year and a lot of time that's overwhelming for us Elders because we see the growth happening and we see our people moving ahead. This last year we had two that got their PhDs. That was something that really touched me. They're not young, but they worked hard at it. Now they're up there and they're gonna make it work. They're not just gonna have it hanging on a wall or in their hip pocket. They're the type of people that's going to use it for a benefit of people in general. That really touched me to see them get those doctorates...

Now they can have more inside information about our history. About who we are. They have the certificate to be able to dig into those piles and that's the kind of people we need so they can dig up all that information without being blocked off. That's my most memorable, is the graduations and our two doctors here now, here at NVIT. I feel so safe. I feel that I become part of something that's not only needed but very genuine – this NVIT. I can use that title, but it's people that work together to make it happen. That's not that long ago, because I've been only here about six, seven years. So to see the growth, like they're not only getting their doctorate but all different degrees happening. (P. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

NVIT Student. As a student, Corrine Hunt Jr. shared a number of her memories of her time at NVIT and why they were so significant. She said:

Probably the intimate class sizes. I was able to get one-on-one with the teacher. They always have their doors open if I had a question on something, we had Elders on campus so that was really nice. They had activities for us, at Christmas time we got money or gift certificates for the food stores. That was really nice because we're not provided with a lot of money from our Bands and stuff so that was really nice around Christmas time. Any Easter and Thanksgiving they'd have turkey dinner. They'd have movie nights. It was really nice. They gave us a chance to get to know our other students. Some of the teachers would show up, too, so that was good. I think everybody is really helpful there and pretty close. Everybody's really close so if one person, you know, is going through something, we all are. We're very tight-knit there and it's just a really nice community feel. Being on Student Council, too, that was really rewarding. Like planning events for the students. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

It is obvious that Corrine's fond memories have stayed with her even after completing her education.

NVIT Instructors. The memorable experiences for Instructors at NVIT primarily relate to stories about teaching and students. Catharine Crow described:

I've had a couple of my students graduate with Master's degrees in Social Work. Those are big ones. Also when you get the student that has either gotten an "A-ha" moment, when they finally get it, or when they find their passion and are willing, more than willing to run with it, that's what's most memorable, that's what's rewarding. (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Likewise, Eric Ostrowidzki explained:

Oh, geez, I have exhilarating days. Lots of exhilarating days. I think when everything goes well teaching and students are learning. I think that when all the personal issues, all the insecurities are overcome and they're frankly speaking from their heart and minds, I think those are some of the most successful classes. I find when you set up a class and you have it as a journey, collaborative journey, you're going... But when you have that sense of collective, students, a sense of they have their own autonomy, enthusiasms and passion. What is not one of the not the best experiences are when students don't have that passion. When they look upon it as, I don't know. Sometimes it seems like they're being punished as opposed to learning you know. (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Finally, Marti Harder provided her rewarding experiences being at NVIT:

I would say the most amazing experiences for me at NVIT have been working with students who struggle academically that I've been able to work one-on-one with and put support systems in place using resources at NVIT and/or creating brand new resources that would support them in a way that will help them to achieve success. Seeing students struggle and watching the difficulties, the emotional upheaval that they go through and then having victory at the end. There is no good way to describe that feeling both for myself as an educator and for the student. Then seeing them walk across the stage is just unbelievable. So that, for me, is the most rewarding. (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

The shared memories from the NVIT institutional leaders, Elders, student, and instructors all demonstrate how important the foundations of belonging to a community are to a student's success.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute

The leaders, Elder, student, staff, and instructor from WWNI also shared their most memorable or rewarding experiences.

WWNI Leaders. Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage) and David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*) recall some important memories of having WWNI at the local community level.

Deanna explained:

If we live in the community where the students are and the community's small, you get to know each other quite well, you know? You actually get to see the change transpire. As these students graduate and now are teachers and they're leaders. There was one incident at the south terminal while I was waiting to catch a plane back to Terrace I heard this clamour. I was sitting there reading or doing whatever, and I heard this clamouring coming in the door and it was three graduates of WWN who had gone on to earn their Education degrees. So they were teachers now. They saw me and they came over to say hello and have a hug. I said, "What are you guys doing?" and they said, "Oh, we're on a committee in Victoria for the Ministry of Education." Not only were they teachers but they're also leaders.

We don't teach leadership at WWN but they become leaders. I think part of the strength is the language and culture. It's their own language and culture so it strengthens them as individuals and as academics. I really hope that there will be more writing that will come in the future as a result of WWN. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Likewise, David Griffin Jr. noted:

That's the reason for WWNI and, I think of, in my time both as a CEO and my time, my much longer time, as an instructor, I have had the wonderful opportunity to work with people I've known all my life that have decided to take that leap and to get an education, many of whom, have now taken up professional positions in this community and other communities. It started with classes right here. They got a little bit of a boost, a little bit of confidence, then there was no stopping them. I think of the CEO of the Health Board, a WWNI grad. Several staff members here are WWNI grads. A few of the teachers in the school district are WWNI grads. That list goes on. They all got their start right here in our little school. (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

From the perspective of institutional leadership at WWNI, building community capacity and community leaders is significant.

Elder, Students and Staff, and Instructor. Nisga'a Elder and WWNI instructor Irene

Seguin noted her most memorable experience as follows:

Probably when I had a student who I taught first and second year and they applied for a Nisga'a language job with the school district and they asked me to be one of their references. When students succeed that makes me happy. When the students like what they're doing and they succeed. I think that's probably most of the battle, is that they like it. I try to find ways to make it interesting. I just don't teach the language, I tell them funny stories to go with it so they remember. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

For Kathryn Kervel and Lori Nyce, they each remark about student success and becoming a part of the history of WWNI's history. Kathryn stated:

Some of the rewarding experiences are when Lori and I see these students come in that are so low in self-esteem or so quiet or they're just lacking the confidence and by the time they leave, it's like a different person. To see their growth and then, on a professional side, just seeing how far we've come. Along the years and getting inspired by listening to our Board members and the directions and always hearing about the beginning of WWNI and hearing how the dream was. Then the Board reiterating that we're here and what some of the further dreams are. It's rewarding to be in a position where it's not a political area. I mean, just knowing that we're living on Nisga'a core lands. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Lori explained:

You have students that come in and they're scared just to come in the door, they're scared to just approach after what's happened to their parents in Residential School.

They have this fear about education because they don't understand it because their parents can't explain it to them. Being able to just come in the door is a big thing for them. (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Being part of the intergenerational families that get to participate in the WWNI communities is important.

WWNI instructor, Dr. Margaret Anderson recalled one of the ways she feels the academy and the UNBC, has been enriched by partnering with WWNI. She explained:

We've had some outstanding people early on committed to the communities. Particularly, Iona Campagnolo, who was our first Chancellor, she dragged academics and administrators across the entire region, the entire North and she had been an MP from this area and was very well-known in the Nisga'a area. I think the tradition, I think, of having a Convocation in the Nass, owes itself to her. That's rich because, when we get a new Dean, they may not know Northern BC at all, or a new administrator or a new program chair. And they all now go up to the Nass for convocation and learn something about communities and see the strength of the communities and the impact the delivery in the communities by the communities has. I think that's part of the way in which UNBC is made stronger. (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013)

The memories and rewarding experiences of the WWNI participants are important to share.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program. There were touching memorable and rewarding experiences the participants at CCWU shared. Carla Anderson said:

One of the unique things in Aboriginal institutions is the drive that comes from the grassroots people, from the Elders who value the relationships and the institutions and what they're doing for students and how they can step in to teach too in this post-secondary venue. I think for them that is a real strength and so we're supporting that because IK for thousands of years has always come from our Elders. I think involving them in this whole process has been a godsend, really, because the Elders have gently guided us and even through the experts come in and they deliver courses, because the Elders have walked this journey with us from the beginning, from the Sister Mary Alice days, pushing the language and pushing post-secondary education and really supporting the students. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

As a former staff member and instructor for CCWU, Crystal Verhaeghe recalled:

I always cry, and this is something that kind of tugs at my heart strings, when I start with students and I have students in a class, I see how much they grow from the start of the class or a program to the end of the class or program. One of the successes is just seeing that people who felt like they couldn't do something and to show them that they all can

do it, just they have to have the dedication and time. Watching people grow and seeing how happy they are in the class and one thing I know is that life isn't always happy outside of the classroom for some of the students. So when they're in the classroom they're really growing and creating their own independence and creating their own self-worth. I enjoy that probably the most. (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication September 26, 2013)

As a student, Cindy M. Charleyboy explained that:

One of the most memorable experiences would be when we'd go on field trips and we'd come up to UNBC and go on campus and be in the dorms and get to experience a little bit of college life... Having Elders right in the classroom with us, taking the courses with us and having our children right there, like it was just an awesome community experience and we met some amazing instructors, like Lee Maracle and, you know, got to come to the storytelling festival with Tomson Highway and Richard Van Camp. It was just a lot of fun. It was always very interesting. (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

For Cathy Verhaeghe, the most memorable and rewarding experiences were in relation to her identity and she explained:

The most rewarding experience that I came away with is knowing my identity. At some point in our life we had some bad experiences with being a failure and not proud to be Aboriginal. The late Dr. Mary Alice had a talking stick and if it was our turn to speak, we would take the stick and at first the words were so choked up that we couldn't speak and one of the students would stand beside us to give us support. Little by little we could hold our head up and be proud of who we were. Through this experience, we came to respect and trust each other's cultures... The most memorable experience was meeting again in the fall after our summer break. We were all happy to see one another, and of course walking across the platform in Prince George to receive our degree. That was rewarding. (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal communication, September 30, 2013)

For Dr. Titi Kunkel, her rewarding experiences are also very personal. She described:

Mine has been a personal journey, because for me as I mentioned earlier, spending time with the students made me want to learn more, made me want to learn more about the Aboriginal people, about the issues that they're facing. I'm from an Indigenous background myself so coming here and seeing what's going on here kind of helped me sort of appreciate my own Indigeneity. In a sense I think through working with Weekend University, through working with the students, I was able to go back and to learn more about my own roots as well.

In a sense it's been more of a personal journey for me and in the company of the students and in the Weekend U environment there's a sense of belonging for me, in terms of my own Indigeneity. It's a place where I could, in a sense, understand another side of me - my Indigenous heritage. I've obviously missed a lot of that through my education

and everything, I missed out on all of that. But coming to the Weekend U environment gave me an opportunity also to grow in that area. (T. Kunkel, personal communication, July 2, 2013)

For Dr. Blanca Schorcht, the memorable and rewarding experiences came in three ways. First, in teaching she described that “developing that sense of relationship with the students in the classroom in a way that I have not in any other classroom experienced” was significant (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013). By developing a sense of reciprocity in the classroom that became a holistic environment, Dr. Schorcht described an experience she had with one of her courses by saying:

My last course was a one hundred level literature course that students had to take and they were terrified and they didn't like literature and they didn't want to take it, is obviously me turning that around and them saying, “Wow I really like literature, you've changed my mind. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

However, as an Administrator who was part of creating the success of CCWU Dr. Schorcht noted:

Administratively... knowing that you've made someone successful in an academic context when he or she has never thought they could be and finding ways to make the program work for them putting in the support and then hearing the students' stories of how if it hadn't been for an organization like Weekend U, they wouldn't have been able to continue on their education. For me, that's very personally rewarding. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

These small stories exemplify how the memories of the experiences in this API structure are important and enduring.

Blue and White

In relation to the colours of Blue and White on the Métis Sash, I have included the participants' reflections on the role of partnerships at the institutions. The colours and the symbol of the infinity sign on the Métis flag are open to varying interpretations. On the website

for the Louis Riel Institute it explains that, “Some say it represents the Métis as the distinctive unification of two peoples, the European and Indian. Others claim that infinity represents that the Métis Nation is robust and adaptable and will survive forever” (Louis Riel Institute, n.d. *The Métis flag*). Since the partnerships represent a coming together of more than one institute, I found the blue and white infinity symbol especially fitting.

Responses from institutional leaders are included here since the Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors were not asked particular questions related to the partnerships or partnership agreements. Therefore institutional leaders reflected on the following: 1) examples of partnerships; 2) encouraging aspects of the partnerships and the integration of IK; 3) other possibilities in partnership arrangements with other post-secondary institutes.

The Role of Partnerships

This section describes each of the perspectives the participants shared about the role of partnerships at their respective API.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology’s Use of Partnerships. Reflections regarding partnerships at NVIT come from the NVIT institutional leads included in this study, namely Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet (Bonaparte First Nation/*Secwepemc*), and Dean of Community Education and Applied Programs John Chenoweth (Upper Nicola Valley First Nation).

NVIT Examples of Partnerships. NVIT has many partnerships including those with mainstream institutions as well as with other APIs. Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet explained:

NVIT has several partnerships. We've actually finessed partnerships. We have partnerships with other public post-secondary institutes at the degree level. We have partnerships with Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) institutions at the certificate and diploma level, at the trades level, and at the literacy level. So if you had a diagram, NVIT would be in the middle and we'd have, on this end, the degree track and, at this end, what I would call the "transition in." Some of our most successful partnerships have been with Simon Fraser University at a degree track level and with University of the Fraser Valley (UFV).

Another one that we've had that has been very, very beneficial has been with UVic and what we've done with UVic because of our IAHLA partnership with the En'owkin Centre. The En'owkin Centre has a conglomeration of partnerships for one degree track and so we've been trying to assist En'owkin students to gather them all into one unit as NVIT and then transfer them out because they're having so much trouble because of the way their partnerships are structured. So we're working in that field as well. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Because of their partnership agreements NVIT was able to formally negotiate the inclusion of hiring their faculty and being able to secure appropriate locations, and have cross-cultural or cross-trained faculty for the benefit of students from the communities (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Also, it is important that programs being offered can be laddered from a diploma to degree levels and NVIT has been able to negotiate that too (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

John Chenoweth supported the diverse representation of partnerships at NVIT when he explained that:

We have affiliation agreements and [Memorandums of Understandings] (MOUs) with about 11 post-secondary institutions right now. Ultimately, we want to have block transfer agreements with every post-secondary school in BC... right now we have block transfers with those 11 schools for all programs... We've actually had a school, our first time ever, and a school asking for a reverse. Can their students block transfer into us? Yes – for the first time. [It's great] because we are the smallest school. I don't know if you know that. We're the smallest post-secondary school in BC... (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Including programs like the Early Childhood Education program at UBC that ladder into an Education degree, and the Social Work program at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) has created innovative solutions to meet the needs and demands of community (J. Chenoweth,

personal communication, March 15, 2013 and V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Encouraging Aspects of the Partnerships and Integration of IK at NVIT. There were many encouraging aspects of the partnership agreements, as Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet noted:

I would keep the determination, the perseverance, the commitment to Indigeneity and I would keep the strong relationships. I think NVIT has such a good solid reputation around success and around relevancy... we have a good reputation that says that we can deliver what we say we're going to and it's going to be successful, it's going to be quality, and it's relevant. Not only to the individuals of the communities but to the system. So that's really hard to do in this system but it helps with scholars around the country who are publishing that. People like Jeanette Armstrong, Verna Kirkness, Elton Yellowhorn, Michelle Pidgeon, you know, all of those people have made our life easier around making that kind of contribution to the academic world.

Graham Smith and Linda Smith were huge in building our relationships and building the whole movement of Indigeneity. I think what's also made it a lot easier is through the efforts of places like IAHLA and First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), around pushing the province and pushing the Ministry of Advanced Education around building Aboriginal frameworks and living up to the agreement of those frameworks. This has changed the scope of Indigenous education in this province. Universities like UBC and SFU, and UFV, even UVic, where they have taken on Indigenous faculty who have moved inside the institutions around building that whole respect and reciprocity of Indigeneity and I think that's really married with policy and policy structure and, let's face it, money talks, the way money comes down around Indigenous Education is huge. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

She continued to remark about the process of relationship building as a "two way street" that will still have barriers, but they are able to be overcome with time and persistence (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Utilizing effective advocacy groups like IAHLA and FNESC are indeed important when considering partnership arrangements and future program and policy development. NVIT experienced first-hand how the partnership can deteriorate if the principles of Aboriginal control and Aboriginal knowledge are not upheld, so

the leaders are cautious in this regard.³⁷ This is about validation of IK and validation of the importance of Aboriginal controlled programming.

What Could Change About Partnerships at NVIT. In relation to NVIT, John Chenoweth explains that NVIT models “living agreements” when NVIT enters into partnership with institutions or community, and he discussed some of the things that he would do differently, but also what he would recommend for institutions wanting to build partnership arrangements (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). He mentioned that involving more faculty in the partnership arrangements is something he would recommend because even with leadership support, the faculty are the ones who are delivering the programs or courses through the partnership agreement (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Mr. Chenoweth also mentioned that “the two other things that are very encumbering on partnerships is unionization... and seniority” (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Being able to effectively move through those issues is necessary for the most beneficial negotiations between the partnering institutions (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). He said:

The other thing around what I would do differently in partnerships is really about building, not only do you build that middle leadership or that middle management but it’s about building the system’s understanding. That’s kind of what we are doing at this point, is building that system understanding so that when it filters down to the community, to the student in the community, that there is a connection between that student and that university or that institution, you know. (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

³⁷ Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet recalled: “We had two programs [with SFU]. The first program, we were very involved and worked [through] obstacles jointly. The second program was done through SFU, managed by SFU, all SFU faculty, SFU designed, and course curriculum. There were 28 students in that program and only three graduated. After the first four courses of that first year, the [majority] dropped out. A majority of those students went off to other places and got their education. Only four finished with that program. The difference in that program was it wasn’t Aboriginal Education. It wasn’t Aboriginal controlled, it was not Aboriginal faculty and there was no partnership. They came in, they rented space, delivered a program. So there was no partnership in that second cohort. That’s the difference between the first cohort and the second cohort and the successes of it. After that we chose not to work with them... (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Ultimately, sharing and understanding at the beginning of building partnership agreements becomes the most fruitful for everyone involved and has the greatest benefit to the community. John Chenoweth talked about the concept of ensuring that the partnerships are a “shared success” and that it is obvious what the motives and intents are of each institution (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute's Use of Partnerships. At WWNI, the institutional leads who spoke on this topic included Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage) and David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*).

Examples of Partnerships at WWNI. For WWNI, Deanna Nyce, CEO for WWNI and David Griffin Jr., former CEO and Instructor for WWNI talk about the partnerships they have held, or hold, with other post-secondary institutes. Deanna explained:

UNBC is the best partnership. It's the most fruitful and the students get the most out of it. We also have partnerships with Northwest Community College, which is the oldest partnership. The Nisga'a have had a partnership with Northwest Community College since Northwest Community College opened and since School District 92 started. However, it's been sort of “one course off” or “one program off.” There hasn't been anything consistent. The beauty of UNBC is the consistency of the First Nations program because that, you know, has allowed us to grow very, very rich. In those 20 years it has become quite sophisticated. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Having the partnership with UNBC and the evolution of the First Nations Studies program with UNBC is a particular highlight of this program. Students are able to complete a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and then go on to other programs such as education or graduate school. This is an empowering feature (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). However, WWNI has had, and continues to have, partnerships with other institutes, including NVIT and the colleges.

Likewise, David Griffin Jr. remarked how WWNI has an affiliation agreement with UNBC and Northwest Community College and that by having these partnership arrangements,

both of these institutions give strength and opportunity for community members (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Encouraging Aspects of the Partnerships and Integration of IK at WWNI. In regards to how IK is being embraced between the institutions as an encouraging aspect of the partnerships, Deanna Nyce said the following:

Well definitely with UNBC, it's definitely embraced. I think UNBC is probably one of the leaders in Canada in this area, I really do think that. With the colleges it's different... Some are very scared of IK. Some Instructors are very scared of it. It was the same at UNBC when it first started because people were a bit worried about it. But they became better at it as they went along. UNBC's is very sophisticated so I think they're really good with IK.

It's empowering because we're doing their First Nations Studies program. Colleges have a bit of a harder time with IK. I don't know that they have it, per se, in their curriculum. Because I know that certainly the two lots that I've seen over the years when we've delivered courses with colleges, like home support resident care or logger's training or whatever, there's not been very much IK. You take First Aid, how much IK is in First Aid? Or traffic control. How much IK is there in traffic control? You know, those kinds of things, right? (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

David Griffin Jr. remarked about some of the encouraging benefits of the partnership:

[The partnership with UNBC] is our strongest partnership. That gives us great benefit in that we have the opportunity to offer UNBC accredited courses here... do your first year here, be closer to home, and be closer to your family and support. Then take that step out. It's good for UNBC because the first choice to step out is UNBC Terrace or UNBC Prince George. So they're more likely to get those students to stay within UNBC. The other nice thing is we have the advantage of having UNBC support and we can lean on UNBC administration. If we've got a question, we can ask someone who has been there, done that before.

With Northwest Community College, it allows us to bring in more trade opportunities and things like First Aid and other courses that you don't usually associate with a University. That has been very beneficial as well. So anytime it's advantageous to form a partnership, to bring education here, we don't hesitate to make that happen. (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Having the option to partner with institutions who welcome providing course work and programming into the community is ideal.

What Could Change about Partnerships at WWNI. Both Deanna Nyce and David Griffin

Jr. are very pleased with the progress and results of the WWNI partnerships. They note that there is always room to evolve and grow within the relationship, but essentially the foundation has been set. Deanna Nyce commented:

In terms of relationships, what can you do differently? Having union issues with colleges, it's pretty hard to deal with... That's its current state. A union does not allow the public colleges to "contract out" which often means they have to parachute in an instructor or instructors. These instructors often see themselves as college employees and not answerable to the WWN. It is more difficult to provide instructor or student support... because there is an unfairness. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

But in terms of the relations between the institutes and within the agreements themselves, David Griffin Jr. explained:

I think our partner institutions are very sensitive to the fact that we have our ways of doing things and they're very respectful of that. I'm very happy every year when we have the representatives from both UNBC and Northwest Community College come to be part of our convocation and that's a big deal when students can celebrate their successes and we make a big deal of it because it opens the doors for other people to see that. They say, "Well, I can do that, if they can do it, so can I." The other institutions have been very, very respectful and appreciative of local culture and the way we choose to do things. It's been good. They were good at the beginning and they continue to be so. (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

David noted that as administration changes have occurred in the other institutions, the new leaders have all been quick to embrace our partnership and to embrace the way we do things here (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013). David Griffin Jr. notes that the administrators at all of the institutions involved in the partnerships are very busy, so sometimes sparing time to get together for face-to-face meetings can be difficult, but they are still strong relationships (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program's Use of Partnerships. For the former CCWU program, I am able to represent the position of Carla Anderson, who held a leadership role with the CCWU when it was still in operation.

Examples of Partnerships at CCWU. For the CCWU, Carla Anderson noted:

CCWU did have a partnership with UNBC and with TRU. Through a Coordinating Council who met once a week, they guided the process. But as far as the community supports, we had the luxury of doing that ourselves. That was community based, but the academics, we worked for two universities, sometimes three, it all depended. I think NVIT delivered some courses too at one point... [Also] there was a partnership with the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). So IHALA being one of our partners also has always been a good thing. They always gave us the updated information and what's going on in the province with post-secondary education. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Although CCWU is no longer in operation, the partnership engagement that included institutions and community is obvious. In fact Dr. Titi Kunkel has continued to help the Tsilhqot'in create and offer UNBC language and culture courses in their territory.

Encouraging Aspects of Partnerships and Integration of IK at CCWU. Carla Anderson continues to note:

Through our agreements, we had certain areas, like administration would be delivered by TRU, First Nation Studies by UNBC, so I think that was unique too that we weren't scrambling... Sometimes it took a while to deliver courses, but I think it worked out pretty good. I know there was almost a hundred students that graduated through CCWU with degrees. It was a beautiful, beautiful program for everyone. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Being able to utilize the expertise offered through the partnerships with other institutions ensured that the knowledge was being delivered effectively by experts in their field of education.

What Could Change about Partnerships at CCWU. Although CCWU is now closed, Carla Anderson had some thoughts about what could change within partnership arrangements.

She said:

I like the idea of collaboration and cooperation amongst everyone. I like that idea and I think we cannot separate... because I think collectively, we can do more. You know by not being able to have those relationships with two or three different universities, to deliver courses where there's an expectation that not [only] one [institution] will get everything for you. I think we're putting too much on one university for that and I think I'd like to see more of a collaborative effort. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Not only would this avoid potential competition between institutions, but it would create opportunities to share the wealth of knowledges that exist within, and between, institutions and communities (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013).

Black

The colour black (or yellow) in the Métis Sash can be considered to be representative of the dark history and challenges experienced by Métis people and culture.

Challenges Faced by Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes. In this section of the dissertation, I highlight the similarities and differences provided by participants from their respective institution in relation to the challenges of integrating IK. I also include a section where participants describe other challenges faced by their API. For institutional leaders, the responses included here most closely align with the question that asked what the most challenging aspect of implementing IK at their institution was and how they have moved forward through these challenges. For Elders, Students, Staff, and Instructors, the responses came following a similar question that directly related to their experiences of challenges that may have been present and overcome.

Challenges of Integrating IK faced by Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes.

Participants remarked about the challenges facing their institution when it came to integrating IK. These perspectives are shared here.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology Challenges with IK Integration. At NVIT, Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and John Chenoweth note many challenges that are faced by the institute

whether they are within the partnerships or other areas of critical importance to the API. Dr.

Billy-Minnabarriet remarks that the most challenging aspect she has experienced involves

accreditation. She notes that there are phenomenal and exceptional academic staff at NVIT but:

The course outlines have to be accepted throughout the system, the syllabi have to be accepted and the methods and the examinations. So when we develop curriculum and we develop programs and courses, they are Indigenous. They have the Indigenous content, they're made and delivered, they're structured and delivered in a way Indigenous education or Indigenous teaching would. Whether that's circle learning, whether that's through ceremony, whether that's through dialogue, the way that we develop those course outlines has to reflect that but also has to reflect the system's criteria. That's the tension.

We've come a long way in educating, I believe, the system in how to look at IK as being valid and accepted and mandatory for us as Indigenous people. I mean, we've had some great leaders in front of us that have helped us make that, like Dr. Kirkness, Dr. Archibald, and [Dr.] Michael Marker. There's a lot of people that have done that kind of work previous to us. I would say one of the real movers of that was [the late] Dr. Jacob McKay [*Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*] from the Nisga'a Nation who never deviated from the idea that Indian, Indigenous education had to stand on its own and it was reflective of its principles, right? So that was important, that's important for us to do. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

She also noted that ensuring that students have mobility and can move from institution to institution is imperative and sometimes difficult.

Also, insisting that other institutes acknowledge that NVIT has the authority as a public institute to make their own courses and program content is important so students do not lose credit for the work they have done at the API (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Having the support and work of organizations like IAHLA to support the relevancy of Indigenous Education and IK assists in making changes within the academic system (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

Some of John Chenoweth's thoughts about the challenges faced by NVIT are related to "a unified vision of what IK means... and getting people involved in the conversation" (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). He notes that the weaving of IK within the courses may not be obvious within the course syllabi, but when institutions are having

conversations about how IK can be integrated, it becomes more real (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). He noted:

We had a Chemical Addictions Program... That program is delivered in cohorts of six day deliveries. Right from the get-go they start with a smudge, in a circle, every single course. They changed the school over the last four years... I think that, over four years of having and pushing that the students, all former addicts themselves, saw how they have matured and have become such leaders - it's a truly amazing program. I think that one program has changed NVIT for the better... (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

John Chenoweth does not feel as though NVIT is the primary expert on Indigenous Education since he believes it is the people, and not the institution, that are the experts and these people and their expertise needs to be celebrated (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). He believes that, "just because of the way a post-secondary system operates it's a constant struggle between being Indian and being public... It's there... But it's a fun struggle" (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Like Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet, Corrine Hunt Jr. also recognizes that there is a challenge of ensuring that NVIT is recognized as a public institution like all other public institutions in the province. She explained, "I think the biggest challenge is probably getting NVIT recognized as an institution...we should all be equal. With all the other big Universities, you know, we should be supported" (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013). She also noted that "another challenge is getting First Nations instructors. I think it's important to have that First Nations perspective, First Nations teachers because we're different in the way we teach. I think that's important and I think that is a challenge" (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013).

For the Instructors at NVIT, many of the challenges related to IK are related to issues of student support, academic resourcing, and the impact of Residential Schools. For example, Dr.

Catharine Crow explains that she thinks “the K - 12 system hasn’t been fantastic in a lot of First Nations [and non- First Nations] communities. We have had to do a lot of work in ensuring, basically, literacy, writing skills, math skills, and basic learning skills” (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013). She knows that “some individuals that come into this institution have never touched a computer before... [if they are] middle aged, coming back is a new issue for them” (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Student support is critical in this area.

The second area most noted by the Instructors is related to the academic resources available for the teachers and students. Dr. Catharine Crow remarked that:

Quite often a lot of our handouts and materials have to be journal articles [that] are not always peer-reviewed. Sometimes it’s difficult to get the resources you need to be able to supplement the Euro-Canadian approach. The other challenge is that there isn’t a lot in terms of written First Nations knowledge in a textbook format that can be applied. Basically, what we do, I think all the Instructors here do, and even in the Merritt NVIT campus, is we get our typical textbook, we prep the material and then we insert our First Nations knowledge and our First Nations resources to be able to supplement [the textbook]. (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

Eric Ostrowidzki would like to see a website that is based on IK to share resources about how individuals are Indigenizing their classrooms (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013). The Indigenization of particular programs or courses is something Marti Harder experienced as part of her health-related curriculum when she tries to find the time to add in the Indigenous curriculum when students have to pass National Licensed Practical Nursing exams and still be able to effectively work in their communities (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

Finally, Dr. Catharine Crow noted that:

The other challenge [is] we are still seeing some of the remnants of the Residential Schools. It affects them in two ways. Number one is the fear of education and educational institutions. So to try and decrease that nervousness and that fear of the institution is sometimes a challenge. The other thing, especially with a lot of the courses I teach and the social sciences, is that we sometimes push some buttons. Social Work, Psychology, Sociology, like, the Racism class is probably one of the most disturbing classes. I have built into that class time to do debriefing at the end of the class so students don't leave angry or they don't leave very upset. Residential School issues do pop its head up within the system still. (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Overcoming the fears and nervousness instilled by Residential Schools is critical. It is obvious that even through all of the benefits and celebration, there are still challenges that people involved with APIs face.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Challenges with IK Integration. Deanna Nyce finds some of the most prominent challenges are related to funding in order to keep the institution running and having the integration of IK move forward. She said:

The provincial government and federal government fund post-secondary education. It's through the province that public post-secondary institutions are funded. That's not the case with [private] Indigenous institutions. They struggle to survive unless you're public... We have some money that comes through the treaty but it's barely enough to run a program so that's always hard for us. I spend about 30 percent of my time trying to raise money to keep us afloat, always wondering whether we're going to stay afloat for the next year. This ISSP [Indian Studies Support Program] has been a real God-send in that area but now that it is being centralized I don't know if we will have access to it or not. That remains to be seen. Public institutions receive core and capital dollars. [Private] Indigenous institutes do not enjoy the same benefit. Hopefully the province will recognize Indigenous institutes by enacting them. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

David Griffin Jr. finds some of the biggest challenges are related to student evaluation. He explains that, "evaluating sometimes can be difficult when we're blending IK with European knowledge and European forms of evaluating" (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March

18, 2013). However, he thinks that “the more opportunities we have to share that knowledge, the better we as Instructors get at being able to evaluate if students are getting it or not” (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Staff and former students Kathryn Kervel and Lori Nyce believe that there is still more to be built on from the excellent resources that include IK within WWNI. Lori Nyce notes that they have the “*yuukhl* that talks about every feast... but there’s a lot of protocol that’s missing” (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). She would like to see it “written in a book and having all those Elder’s information in that book. Then you can say, ‘Well, this is what your grandmother said. This is how it’s done,’ so that they don’t change the culture (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). Lori said, “You don’t see urban people that are grieving in black all the time. They don’t follow that protocol.” (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013).

Kathryn Kervel supports this by explaining that it is important to share “our understanding of why things are done a certain way” (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013). Kathryn said:

When you’re growing up [in the Nass] and you’re living [in the Nass], Elders will tell you and your family, “Oh, you can’t do this.” Like, for example, if a person dies, passes away, the house is prepared in such a way, there’s different things, things are covered up. People outside of that wouldn’t understand why. Have the stone in their mouth so that they’re not speaking in public and the reasons why they shouldn’t be speaking while they’re mourning. It’s the little things that we probably take for granted living there because that’s all we know. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Finally, Dr. Margaret Anderson believes WWNI’s challenges include being “a very small institution and of course, it’s expensive. So a lot of their time is spent getting and maintaining resources and infrastructure” (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013). She believes that WWNI is in control over how IK is integrated and delivered, but “the institution

part is harder for them because it's a continuous effort to be funded and so on" (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013).

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program Challenges of IK Integration. For the CCWU program, the majority of the challenges related to having the opportunity to integrate IK were about getting First Nations Instructors and Elders as resources for students but also funding related issues. This included ensuring that there were First Nations Instructors or tutors available to deliver course content, having access to Elders as well as other resource materials, as well as ensuring general accessibility to the institution. Carla Anderson explained:

I think one of the challenges we had was [having] First Nations Instructors... Because of university protocols and other things, it wasn't always possible. However, we really pushed that so as much as possible [having First Nations Instructors] would happen... [Also], a lot of the students needed tutors and extra time to try and get through some of those core courses... so we would offer tutoring. That solved issues of students not having the support.

If we look at the geography of the CCWU communities, like one community being three and a half hours away, travel was sometimes a huge challenge too for students... With the transportation we solved that by giving students gas cards and other things. We were really trying to make it an easy transition for students... so they felt really good about going to school. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Cindy M. Charleyboy, Cathy Verhaeghe, and Dr. Blanca Schorcht all reinforced the concern related to the challenge of not having First Nations Instructors. All three participants shared the importance of having course Instructors that shared in the knowledge of knowing where the students were coming from and an understanding of their world views (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013; B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013; Cathy. Verhaeghe, personal communication, September 30, 2013).

Cathy Verhaeghe said:

I think there was never really much of a budget to bring Elders and I think about how important the impact Elders' knowledge has been. It would have been nice to have just funding there where Elders could be there as Instructors. Like what we call our Elders knowledge keepers because they are the ones that hold all the cultural knowledge. It

would have been nice to have them all at the university and say “During this time it’s going to be an Elders luncheon.” It gets them to come but then also it gets them to share with the students. I think about that as it also leads to the comfort... That would be encouraging, that would be like a highlight of my day and I’ve learnt something personal as well. It’s not only about school. (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal communication, September 30, 2013)

Finally, Carla Anderson explained:

ISSP funding was cut back this year, from all institutions and given back to Ottawa. They’re making decisions on half of BC and that’s not fair to a lot of the institutions, like ours that have depended up on those dollars. Then you have to search elsewhere and it’s kind of stressful for students who are in their first, second, third year and wondering where their funding is coming from or what’s going to happen for courses coming and then they have to come up with a new plan. That’s a bit of a challenge. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

Crystal Verhaeghe shared that the obligations related to course offering and funding that were out of the control of CCWU were ultimately detrimental to the API even though CCWU and the communities it worked with and served persevered through these challenges until its closure (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication, September 26, 2013).

Other Challenges Faced by Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes

This section describes some of the other challenges that research participants described during the interview that are important to acknowledge with the colour black of the Métis Sash.

Other Challenges at Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. In relation to other challenges, John Chenoweth at NVIT noted:

Well, that’s when I kind of have to really go back to what do I think the definition of IK is. It’s our stories, it’s our memory, it’s our past as told by grandmothers, grandfathers, aunties, while fishing, while doing things, while sleeping, everything. What of that is being embraced or not? I think, to be honest with you, one of the biggest barriers I see is that the systems, and by that I mean the provincial systems, have to be more open to change. There are some examples of post-secondary schools that are really doing some stuff. (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

As for the NVIT Elders, there are many areas that they saw as a challenge facing the school.

Margaret George, who spent time in Australia to promote International Studies for a First

Nations student as well as NVIT and SFU, explained:

One thing I would like to see here is the little kids come through and sitting through some of the classes that some of the adults are going through. Not for the whole day but just to see, just to experience and to have a feel of what it's like to meet some old people, as they say. But to have them come in and be part of this should be something that just goes on until they graduate. (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Betty Gladue on the other hand would "like to see a traditional, herbal registered doctor to come and teach. Herbs will never kill us. But some of the other things can kill us..." (B. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013). She said, "I think that's one of the things that we need because there's so much cancer, so much of diabetic, so much of different things. How they can help themselves instead of being an instrument for western medicine. (B. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

From a student perspective, Corrine Hunt Jr feels that "the Student Council probably needs a little bit more acknowledgment and more of a priority... [it is] important because it gets the students involved and students interacting" (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013). When involved in a study where she asked students about their transition to post-secondary school and found ensuring that there are appropriate resources emerged as a major issue (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013). She believes that having resources available is imperative and said, "I don't know how many times I wanted to give up because I just felt alone." She also said, "when you move into an urban setting it's so different, it's such a culture shock even in a First Nations school... it's such a huge thing" (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013). This might be overcome by having a Student Support Worker available so that students are not feeling alone. Dr. Catharine Crow would like to see more

supports for students with disabilities, plus a daycare, and student residences with the purpose and intent of making the transition and experience in higher education more successful (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

Dr. Eric Ostrowidzk had a different perception of some of the other challenges facing IK and APIs. He explained:

IK was a hot thing at one time. Everybody was trying to get into this new market. But I find that everybody talks about IK, but there to be a lack of will sometimes. I do find that lack of will. We can call meetings up and people are so overwhelmed with work they could barely get through these meetings. But I think a bigger challenge for IK is the fact, declared by Obama and openly espoused by Christie Clark or the liberals is that the universities are mainly math, science. Science looms large in terms of possible domination of those areas, so the liberal and the humanities get cut and part of the humanities is IK, history. I think that's the biggest threat to IK. I'm justifying the use of stories. People still have a very stilted idea of stories or narratives, where narratives are everywhere nowadays...

Part of IK is collaboration. I don't think that we have how I'd like to see collaboration as an aspect of Indigenous learning. I would like to see more collaboration not associated with the student centre, where they do a good, really good job. Or tutoring, but where students are helping other students, or having more independent projects. (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

The positioning of student support and resources, along with working towards alleviating any fears to the transmission of IK is vital.

Other Challenges Faced by Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute. In regards to other challenges at WWNI Deanna Nyce remarks that the “most challenging thing about the college partnerships is money... and having the money to do [the partnership]”, rather than the relationships themselves (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). She explained:

UNBC has investments in WWN [and] gives WWN funding... We keep the tuition, we don't with the college system. If we keep the tuition, we're able to do a little bit more. But with the colleges, they keep the tuition. At least they have up to now... The more control WWN has in the program, the more successful the students. If a college has union issues and they can't hire somebody who has been successful in Aboriginal Education it's more of a challenge. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Another challenge noted by Nisga'a Elder and Instructor relates to access and the lack of transportation for students from *Laxgalts'ap* (Greenville) or *Gingolx* (Kincolith). She recalled:

I know I've had students [have car accidents like sliding] off the road and then there's other students that miss maybe a couple of days a month, which is a lot when you consider there's maybe four or five classes in a month. Or they're late because they're having to look for a ride. I think we really need a bus system. I think there's a lot of people, I know in Kincolith there's people in there who have taken that first and second level, want to continue on but they don't have a vehicle. If there was a bus, I'm sure there'd be more students. That's a big thing. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

Lori Nyce and Kathryn Kervel, WWNI staff and former students, addressed issues of utilization.

Lori explained:

I think that one of the main concerns about WWN is that we are so underutilized. As much success as we've had, it's still underutilized and it's still trying to reach those students and they'll think of other Universities and they'll think of us, not thinking that we're at the same level and can offer the same because they know, "That's just my uncle teaching the course." They don't take it as if they were taking the course with someone they didn't know. So, we still have those hurdles to really overcome. Being underutilized is a huge thing. (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Kathryn Kervel supported this when she said:

There's still some resistance and there's some people that'll say, "Well, we shouldn't have to pay for our culture or our language, right?" The way that we overcome that is we'll have one student out of a certain family group demographic that will take courses and say, "Well, no, look. This is just enhancing what's there and we're able to get a University certificate or degree" versus not having any education. It's kind of just promoting education through the culture and the language. (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Ultimately, financial resources, issues of student transportation, and under-utilization emerged as some of the other major challenges for WWNI.

Other Challenges Faced by Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program. To mitigate some of the concern with having Instructors that were aware and sensitive to First Nations issues, Cindy M. Charleyboy described that:

Probably about three times a year we would request that if we were going to get a new Instructor or if we were going to get someone who we knew maybe was not a great fit, we just wanted something in place. So what we would request was that we would like to provide all of our Instructors with an orientation. We would always, you know, recommend it and say, “How can we implement this?” and “Wouldn't it be great if we could tell someone new coming in if we could introduce our program and talk about the successes and the students and how it's different?” That never happened. I'm thinking it's, you know, maybe not in their union contract or something, right. But we really wanted that. So that's the one challenge that I can think of in trying to include and make sure that the IK piece is always there. (C. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Dr. Blanca Schorcht noted:

Another challenge sometimes can be that there is still dangerous turf here with academic stuff, but I think on the part of the academia, there's still a bias against Indigenous ways of knowledge and there's a few in some circles, not any that I prefer to hang around in, that see it as somehow wishy washy or not scholarly, not rigorous in academic ways, the way other disciplines are. So I think there's a little bit of that bias that's still faced. I would imagine that would've carried over to some of the individual courses... (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Although there is great detail in this section related to the challenges the APIs face or have faced, it is important to acknowledge the resiliency and commitment that is present for IK in API academic settings.

Conclusion

As a conclusion to this chapter discussing the interview responses, I found it important to reflect on some of the celebrations and future visions that came from participants relating to IK and their API. Using the colours of the Métis Sash throughout this writing has been an especially effective way to weave together the ideas, thoughts, and reflections of the individuals included in this work. This concluding section is to be interpreted as combining threads of all the colours that bring the words and wisdom together.

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Looking Back, Looking Forward. Dr. Verna

Billy-Minnabarriet shared her vision for NVIT:

My vision for NVIT, hopefully, before I ever have to retire or am forced out that door, is that NVIT is an Aboriginal University. As an Aboriginal University, we would then be able to have the ability, the recognition, the validity of designing our own programming and crediting that program. I would envision seeing Indigenous degrees in all kinds of things. Wherever community drove those degrees, that's what would come, instead of having to partner with an institution to get those degrees... I envision NVIT as a University that is world-renowned, that has the ability to create and foster and move forward Indigenous Education wherever.

I see the IK not only being more prominent, but being a basis, not only of NVIT, but of other post-secondary institutes because whether we like it or not, we're not going anywhere. We're not leaving. We're multiplying, we're taking a stand. I mean, Idle-No-More was a huge motivation for young people to understand who they are and where they're coming from. In my day, it was the constitutional express, right? It was sit-ins, it was all of that whole thing of mobility, mobility around issues, around the Indigenous fighting for who you are. (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet realizes there are shared understandings of Indigeneity around the world and that the connections to spirit, the connections to land and Aboriginal world views will prevail (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

NVIT Elder Phil Gladue, noted the following while reflecting and looking forward:

Well I'd have to go back on the curriculum building. That goes into elementary schools and all through the schools, that we have traditional knowledge implemented in some of those curriculums and what that would that look like. I don't know if it'll ever go, but I mean it's a thing that we need yet. Who needs to educate who? I mean not everything is gonna go but there's gonna be certain parts of it that would help the mainstream understand a little bit more about our vision, I guess... ten years from now my vision would be that it stays healthy and strong, that would be my vision at NVIT and that's where it's going. In 10 years if I, when I see it, that it's still strong and staying together. (P. Gladue, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Looking forward, NVIT Elder Margaret George explained:

Yeah [IK integration] would be better because there's so many younger people now being very interested in, as they say, the old people's way. I'm only repeating what my son always says to me. You know, the old people's knowledge, like we got our knowledge out of a popcorn box. This is my son's definition of our Traditional Knowledge. He understands it, but he doesn't have the papers to go with an education.

It's just what he's learned from the old people. I say old people because a lot of people don't like to be called Elders in some areas so I'm always safe to say old people. I think with the younger ones understanding more of life, more of experience, like the younger ones are quicker at these machines than we are. If they don't understand what we're talking about, traditional knowledge, they'll look it up in that little machine and come up with their own definition. (M. George, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

Corrine Hunt Jr. believes that there is still much to be shared and learned about First Nations people and First Nations history. She explained:

I think IK needs to be in other Universities because of the racism that's still here. I think that a lot of the other people don't get taught the best things about First Nations. So I think it's really important to give the whole history and we need the racism to be gone and it has to do with half-truths, has to do with only one side of the story. So people are only hearing that we're on welfare, we just have babies, we're alcoholics, that's all they're hearing and that's because of education. That's because they're [not] learning in elementary to high school, you know? It's because that education is not in there. That's so important to me. (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

For the future, Corrine Hunt Jr. envisions the following:

I envision our language and culture and I think everybody's language and culture and people speaking, that would be a dream of mine because our language and culture is lost because of the Residential Schools. We've lost that so it would be nice to have that. But it would also be nice to acknowledge everybody's language and culture because I know they're acknowledging certain pieces of people's culture but I think because there's so many of us and there's so many to be recognized so it would be really nice to teach everybody's, not just one. Don't just teach the dominant because I know for out there it's *Kwagiulth* but here it's *Lheidli T'enneh* you know? I think it's important to touch everybody's... (C. Hunt Jr., personal communication, April 5, 2013)

Dr. Catharine Crow believes that although it would be difficult for mainstream institutions to integrate IK, she believes that efforts should be made to do so. In regards to the other institutions she says, "those First Nations or Aboriginal Centres should be more open and welcoming to students. Students should be able to see that as a kind of cocoon when things are not going right. If you watch our students, they do support each other. They congregate" (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Dr. Crow added:

My ideal institution would be something probably as big as BCIT next door. You can have the college and the college traits, the mechanics and all the equipment necessary to be able to buy those types of courses, as well as the University and University transfer type courses. Have a huge Indigenous teaching capacity as well as, like a central gathering place where everybody can comfortably go and chit-chat, I mean, we do use the couches up here, but the way the building is set up, it's not ideal. It would be nice to have, like, a center circle so that all the offices kind of point into the circle... (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

As the bodies of Aboriginal research continues to grow, this will make immense contributions to many academic fields (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013)

In looking forward, Eric Ostrowidzki envisions more place for stories within the institute, not only the traditional oral stories, but the contemporary stories that could be shared through a Communications Program of some kind (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013). The perspectives of students would be obvious and they would be everywhere so their perspectives and IK could be shared too (E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013).

In addition to having a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program that has an Indigenous focus, Marti Harder's vision for the future of IK is as follows:

I think it needs to be believed from people's hearts that this is not only the cultural and the learning needs of BC Aboriginals but all people. The Aboriginal population is the fastest growing population in the country, we all need to know this. If we truly want to understand each other and meet each other's needs [being] genuine is key.

I think, 10 years from now, I would envision that our community of Merritt recognizes and embraces NVIT as a place where IK is shared in a beautifully healthy way. In a way that benefits all cultures in our community so that our entire community as a whole and the community of Merritt comes together in a way that celebrates IK. Even though the Aboriginal community in Merritt is very large, there's still a huge segregation. I don't think there's an acceptance. Perhaps there's a tolerance at best in a lot of people. But there's still a real separation. Undoing that separation, that's what I would envision for our institution. (M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013)

This IK must have relevancy and be meaningful to the students and communities involved, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute, Looking Back, Looking Forward. At WWNI,

Deanna Nyce acknowledged that:

There is so much knowledge in the Nass, there's so much knowledge and history that 10 years from now, I hope with all my heart that there will be a larger array of it. I talked earlier about writing, that more people will write about different aspects of IK, Nisga'a writing about Nisga'a knowledge. I think that would be really important. I think that it would be really good to have a partnership, but I really think that it would be better if WWN was an autonomous, stand-alone because the culture of First Nation Studies at WWN and the culture of First Nation Studies at UNBC, it's the same courses but different

There's a lot of mining going on now and there's going to be a lot of clean-up that's going to have to happen. I think that IK is going to help in that area a lot. I think that IK gets a sense of how it values place and so it'll bring out the history, the real history of BC. Not just history to confederation or history to pre confederation but history of BC or history of the region and that's a lot more valuable. (D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

For David Griffin Jr., the future visions and opportunities are entirely related to the importance of the growth and inclusion of IK. He stated:

I think the more we start to embrace local knowledge and local ways of teaching and learning, that starts to branch out and our partner institutions, I picture them starting to embrace some of those things as well...as we continue to search for knowledge, we all have to embrace the knowledge that's right here around us. And I think our partner institutions will, more and more, realize that knowledge is right there, all around them, too. It isn't just in the textbooks and in the libraries, including the online libraries. There's a vast resource of knowledge in the communities that they are a part of and that can have a greater impact. I think that as our institutions, us included, involved more and more, invite more participation and become that much more inclusive, it benefits us all that much more.

I think we can even do more to include more IK. We can, institutions can make it policy to find out what that knowledge is and to incorporate it not just at the whim of an Instructor but it can become policy that instructors will seek out IK to include in their courses. It's been my experience that when teachers are asked to seek out information, good teachers do that because they know they're bringing in what their students can relate to. I think if it becomes policy to do that it becomes that much more effective. Otherwise, it happens really slowly. It comes in spurts depending on Instructors. But if we make it policy, if the people seek it out, I think we will speed up the rate that IK becomes part of the academic world. (D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013)

For Elder and Instructor Irene Seguin, she is proud to acknowledge that:

I think with proper advertising we could have the students because this is a unique setting. I mean, how many people can sit in a classroom and look out at that (pointing to the Nass River) and once a year, twice a year, a white wolf walks out on the other side of the river. Just to be in this setting in an Indigenous community. Because we need head-start workers, you know? We need, we need hairdressers. It would be wonderful. We could get a proper garage here with a mechanic, [and have a Bank]. All those things. We need them here.

[WWNI] is wonderful. It produces BAs. I was trying to count the other day how many teachers we have that started here, that did their BA and took a Professional Development Program with SFU or three years here and then two years at UNBC. There's lots. Do you know, in this village [*Gitwinksihlkw*], 12% of our population have BA and higher? Can you imagine that? It's really amazing. In Canyon City [*Gitwinksihlkw*]. That live here. It's really amazing. (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

She also envisions there being more IK and a language program and believes the students will be successful (I. Seguin, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

For the staff and former students, Lori Nyce and Kathryn Kervel, their visions are varied. They both remark about the importance of more publications about traditional activities including fishing and being in the smokehouse, and that it is important that there are Nisga'a Instructors teaching the culture and language.

In addition to resource-related increases, Lori and Kathryn explain that they would like to see a library, to see childcare facilities, transportation and more counselling with a breadth of courses being offered (L. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). Kathryn explained:

I'd like to hope that it would be thriving even more than it is now. It's really good now. It's great. But I'd like to see it expand. If they had more students and they had more interest, especially with the language because a lot of the language Instructors are older, that the risk of losing a lot of our language is imminent now. There are some youth that are really good with the language and we keep trying to suggest, "What about teaching it more [in schools]?" (K. Kervel, personal communication, April 24, 2013)

Having an institution that would be fluent in the language would provide a unique and invaluable experience within the communities and beyond.

Dr. Dr. Margaret Anderson concluded her vision summary with the following statement:

I hope that it will continue to be strong and that the next generation of knowledge holders will have the confidence that the last generation brought to the project and that students will continue to benefit from that process. (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013)

The spirit and belief that encapsulates the relentless commitment to the hopes, dreams, and future of WWNI is inspiring.

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program, Looking Back, Looking Forward.

At CCWU, there is a similar desire for the establishment of a stand-alone institution or a reestablishment of the Weekend University Program. Carla Anderson, Cindy M. Charleyboy, Cathy Verhaeghe, Crystal Verhaeghe, and Dr. Titi Kunkel all mentioned this future possibility for the Williams Lake area. Crystal Verhaeghe said:

I mean how amazing, we have fifteen First Nation communities surrounding Williams Lake, but to have our own First Nation's University here and to receive the funding without strings... (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal] personal communication September 26, 2013)

She reminisced about a time when she was at UBC:

I was walking around this concrete area and I was thinking you know, "Wow, I'm so far from home, nothing reminds me of home here," you know, completely homesick and it's raining and it was just completely different from what I would envision home was and I came across a First Nations building. and when I walk in there's a smudge going and this Elder just came up to me and grabbed my hand and welcomed me in and sat me down with tea with her and I was thinking like, you know I can imagine it would be nice to have a building like that where our Elders are comfortable, their knowledge is utilized and that classes can go on, and funding is always going to be an issue but sometimes people learn best [when it is] closest to home. (C. Verhaeghe [Crystal], personal communication September 26, 2013)

Finally, Crystal talked about her vision of acknowledging *all* of the accomplishments of *all* students as they progress through their studies and how that can reinforce hope and promise.

Carla Anderson said:

One of the unique things in Aboriginal institutions is the drive that comes from the grassroots people, from the Elders who value the relationships and the institutions and

what they're doing for students and how they can step in to teach too, in you know this post-secondary venue. I think for them that is a real strength and so we're supporting that with IK for thousands of years, it always came from our Elders. I think involving them in this whole process has been a godsend really because the Elders have gently guided us and even though the experts come in and they deliver courses, because the Elders have walked this journey with us from the beginning, from the Sister Mary Alice days pushing the language and pushing post-secondary education and really supporting the students. (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013)

And Cindy M. Charleyboy mentioned that "looking back I really wish that we had documented more about what we were doing... that we'd videotaped classes and presentations" (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013). Having more authority about the kinds of classes being offered would have been beneficial, so the students could complete the appropriate certificates for employability (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013). But ultimately, Cindy M. Charleyboy believes that if the inclusion of IK was continually increasing, then perhaps it would be an Indigenous language that the students and Instructors would be conversing in and not in English (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

For Dr. Titi Kunkel, in addition to having the CCWU program available again in the community, she would like to see a dedicated building where:

Elders can come in... where people can gather and sit around with Elders and listen to stories. I would like to see where communities feel they have ownership as well. Not something that depends on funding, whether they have funding or not, where they don't have to worry about those things because it's there. I would like to see somewhere where the younger generation come from the high school and they visit and they spend time and they sit down at the feet of the Elders and listen to stories. I'd like to see it as a resource for everybody. I'd like to see even Western researchers come there to gain knowledge. In a sense, classes happen, research takes place, visits from community members and Elders, visits from you know the youth, like a real celebration of culture. (T. Kunkel, personal communication, July 2, 2013)

Dr. Kunkel would like to see the IK move to a place where policy leaders can contribute to the change and sustainability of resourcing.

Dr. Blanca Schorcht would like to see an increased presence across the disciplines and for there to be an increased understanding about the diversity between First Nations peoples and cultures within many academic disciplines. However, she explained:

That'll be a tough one to change because I see IK as very much about relationship and academia unfortunately is very much about isolated academics working in their lonely offices by themselves. It's kind of a double whammy, we've got the big cultural picture, the Western ways of doing things and Indigenous ways but we've also got kind of a, something that's just specific to academia where collaborative work and relationship is not valued in the way the kind of hyper individualized academic process is. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Having an all-encompassing approach is important to Dr. Blanca Schorcht since she sees that:

The big thing is... the challenges that Indigenous students still face, in terms of not only studying at institutions that incorporate IK, but the barriers in terms of course load and funding. That's one that always sticks in my throat, where students who are required to take more courses than any student are just set up for failure. Then it becomes this circular thing where people are still saying, "They're not ready." Well actually they're ready, they're just like working too damn hard and they've got way too much on the go. I'd like to see that change because the system is really problematic. (B. Schorcht, personal communication, October 2, 2013)

Looking back and looking forward becomes an important part of advancing some of the key messages from the interview participants.

In conclusion, this chapter presents the colours of the Métis Sash and their important meanings to offer the invaluable insights, opinions, and experiences of the research participants involved in this study. There are many commonalities within the responses from the participants, but there are also some differences. Chapter Six will present a discussion of those features while profiling more stories and future thoughts, and conclude by sharing a story I want to tell about the promises and challenges of integrating IK at an API in BC.

Chapter 6: Connecting the Threads that Weave Indigenous Knowledge: Discussion, Future Work, and Final Thoughts

Throughout this study, in presenting the promises and challenges of integrating Indigenous Knowledge (IK) within the context of Aboriginal post-secondary institutes (APIs) in British Columbia (BC), I have privileged the voice of Indigenous leaders, Elders, administrators, instructors and students. In order to answer the research questions presented in Chapter One, I provide a review of the literature relevant to this topic in Chapter Two and describe the theoretical position of this study in Chapter Three. The research methods I used are detailed in Chapters Four in order to establish the foundation for presenting the results of this qualitative study in Chapter Five. The research questions from Chapter One are as follows:

1. How do APIs include IK within their programs and course offerings? What are the promises and challenges of including IK in an Aboriginal institute that relies on partnerships with a public post-secondary school?
2. From the perspective of an Aboriginal institution, how can the nature of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions in British Columbia be described? What are the challenges and benefits of these institutional relationships?
3. How do APIs address IK, policy development and decision-making, and relevance to Aboriginal communities in their relationships with non-Aboriginal post-secondary institutions?

In this final chapter I present my understanding of the answers to these questions as they relate to the literature, qualitative research, and the findings from this study. As well, I acknowledge the study contributions and limitations this research makes before I present my ideas for future work and closing thoughts. The study of IK in an API has been meaningful and rewarding, and I feel privileged that I have been able to share this story through this academic endeavour.

Use of Métissage and the Métis Sash

My theoretical positioning of Métissage, where Indigenous and critical theory blends the ideas, words, and visions that emerge from different positions, worldviews, and beliefs, combined with the Métis Sash framework, weaves together the important thoughts and perceptions that deliver a critical message about the role of IK within the context of the APIs. Using a theoretical position that includes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ideologies and principles has special significance for me personally and scholastically as a Métis woman. I believe that this theory is positioned within a decolonizing approach to research that includes elements and celebrations of an Aboriginal culture that comes from two worlds.

In addition, by using the Métis Sash as a conceptual framework and honouring the important symbolic attributes of this part of Métis culture and identity, I offer examples of how Indigenous people have moved IK forward in higher learning to a place of respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility, and meaning for Aboriginal peoples and the communities served by the APIs in this qualitative discourse. There are indeed complexities that exist within the framework of this discussion. While it is evident that in articulating the themes that emerge from the results of the study there are both commonalities and differences amongst institutes and participants, at a foundational level a profound belief remains that IK is not only important, but necessary in the realm of post-secondary API education where sharing and learning together benefits all. Here, I am pleased to share the themes that emerged from the results of my research.

Discussing the Common Themes

There are four prominent areas that emerged as a result of my research experience and the interviews that are important to profile as separate themes. They are: 1) Elders have a core role; 2) APIs impact identity and a sense of belonging in the academy; 3) APIs lead partnership-building; and 4) APIs demonstrate resiliency to systemic challenges. As in Chapter Five, I have aligned these themes with the colours of the Métis Sash.³⁸

Red – Elders Have a Core Role. It was obvious as a result of my research that Elder presence and knowledge is celebrated as an essential part of the foundation of the APIs included in this study. As representative holders of history, knowledge, and wisdom, the colour red of the Métis Sash is used in the discussion of the role of Elders. Elders, as storytellers and holders of traditional knowledge, and also the educators before Residential Schools tried to eradicate the validity of their knowledge are important to include with this colour of the Sash.

At the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), a publically funded API in BC, the Elders hold a prominent role both in the physical structure and representation of Elders on campus and on the NVIT website, and also in their participation with the NVIT academic community. At the Burnaby campus, the Elders have a dedicated space to meet with one another and also with the students, staff, and faculty. At the Merritt campus, there is an acknowledgement on one of the main entrance walls of who the Elders are and the communities and/or Nations that they represent.

³⁸ As in Chapters One, Four, and Five, the colours of the Métis Sash are used in this chapter in the following way: the colour red, as symbolic of the history of the Métis (and other Indigenous people) will be aligned with the thematic category of Elders; the colour green, as representative of prosperity, will be used in discussing the benefits, celebration, and impact of the integration of IK at an API; the blue and white colours of the Métis flag, will be aligned with the discussion of partnerships in the respective APIs; and finally, the colour black (or yellow), as representative of a dark period of history for the Métis (and other Indigenous people), will be associated with the challenges the APIs face.

Since I had the good fortune of being able to interview four Elders at the NVIT Merritt campus, I was able to listen to how the Elders perceived their roles at NVIT. Margaret George (*Tsleil-Waututh*), Betty Gladue (*Saulteu Cree*), Phil Gladue (*Métis Cree*), and Theresa Neel (*Kwagiulth*) acknowledged how they provide shared resources and support to students, staff, and instructors within the NVIT community and how important it is that they are there for each other as Elders at the academic institution. The NVIT Elders are deeply committed to the respective roles they hold at NVIT and to education and higher learning entirely. The sense of pride they had for student success and achievement is undeniable and their commitment to relentless support and guidance is humbling.

At the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), a federated institution that has affiliations with other post-secondary schools, the inclusion of Elders and Elder knowledge about Nisga'a lands, culture, traditions, and values is also held in very high regard. In addition to the fact that WWNI was founded by Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers who did a vast amount of work of producing books that record Nisga'a traditional knowledge,³⁹ one of the ways the presence of Elders at WWNI is represented is the fact that the only full-time instructor at WWNI is Elder Irene Seguin (*Hagwilook'am Saxwhl Giis, Nisga'a*). Elder Irene Seguin deeply values education and how important it is for Nisga'a people to learn their Nisga'a language. She honours how Elder's knowledge has been a large part of Nisga'a life and learning.

The honour accorded to Elders is supported by the institutional leaders, staff, and instructors at WWNI by ensuring that the Elders are treated with deep respect. For staff members Kathryn Kervel (*Nisga'a*) and Lori Nyce (*Haida*) the importance of ensuring that the knowledge of Elders is kept alive and also in a written place of permanency cannot be

³⁹ The land and occupancy study books are held in the Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department at Nisga'a Lisims Government. Copies of the books are available through WWNI.

understated. Instructors Margaret Anderson and David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*), and institutional leader Deanna Nyce each acknowledge the fact that the course content and curriculum at WWNI is developed with knowledge that is embedded with the wisdom and experiences that comes from the Elders of the Nisga'a Nation (M. Anderson, personal communication March 19, 2013, D. Griffin Jr., personal communication, March 18, 2013; & D. Nyce, personal communication, April 24, 2013). It is well understood that having the Elders' knowledge written down is important, but it is also important to have Elders teaching orally since that is the source of the tradition.

For CCWU, Carla Anderson acknowledged that the establishment of the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program (CCWU), a community learning centre-style institution, was achieved by working very closely with Elders from the three Nations that were involved with CCWU since its inception (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013). Former students, Cindy M. Charleyboy (Williams Lake Band, *Tsilhqot'in/Secwepemc*) and Cathy Verhaeghe (*?Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation); former staff member and instructor Crystal Verhaeghe (*?Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation); and former instructors Drs. Titi Kunkel (*Yoruba*, West Africa) and Dr. Blanca Schorcht all acknowledge in various ways that the Elders held a prominent role in working with the students and instructors as guest speakers and participating in different celebrations that occurred during the academic year. CCWU provided students and instructors with opportunities to meet with Elders and learn from them in an academic setting. From language to cultural traditions and artistic expressions, students, staff, and instructors at CCWU experienced a rich engagement of Elder knowledge and presence in the classroom. This is reflected in the Coyote Story that Cindy M. Charleyboy wrote that is included in Chapter Two.

It is obvious that NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU value the presence and place of Elders within the institutional organization because Elders were and are the foundational teachers in their societies. At NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU, Elders hold an advisory, supportive, guidance, and instructional role and it is recognized that Elders' knowledge holds an important and necessary place within the structure and function of all three APIs. Ultimately, participants acknowledged the importance of including Elders in post-secondary education since they are foundational to education in the traditional communities.

Green – The Positive Impact of Integrating IK in APIs. At NVIT, participants talked about how by having Elder involvement, celebrating IK, and providing students with the opportunity to learn about their history, IK is celebrated in a way that is meaningful. From the perspective of institutional leaders, there are empowering IK benefits included with being able to partner with communities and support community-based and community-driven initiatives that are rich with cultural resources (V. Billy-Minnabarriet, personal communication, February 27, 2013 and J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Indeed, through these IK-related partnerships, there is a sense of communities being able to realize the relevance and purpose of accessing higher learning opportunities at an API like NVIT.

NVIT instructors find being able to include IK and diverse Aboriginal-related perspectives in their classrooms enriching for both the instructor as well as the students (C. Crow, personal communication, February 27, 2013, M. Harder, personal communication, March 15, 2013, and E. Ostrowidzki, personal communication, February 27, 2013). Students are provided with opportunities to learn more about themselves and their histories. Elders are available to work with students as they face struggles or want to have a deeper understanding of the traditional knowledge Elders bring to the academy.

Regarding WWNI, a federated institute with an affiliation with a mainstream post-secondary school, Anderson and Nyce (1998) wrote about the impacts WWNI has with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). They noted that since “the Nisga’a were not compelled to infuse Western thought or values into the process, the academy was enriched with a new perspective that brought high academic standards and a unique way of understanding the world” (Anderson & Nyce 1998, p. 291). Nisga’a culture and language forms the content of many WWNI courses, and while the courses are taught with Western style grades, the content is and comes from the Nisga’a. Indeed, interview participants from WWNI celebrate that there is an inclusion of Nisga’a knowledge at an academic level.

It was also obvious through my research that participants felt that including IK is essential to enriching the discourse of the mainstream academy, and that this impact can evolve, and has the potential to affect all university programming and course development with a spirit of reciprocity and relevance for all. Evans et al. (1999) explained:

The Nisga’a Nation is the embodiment of Nisga’a language and culture; for the Nisga’a language to survive, like many other First Nations languages and cultures, it must be seen by Western society as making an important contribution to the academic world or it could be lost forever. The curricula must continue to grow to higher academic levels - graduate and postgraduate. (p. 202)

The responsibility of institutes to hold fast to these arrangements must be, and has been, realized through the success of many of the programs and in student enrolment numbers for WWNI.

Language and culture are the cornerstones to the Nisga’a people, and only through their perseverance and survival can the larger academy benefit from Nisga’a history, its evolution into modernity, and most of all, its perspective.

The 2014 WWNI/UNBC *Agreement of Federation*⁴⁰ (see Appendix 1) is a remarkable example of how a partnership can result in many positive impacts as a result of having an API. For instance, all WWNI participants remark about the importance it brings to Nation members to be able to be educated close to home with a curriculum content that can reflect many of their language and educational values (e.g. Nisga'a language and culture courses). Also, being able to build on the partnership with UNBC provides important courses, support and personnel for students, instructors, and administrators like library access and student resource opportunities. Finally, being able to share in powerful celebratory experiences like the WWNI Convocation held every Spring brings forward a legacy of valuable memories and relationships between the Nisga'a communities and institutions.

At CCWU, a community-learning centre style API where I was a former instructor, I personally experienced and witnessed how student identity and belonging was impacted. For example, students would demonstrate to me in their assignments how appreciative they were to have the opportunity to benefit from being educated so close to home, by Aboriginal instructors, and in a setting that was respectful and encouraging of cultural integration in the classroom. Also, as evident in my letter to the students, staff, and Elders of CCWU, this API had a transformative impact on me and my own realization of the power of formally integrating IK at an API.

As at NVIT and WWNI, the former students, staff and instructors from CCWU remarked about the tremendous benefit, promises, and impact of having the CCWU program. This included: having the opportunity to participate in an educational setting that was closer to home and during a weekend setting; having the history, traditions, and cultures of the local

⁴⁰ Please note that permission to include a copy of the agreement in this research was obtained from both WWNI and UNBC.

communities integrated into the classroom; and having a presence of local Nation members and Elders involved in the institutional structure. The distinct opportunities to be able to participate in shared celebratory events like dinners, potlucks, and graduation was especially meaningful and held in high regard.

As a final remark related to the green category of my research experience, I want to note that the NVIT campuses in Burnaby and Merritt, BC each had resounding representations of Aboriginality. This is expressed on the NVIT Merritt, BC website which says:

The NVIT Merritt campus sits on land that was occupied by First Nation people from the Nicola Valley. With this in mind, a collaborative undertaking was initiated between local Elders and the architect, their focus being to create an environment that addressed the needs of a modern academic institution while at the same time inspiring Aboriginal education through our proud heritage and culture.

The building is named for Frederick Gordon Antoine whose role as a founding member of NVIT and as a strong advocate for quality education for all First Nation People inspired its creation. Gordon was instrumental in the establishment and management of NVIT. He served as a member of the Board since NVIT's inception in 1983 to 1998. (NVIT (n.d.) Available August 15, 2015)

Pidgeon (2008) writes in her dissertation that “the value of having Aboriginal peoples on campus and within the curriculum was important for students to feel appreciated and respected” (p. 161). Pidgeon’s research is focused on how universities can be successful places for Aboriginal learners using three universities in British Columbia as examples. Pidgeon (2008) found that:

Students acknowledged that having courses and academic programs grounded in IK helped make the university a successful place for them. Other participants recognized that the presence of Aboriginal faculty, staff, and Elders improved their understandings of IK and assisted them in building relationships with Aboriginal peoples. (p. 227)

For the Aboriginal institutions included in my study, participants remarked about how APIs positively impact identity and belonging within the institutions and their descriptions are complementary to the colour green of the Métis Sash.

Blue and White – Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes Lead Partnership-Building.

For each of the APIs within this research, there is a prominent role of partnerships in the delivery of courses and the creation of academic opportunities for API students. During the interviews, representative institutional leaders from NVIT, WWNI, and CCWU noted the role of partnerships within their institution and in this section, in addition to profiling my understanding of the role of partnerships from the literature and interviews, the inclusion of the role of IK in the *Agreement of Federation* between WWNI and UNBC is discussed.

The institutional leaders from NVIT, Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet and John Chenoweth talk about the many partnerships that NVIT has had with both mainstream institutes as well as other APIs. Indeed, as an institute that values the premise of community-driven and community-controlled partnership arrangements, NVIT can celebrate being a leader in partnership-building.

John Chenoweth is proud of the multiple partnerships that NVIT holds with various other post-secondary institutions and realizes that partnership arrangements can model shared successes between institutions (J. Chenoweth, personal communication, March 15, 2013). As the smallest post-secondary school in BC, NVIT has the opportunity to share the gifts of some of the embedded institutional attributes of BC's only publically-funded API.

At WWNI, Deanna Nyce and David Griffin Jr. both celebrate the partnerships WWNI has with post-secondary institutions like UNBC and Northwest Community College (NWCC). Both institutional leaders acknowledged how proud they are to have the partnership with UNBC and the opportunity for shared resources and shared learning between the institutions.

A formal agreement, the *Agreement of Federation*, between WWNI and UNBC defines the parameters of the partnership and the expectations of each institution. I have placed this agreement in Appendix 7 to demonstrate how IK is included as a fundamental component of this

framework and the benefits of including IK in the agreement with WWNI and the Nisga'a Nation. The *Agreement of Federation* clearly describes in section 1.3 that it will:

...recognize and include Nisga'a contribution to academic scholarship and to establish inter institutional dialogue to further human understanding (p. 1).

The agreement clearly articulates the role of IK and the essential aspects of community-driven contributions to the development and delivery of courses taking place at WWNI. The partnership obviously has had long-term positive impacts given the enduring relationship between the institutions and the successful delivery and completion of courses and degrees for students participating in WWNI-related programming. This responsiveness, as demonstrated in some of the language put forward by UNBC in the agreements, creates space to acknowledge Indigenous thought formally within the realm of higher learning.

At CCWU, Carla Anderson remarked that the main partnerships at CCWU were with UNBC and Thompson Rivers University (TRU) (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013). However, Carla Anderson also acknowledged that NVIT assisted in one-off course delivery and Cindy M. Charleyboy acknowledged that SFU also previously held a partnership with CCWU (C. Anderson, personal communication, July 24, 2013 and C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013). It is important to note that all of these partnerships were guided by a community-based coordinating council that set the direction for CCWU programming. Having partnerships with public post-secondary institutions as well as the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA) proved to be a positive part of CCWU functioning and operation.

At the closure of CCWU, partnerships between UNBC and the Tsilhqot'in Nation continued. In fact, representatives from the Tsilhqot'in National Government and Dr. Titi

Kunkel were able to establish the Tsilhqot'in Language and Culture Courses after the CCWU partnership with UNBC fell apart.⁴¹

It is obvious as a result of my research that APIs are indeed partnership-building leaders. From the examples of arrangements discussed by research participants, it remained obvious that when the premises of community-driven and community-built partnerships remain supported, the enduring success of course delivery and programming prevails.

Black - Demonstration of Resiliency Despite Systemic Challenges. The challenges faced by APIs are important to represent as they are found in both the literature about APIs, and in the participant interview. In a country like Canada, where the post-secondary institutes operate primarily through a lens dominated by Eurocentric values and knowledges, some of the challenges for APIs can be contextualized to include notions of worldviews and knowledge systems. Also, further challenges emerged in regards to financial security, support, and policy development for the Aboriginal-based programs.

Calliou (1998) noted that finding balance between the Native and non-Native dichotomies that exist within an institutional setting is layered in complexity and, historically, IK has not always been welcomed in higher learning. Thornton (1998) noted:

Early seventeenth-century European plans for the education of Native Americans included not only mission schools but colleges. The objectives were basically the same; the colleges sought to train an elite group of natives who would then teach their own people "civilization and salvation." (p. 80)

The fact that higher education for Aboriginal learners was premised on similar assimilationist motives as the Residential School system continues to impact how Aboriginal knowledge and

⁴¹ I am proud to acknowledge that while I was employed in the UNBC Office of Research, I was part of the development and approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Tsilhqot'in National Government and UNBC that signals an agreement that is premised in relationship building that is enduring and mutually beneficial.

ways of being can permeate a higher education structure grounded in Western views and frameworks.

Kawagley and Barnhardt (1999) noted that “the incongruities between Western institutional structures and practices and Indigenous cultural forms will not be easy to reconcile” (p. 120). The reality of the nature of contestation that emerges when two different worldviews come together undoubtedly impacts how the perception of Aboriginal-based, post-secondary institutions are received and included in the context of mainstream education processes and expectations. As Haig-Brown (2000) noted:

[For Aboriginal peoples] education as an activity is/was not limited to specific people teaching specific groups or even individuals. Education is/was a community responsibility taken seriously (and in humour) by each and every community member who at any moment can be in the position of teaching. To collapse traditional Aboriginal education into being only formal knowledge is to miss the nuances and the complexity of what counts as education in traditional Aboriginal contexts. (p. 2)

The necessity to have all institutions involved in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnership arrangements made aware of such differences is essential, but it is also a challenge.

Nadasdy (2003) recognizes that since the Western governmental system seeks government-to-government interaction with Aboriginal peoples, there is a neglect of acknowledging how Aboriginal people have had to adapt and “learn completely new and uncharacteristic ways of speaking and thinking” (p. 19). This neglect is immensely prevalent in the history of Aboriginal education in Canada. In the partnership arrangements, great learning was necessary in order to reconcile different worldviews. Nadasdy (2003) explains: “misunderstandings come from things that are culturally and language-related and from fundamentally contested terms like ‘knowledge’” (p. 148).

Because Canadian universities are shaped by layers of Western assumptions, as Anderson and Nyce (1998) note, “establishing and maintaining [an Aboriginal] orientation is a huge

challenge that requires a critical mass of committed First Nations staff members and students as well as support and good will throughout the institution” (p. 290) and in the partner institutions. The need for mainstream institutional awareness of these challenges is crucial for them to be overcome. For the interview participants involved in this study, the challenges exist regardless of whether the institute is publically funded, an affiliated institution, or a community based learning centre.

At NVIT, real challenges exist that impact the institutional structure and ultimately the experience of some of the learners that choose to attend school there. From the perspective of institutional leadership, some of the prominent challenges are that there still needs to be a greater understanding of what IK is and how it can be integrated. Because of this, the premise of ensuring that Aboriginal control over the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge cannot be understated. Additionally, participants acknowledged that the hiring of course instructors and union-related issues may present some difficulties, but that often, these can be overcome.

For the instructors at NVIT, some of the major challenges exist with Aboriginal-related academic resource issues and ensuring that there is enough support available for students who attend the institution, especially since the impact of Residential School can continue to permeate the walls of the institution. For the student interviewed for this research, having more Indigenous course instructors was noted as an important challenge to overcome, but most importantly, for Corrine Hunt Jr., one of the biggest issues was ensuring NVIT is being recognized as an institution in the same way the other major post-secondary institutes are recognized so more degrees (including those at a graduate level) can be offered.

Interview participants from WWNI recognize that funding and budget-related issues are a challenge. Evans et al. (1999) explained that “budget is a key issue... the WWN is an

Aboriginal post-secondary institute that functions on ‘soft’ monies... UNBC, on the other hand, is established under a provincial act and is financially supported by the province” (p. 202).

Margaret Anderson (in Anderson & Nyce 1998) described how, even though UNBC was successful in the creation of a First Nations Studies Program and developing community-based relationships, these developments “highlighted structural barriers in the form of government funding processes as well as predictable resistance to First Nations’ exercise of authority within the university’s governance and administration” (p. 282). Indeed, asserting control in the area of financial support and security for Nisga’a driven programming within the WWNI/UNBC partnership was a necessary measure for the protection of this initiative which was achieved.

Elder Irene Seguin from WWNI noted that ensuring students from all four Nisga’a communities have access to the institution was a challenge since there is no public transportation available between the communities. For Kathryn Kervel and Lori Nyce, it was noted that it can be a challenge to have participants from the Nation attend WWNI instead of going elsewhere for their post-secondary education, but also that there is still more work to be done in regards to building on Nisga’a-related resources like the dictionary and the *yuukhl*⁴².

Since CCWU is no longer in operation, an obvious challenge for this API was the withdrawal of financial support for continued operation and sustainability. This is directly related to funding issues and the availability of programs to support a grassroots institute like CCWU. However, there are other important challenges that faced CCWU when it was in operation. Since many of the students travelled from one of the 15 Bands in the Cariboo Chilcotin region that were outside of the community of Williams Lake, travelling every second weekend from a rural community where many students held full time jobs could present a

⁴² Nisga’a laws.

problem, especially in the winter months. Also, it was noted by CCWU participants that ensuring there were course instructors who were Aboriginal or had knowledge about Aboriginal history, culture, and values, emerged as a common theme. Finally, it was noted by many of the participants that it is important to have funding available to Elders who are contributing to the APIs knowledge base and transmission. This was noted as a challenge facing this institution. Compensating Elders as co-instructors was not possible given that the courses were not self-sustaining even without a co-instructor. Since instructors need to have Western academic qualifications, Elders without such training unfortunately do not qualify to instruct the students.

Impact of the “Type” of Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institute

It becomes obvious after detailing some of the common themes between the institutions that there are indeed similarities and differences depending on the “type” of institute included. Notably, one of the major areas of difference is related to funding. NVIT, as a publically-funded API, does not face the same challenges as WWNI or CCWU since there is a guaranteed source of funding from the government that can be expected on a yearly basis. Affiliated institutes (such as the federated institute of WWNI) or community learning centres (like CCWU), must face a yearly prospect of uncertainty due to the availability of funding and resources.

However, from this study it became quickly apparent that all three types of institutes shared many similar challenges in other areas. For example, having appropriate course instructors to teach at all three institutions was noted by participants and considered to be a major challenge. Accessibility and support for First Nations learners was included within all three institutes and the need for greater access to academic funding came forward as a common problem, and indeed the issue of resources was the one that closed CCWU.

In the end, all three institutes also shared some common benefits, promises, and impacts with the unified belief in the power and importance of IK that was driven by the community and fostered with the enduring spirit of belief that traditional knowledge structures need to and will triumph. The First Nations Education Steering Committee's (2008) description of the "types" of APIs is valuable for being able to note the commonalities and differences and this understanding can contribute to discussing how to move such frameworks forward in a good way so equally supportive measures for the success and sustainability of institutions can be put in place no matter what "type" of API they represent.

Validity of the Study

For this research, I utilized a case study method and Métissage of Indigenous and critical theory as the theoretical foundation and I integrated the use of the Métis Sash as a metaphorical framework to deliver the findings as a result of the interviews I conducted. As a Métis scholar, this was especially meaningful and has important significance for my own identity and how I have been able to blend together the integrated knowledges from myself, the secondary resources, and the participants to bring forward the rich and varying perspectives about the research topic. In this section, I explain how I have managed the validity of the study to ensure that the findings are relevant and respectful.

Validity of Case Study Research. There are key approaches to conducting case study research as presented by Stake (1995) and Yin (2003, 2006, 2012) that were useful to consider within the scope established for this study. Both Yin and Stake approach their research from a constructivist paradigm where "the truth is relative and is dependent on one's paradigm" (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 545). This means the "truth" of the responses from the research participants

comes forward in a way that is meaningful and holds value for both the researcher and research participants.

Crabtree and Miller (as cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008) suggest that “one of the advantages to this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories” (p. 545). As an Indigenous researcher, honouring oral history and life history of my participants through the study of IK integration in an API was important and the stories shared enable us to understand the cultural divides, to seek shared meaning (Kovach 2009), and hopefully to find resolution of the financial problems.

According to Yin (2009b), one of the final steps in conducting a case study is in regards to analyzing the case study evidence. This is where the strategies are used in the research analysis to bring forward validity and credibility to the work. Krefting (1991) describes Guba’s (1981) model to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research as, “(a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency, and (d) neutrality” (p. 215). The “truth value” (or credibility) is derived by being able to target the experiences of participants and allow the participants to tell their stories in relation to the research questions asked.

In regards to applicability, it is important that I provided an opportunity to allow for comparison and through my utilization of three sites of study and 22 interview participants, comparisons were indeed able to be realized. The notion of “consistency” is related to the dependability of the data. Referencing Field and Morse (1985) Krefting says, “qualitative research emphasizes the uniqueness of the human situation, so that variation in experience rather than identical repetition is sought” (p. 216). In this research and the data analysis presented in this chapter, the presentation has been consistent and thorough while acknowledging that it was not possible to present all words from all participants.

The final piece of Guba's trustworthiness model is related to neutrality (or freedom from bias). In addition to having effective methods of triangulation to increase the validity, in the end, as described by O'Neill (2008), "validity is found in the intersubjective agreement of this study's community and in the work's relevance and believability to others" (p. 117). Essentially, by cross referencing and comparing the participant responses with one another, the truth of the responses provided by participants emerges and unique and important stories are told and shared.

Study Limitations

Although the validity of the study and its importance to the individuals included here is obvious, this research did have some limitations. First, in the construct of the interview questions, the term "Indigenous" was not as seemingly relevant to all participants as it was to me in the sphere of academia. I wonder if the terminology had been different in the original questions, if I would have had different responses. I was able to restate the questions and use the term "Aboriginal", or in the instance of interviews with WWNI participants I used the term "Nisga'a", when I realized the term "Indigenous" did not resonate with everyone. Regardless, I feel as though the inclusion of the word "Indigenous" may have impacted how participants were interpreting the research question until it was restated.

Next, this study does not have an equal number of representative participants from each of the APIs included. I feel fortunate I was able to include all of the participants that are represented in this dissertation, but there is indeed a gap between the number of represented categories of leaders, Elders, students, staff, and instructors at the three APIs. Also, I truly wish that I had more time to spend at NVIT and WWNI and could have been as much a part of their institutional structures as I was at CCWU.

In addition to not having the equal number of representatives from each institute, the fact that participants had the option of using their real names or using a pseudonym may create some limitations in the study. For individuals who are using their real names, interview responses may be influenced by knowing what they will say will become publically available. For those utilizing a made-up name, a pseudonym doesn't entirely protect the participant's identity especially if the scope and topic of research is unique.

Also, I had initially wanted to obtain copies of the agreements between the APIs and UNBC to discuss how IK is included within the written documents. However at this time, there is only one agreement that is current between UNBC and WWNI that is available to the public. Therefore, the only agreement I have included within the "The Role of Partnerships" category earlier in this chapter is the UNBC/WWNI *Agreement of Federation*. Nevertheless, since all research participants had an opportunity to talk about the agreements and tell me how IK was, or was not, honoured, I have included any remarks relevant to the agreements and the role of IK as they have been available.

Finally, no non-Indigenous students at the APIs were asked whether they found the inclusion of IK useful for understanding its value. The inclusion non-Indigenous students in the study sample may have brought forth other perspectives about the topic.

Study Contributions

First and foremost, I believe that Aboriginal institutions represent a powerful example of the strength and resilience of the self-determining nature of Aboriginal peoples and communities exercising their rights to share their IK and values. Conducting this study provided a place for different First Nations, with different institutional models of higher learning, to speak about their experiences and reflect on the relationships that have emerged as a result.

I believe this research provides fresh insight about the sustainability and longevity of particular APIs working in partnership programs and how these partnerships have an influence that goes beyond the classroom and extends to Aboriginal communities and their peoples. This study took a unique approach to glean the experiential perspectives of people who are a part of the reality of the benefits, promises, and impacts of APIs and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary partnerships. Also, the fact that there is a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of the three “types” of Aboriginal institutions in this study is an excellent way to garner important and relevant information that will contribute to the development of policy and programs in the future to maximize the opportunity for IK incorporation into higher education for the benefit of Aboriginal learners, communities, and Canadian society as a whole.

Ultimately, this study may contribute to implementing the goal of the Ministry of Advanced Education (MAVED)(2012, p. 4), to “strengthen public post-secondary institutions in meeting the needs of Aboriginal people; stabilize partnership agreements between public and Aboriginal-controlled institutes; and, provide for designation of Aboriginal-controlled institutes as public post-secondary institutions” and in answering the main research questions I established. Having the specific geographical location of British Columbia in this study provided a perspective that is premised on locations in BC that are rich in Aboriginal tradition and culture and exemplify the self-determining nature of Aboriginal people in both the highly populated southern and the more remote contexts.

Finally, using the Métis Sash as a representative framework for delivering the research findings in this study created a distinctive way to blend the ideas, words, and knowledge of participants together that honours who they are and the contributions they bring forward to this

important topic. I am pleased that I can also honour a history I am from as part of this process and bring forward a powerful example of Métis culture and history within this academic work.

Future Work

As I complete the research and writing for this dissertation, I feel fortunate that I can reflect on some of the amazing opportunities I have had as a part of my research experience. The wealth of knowledge that has been presented to me in both the literature I have reviewed as well as by the interview participants I was able to talk to has made an immense contribution to my own understanding and belief that the issue of IK in the academy continues to need more discussion, more profiling, and ultimately more support.

I believe that in this year of the delivery of the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation* report by Justice Murray Sinclair, there is a need to reconcile some of inconsistencies and paradoxes within federal and provincial Aboriginal post-secondary policy and funding (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The incongruence in relation to taking responsibility for Aboriginal Education are undeniable. The interview participants often remarked about the greater need for funding security and control, although there were differences amongst participants, depending on the “type” of API, as noted earlier in this chapter.

Further compounding the uncertainty surrounding the issues of financial resources for Aboriginal-based programming, and related to the colour black of the Métis Sash, is the need for stronger policy relating to support such institutions. The Aboriginal Institutes Consortium (2005) notes:

This lack of policy and legislative support impacts the creation of Aboriginal institutions in two very significant ways. Firstly, there is no regular source of adequate funding for day-to-day operations, program development, facilities, or infrastructure development. Secondly, Aboriginal institutions lack recognition from federal and provincial governments as having the authority to grant certificates, diplomas, and degrees;

therefore, the credentials obtained by students attending Aboriginal institutions do not hold the same currency as credentials obtained in mainstream institutions. Student credentials are often not recognized by employers and are not necessarily portable within the mainstream system, with respect to credit or knowledge transfer. (p. 29)

Therefore ultimately APIs will “continue to be forced to partner with mainstream universities and colleges for recognition and additional resources” (Stonechild, 2006, p. 124). In the end, and until there is broad federal and provincial policy and support for Aboriginal institutions, program sustainability and success will be vulnerable to support received from a mainstream institution. Having reasonable and equitable financial backing for Aboriginal-based higher learning institutions is necessary to resolve this tension (Nichols & Monette 2001). By ensuring this funding, APIs and the integration of IK in the academy will be positioned in a way that programming and educational opportunities delivered from Aboriginal academies will have certainty in maintaining the vision of including relevant and meaningful IK integration.

It is my hope that in further research related to this work, I can study more closely the association between policy-related interventions and greater autonomy and certainty respecting Aboriginal Education generally and APIs specifically. It became a strong message to me throughout this work that there needs to be greater attention on a national scale to ensure that Aboriginal communities are being given the rightful and proper support to pursue education and that that education include IK.

Finally, and after speaking with interview participant Deanna Nyce, I want to acknowledge that I hope my future research can elaborate on the inherent relationship that exists between language and culture and how APIs have an opportunity to wholly embrace and include community in a space of higher learning where students can learn more about themselves and each other.

Final Thoughts and Conclusion

Final thoughts for this study include an honouring of the institutional champions of each of the APIs before I present ending words as a conclusion to this research and the final chapter for this study.

Honouring the Institutional Champions. For me, the institutional champions represent the colors red, green and blue and white in the Métis Sash. Beginning with the participants in this study, it is in my view that each and every one of the participants is indeed a champion of Indigenous Education as well as of an API. This includes: Vice-President Academic & Strategic Partnerships, Dr. Verna Billy-Minnabarriet (Bonaparte First Nation/*Secwepemc*); Dean of Community Education and Applied Programs, John Chenoweth (Upper Nicola Valley First Nation); Elders Margaret George (*Tsleil-Waututh* by marriage but originally from Upper Fraser Valley), Betty Gladue (*Saulteu Cree*), Phil Gladue (*Métis Cree*), and Theresa Neel (*Kwagiulth*); former NVIT student Corrine Hunt Jr. (*Namgis*, Alert Bay); and instructors Dr. Catharine Crow, Eric Ostrowidzki (Odanak Band/*Abenaki* Nation), and Marti Harder.

I also acknowledge as institutional champions: Chief Executive Officer for WWNI Deanna Nyce (*Kitselas* and *Nisga'a* by marriage); former CEO for WWNI and WWNI instructor David Griffin Jr. (*Nisga'a*); Elder and instructor Irene Seguin (*Hagwilook'am Saxwhl Giis*, *Nisga'a*), staff and former students, Kathryn Kervel (*Nisga'a*) and Lori Nyce (*Haida*); and former instructor Margaret Anderson.

And finally from CCWU I acknowledge Carla Anderson; former students Cindy M. Charleyboy (Williams Lake Band, *Tsilhqot'in/Secwepemc*) and Cathy Verhaeghe (*?Esdilagh* First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation); former staff member and instructor Crystal Verhaeghe

(?Esdilagh First Nation, *Tsilhqot'in* Nation); and former instructors Drs. Titi Kunkel (*Yoruba*, West Africa) and Blanca Schorcht.

In addition to the interview participants that were part of this study, I want to honour the founding champions of the respective APIs included and describe how they continue to be respected and remembered. As the founders, their relentless commitment and contribution to the role and importance of IK cannot be understated. It is through their spirit of belief and commitment to vision in realizing success that APIs continue to make a marked contribution to Aboriginal Education and academia outside APIs.

Nicola Valley Institute Visionaries. At NVIT, Dr. Billy-Minnabarriet and Dean John Chenoweth both gave important honours to the founding champions in their interviews and this includes the late Grand Chief Gordon Antoine and Robert Sterling. As an institution, NVIT constantly celebrates the contributions of the late Grand Chief Gordon Antoine with the naming of the NVIT Merritt campus as the “Frederick Gordon Antoine” building and annually offering the “F. Gordon Antoine Memorial Entrance Scholarship” to incoming students (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. n.d., *NVIT entrance awards*). In addition, the NVIT Elders bring forward honour to the Elders who have passed on. They said:

We honour those Elders that came before us and who are continuing their journey spiritually: Gordon Antoine, Pearl Clayton, Margaret Tom, Felix and Bernice Squakin, and Mike Bob. (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. n.d. *Elder's Council*)

Indeed, having such monumental and enduring representations is significant and acknowledging the foundational work of the institutional leaders is important.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute Visionary. For WWNI, the founding champion, the late Jacob McKay (*Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*), holds a prominent place on the website for WWNI and also on the website for the Indigenous Adult Higher Learning Association (IAHLA). In addition to having a picture of *Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl* profiled on the home page of the website,

there is an opportunity for students to learn more about the “Dr. Jacob MacKay Award” which is given annually to students. The web page explains:

In memory of the late Dr. Jacob McKay, IAHLA established annual awards to support current and former students of BC’s Indigenous adult and higher learning institutes. The four awards, in the amount of \$1,000 each, are available annually to Aboriginal students who have attended an IAHLA institute and will be continuing at the IAHLA institute or attending a BC post-secondary institution in the fall. Big Congratulations to the four successful candidates! (IAHLA. (2015). *Dr. Jacob McKay Award Recipients – Congratulations to the 2015 Dr. Jacob McKay Award Winners*).

In memory of his tireless commitment and belief in the power of Nisga’a knowledge, Aboriginal students will continue to benefit from the efforts he made to create a place of education that honours and welcomes the premises and principles of Nisga’a IK.⁴³

Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program Visionary Founder. At CCWU, and as represented in the literature presented in Chapter One and Two, the late Sister Mary Alice Danaher holds a prominent place in the hearts and minds of the CCWU interview participants involved in this study. For example, during our interview, I was fortunate that Cindy M.

Charleyboy shared some special memories about the late Sister Mary Alice Danaher. She said:

She was so awesome. I really enjoyed working with her. I thought I might have an issue because she was non-Native, she was a Sister, and she was much older. She was very bossy. [Laughs] She totally thought that she knew what was best for you. [Laughs] So I thought, "Oh my gosh, how am I going to respect her as an authority figure and not have an issue with her?" You know, with her being a nun. It was great. She honestly did know what was best for each and every one of us. So that turned out to kind of solve the problem.

Because it wasn't just coming from her identity as a non-Native woman it was coming from her understanding of education and what it can do for us and how it can empower us. So it was really neat, it was a great experience working with her. Like she would plan to just bulldoze over, you know, the university staff and, you know, she would say, “We're gonna do this and this happening and we've gotta have this” and she'd

⁴³ I want to acknowledge that when I convoked with my Master of Arts (MA) degree in First Nations Studies from UNBC in 2008, I was privileged that Deanna Nyce gave me, and my husband, Andrew Robinson (*Hapdiilax̄diha'a*), the opportunity to participate in the WWNI convocation even though we completed our studies at UNBC in Prince George. During this ceremony, Jacob MacKay (*Sim'oogit Bayt Neekhl*) assisted in the presentation of our degrees. My WWNI MA certificate of graduation hangs in my office, with his signature, which has special meaning and significance to me.

go into the meeting and she would just be so nice. She would say exactly what she wanted and they would say, “Oh no, we can't do that.” Then they would give us that. It was awesome.

Sister Mary Alice Danaher was a coordinator. She would plan, you know, she would really try to get the courses that she felt we needed the most. It wasn't a numbers game to her, like how many people need this certain English class or how long has it been since this certain science class has been offered. She didn't care about that. She wanted the best course that was coming up, she wanted us to have that. She was really good about being able to get us those things. She just had that knack.

Then she knew something wasn't working, like we used to have Christmas dinners and she would invite everyone and their families to the Christmas dinner. She would personally ask everybody. You know how it is with Christmas, you go to so many dinners, and people wouldn't show up, they'd be tired out, it's like a Saturday night. You've gone to school all night Friday and all day Saturday and you don't really want to go to a dinner but she figured out how to get us to ask each other and then the next problem was how do we find a big enough location for all of us because we had 120 people in this space, I think was made for 78 so she was really good at things like that.

I saw the soft side of her sometimes. She was usually so strict but she was very caring. We'd forget that sometimes, 'cause we'd make jokes about her, like her very forceful personality. I forget how to say that word, but there is an actual word for “the nun is coming.” We used to yell out that word and then run and close the door if she was coming down the hallway. So, because we would honestly get freaked out about her, because she was so strict. But then you'd see the soft side of her and you'd realize she really loved and cared about us and totally wanted all these amazing things to happen for us. She started crying in class one time because she let us know that she'd found out that one student was hitchhiking to class and hitchhiking home and hadn't been eating. It just broke her heart. So things like that, it didn't make us feel ashamed or make us feel like we should complain to somebody - it just made us act, like just get on it. She was really good at that. (C. M. Charleyboy, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

As a former course Instructor for CCWU, the words that Cindy M. Charleyboy said strongly resonate with me since I clearly remember similar accounts related to the commitment and dedication Sister Mary Alice Danaher had to the students, their communities, and the CCWU program in its entirety.

Ending Words. This study has significance for me academically, professionally, and personally. I have been blessed to come to know more about myself and Aboriginal Education through my time as a student at UBC and UNBC as well as a course instructor and a university staff member. My experience teaching for the CCWU program had a profound impact on my

understanding of how the integration of IK through an API can be transformative and life-changing. Although this program ended due to funding challenges for students and the institution, the influence of integrating IK at the CCWU continues.

After I had completed my interview with Cathy Verhaeghe, she sent me an e-mail as a follow-up to our telephone interview and I want to end the dissertation by sharing her words here. On October 6, 2013, Cathy sent me the following note to give me a better understanding of what it meant for her to attend the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University:

As Jane Fonda said,

“In order to know where we are going, we have to know where we’ve been and to know where we’ve been, we have to know who our parents were.”

This seemed to be the late Dr. Mary Alice’s niche in the psychology world of what we needed. This also fit in with a Major in First Nations Studies. I would take this one step further. “In order to know where we are going, we needed to understand right from the beginning the role First Nation’s played in: contact, Fur Trade, Gold Rush, Logging and Mineral Extraction.” What was the impact of our culture? After going through step by step over the seven years of studies we now understood the history and to know why we were the way we were.

My identity is to accept and be proud of who I was, that my ancestral background is Chilcotin, Carrier and Secwepmc (Shuswap). I had a rich traditional upbringing living on my Grandfather’s homestead way out in an isolated Chilcotin wilderness. We had a rich traditional upbringing until our parents moved away from my Grandfather’s homestead and moved closer to public schools. Our saving grace is that our father enfranchised himself from the “Indian List” as they called it then. It was the Indian Registry to be a member of a Band. Our Dad went to St Joseph’s Mission for the full eight years and became a boxer and hockey star. We could not go to St Joseph’s Mission as we were all enfranchised. We attended public schools.

My life in the public school became the beginning of seeing racism. I became a victim and ashamed of where I came from. I thought I was the only one who lived in a one room cabin, packed our water, and had an outdoor toilet. We were poor. Not only that, our parents were now drinking alcohol at rodeos or on trips to Williams Lake until one fateful day my Dad died after he fell out of a moving vehicle and his head hit a boulder along the side of the road. He was unconscious and never recovered. My mom, a single Mom with 11 children and pregnant became a victim of alcohol for 13 years.

When all of the students began to share their backgrounds. We all had similar backgrounds. Some worst. We all began to heal. The other niche that the late Mary Alice had was that we all had to get up in front of the class to tell our story. At the beginning we needed support, someone to stand beside us and little by little we could proudly raise our head and then it became second nature until we could proudly walk across that platform to accept our degree.

Families travelled to campuses with their children. I always thought these children would also become University Graduates as they were introduced to the education system at an early age. They walked the halls of the University and during these summers a whole program was set up for them. My daughter Crystal started out coming to the campuses as a Summer Youth Coordinator for the late Dr. Mary Alice. I still remember the day when Mary Alice asked Crystal if she wanted to apply to the Master's in Business. She said "Yes." As the second daughter, I didn't know how we could afford this as it would cost her \$35,000. The first daughter wanted to be a doctor since she was 10 years old. We encouraged her and in the back of our minds we were always thinking of how we could afford to send her to medical school.

We gave Crystal the support financially and the family support she needed. I remember that she had to fix up her Thesis and she must have read and rewrote a million times, tired and discouraged. The deadline was looming. I asked her to let me read her Thesis. It took me the whole night. I could tell the Thesis was complete from my education as I had a Bachelor of Arts, Major in First Nations Studies. I edited her Thesis only by moving this section here, with a few grammar errors and this section here is your conclusion. I gave it back to her and she made the changes and sent it in. It was accepted and published. Then she was ready to defend her Thesis. She got an A- with a few minor changes. I was so proud that I could step in Mary Alice's shoes and help edit a paper. Take this paragraph and put it here, move this paragraph here and this is your conclusion. We always seemed to have our paper in the wrong places until we got the knack of order. Besides Crystal, it would be interesting to interview one of those student's children.

Our narrow view on life was broadened by the courses we took. We could follow the Canadian and American system of elections. My most embarrassing moment that I could remember was when one of our Traditional Guest Speakers told us about drying meat and fish, speaking her language and I said "Why do we want to [go] back" and the Traditional Guest Speaker said, the language and traditional foods is what makes us whole, it is the root of who we are as a First Nation. Today I am still not there as we have lost our language. I have taken a few courses in Chilcotin and if I were to put the Chilcotin language on one hand my accounting course on the other, the accounting courses were easier.

The other niche in Mary Alice scheme of things was to have stepping stones and awards to achieving this level, celebrate it and work toward another goal right up until we graduated. Many of the students attended our graduation and this gave them even more inspiration to graduate.

I was one of the first graduates to receive my degree in the Bachelor of Arts with a Major in First Nations Studies in 2004. In 2010 I received a 2 Year Diploma in Accounting Technician from the TRU University in Kamloops.

My story is published in Williams Lake, The Heart of the Cariboo, Volume Two, Museum of the Cariboo Chilcotin – page 169 The Verhaeghe Family and Diana French's other book called Women of Brave Mettle. Just recently my daughter gave me a trip of a lifetime for my 60th Birthday. We went to Graceland, Nashville, went to a Grand Ole Opry Show and then flew on to New York. She took me to a restaurant and I could sit amongst all walks of life. Before my education, I would be ordering room service or even be frightened of going to Vancouver.

The late Dr. Mary Alice threw us a lifeline and we took it. Attending the Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University, working full-time and attending on weekends, during the summers going on campus to one of the Universities was an “Opportunity of a Lifetime.”

Cathy (C. Verhaeghe [Cathy], personal Communication)

This e-mail encapsulates so much about the promises and challenges of APIs. I am proud that I can share it here, with Cathy Verhaeghe’s consent.

Ultimately, the impact of APIs as sites of self-determination and decolonization cannot be overstated for me. I have been blessed to witness the strong attributes and enduring impacts APIs are having on the individuals who participate in the institutions, but I also see the impacts the mainstream universities, like UNBC, are able to experience from their connection to APIs and inclusion of IK in their own courses. As an Aboriginal learner myself, I celebrate the pride I witness in students being able to share, honour, and validate their knowledge in the academy and appreciate the important attributes IK has to influence academic conversations in a positive way. As former API students graduate and return to their communities enriched and empowered, they leave behind the stories, knowledge, and legacies they shared. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to tell the story I wanted to share about the role of Indigenous Knowledge in Aboriginal post-secondary institutes.

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Appendix 1

AGREEMENT OF FEDERATION



BETWEEN:

The University of Northern British Columbia (hereinafter called "UNBC")

OF THE FIRST PART

AND:

The WilpWilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (hereinafter called "WWN")

OF THE SECOND PART

DEFINITIONS

- UNBC is the University of Northern British Columbia established under Bill 40, "University of Northern British Columbia Act" and governed under the "University Act".
- WWN is the WilpWilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Post-Secondary Institute operating under the authority of Nisga'a Lisims Government and incorporated under the Societies Act.
- Board of Governors shall mean the Board of Governors of UNBC.
- Board of Directors shall mean the Board of Directors of WWN.
- Senate shall mean the Senate of UNBC.
- WWN student means a student registered through WWN and taking UNBC courses at a WWN operated campus.
- Nisga'a Final Agreement is agreement between Canada, British Columbia and the Nisga'a Nation signed May 11, 2000.

1 PURPOSES

- 1.1 To provide an implementation vehicle for the UNBC/WWN protocol agreement (appendix I).
- 1.2 To further the UNBC northern, regional and First Nations mandates.
- 1.3 To recognize and include Nisga'a contribution to academic scholarship and to establish inter-institutional dialogue to further human understanding.
- 1.4 To broaden the offerings of WWN.
- 1.5 To enhance the benefits of education and research primarily for Nisga'a people.
- 1.6 To make facilities and knowledge available for the study of Nisga'a language and culture.
- 1.7 To establish WWN as a strong, comprehensive, university/college, offering a range of university educational opportunities consistent with 2.7 below.
- 1.8 To assist Nisga'a citizens to establish self-determination in post-secondary education through maintaining standards comparable to provincial standards with respect to institutional organization and accountability, tuition and fee schedules, admission policies, instructor qualifications and certification, curriculum standards and degree completion requirements. (Nisga'a Final Agreement Section 104: a-e; p.177).

2 GENERAL

- 2.1 By the University Act, UNBC may confer and award degrees in any branch of learning taught at UNBC or by WWN on behalf of UNBC, upon persons who having completed requirements are admitted to such degrees by the Senate, including persons registered at WWN.
- 2.2 This Agreement will supercede any previous agreements on the date that WWN is accorded degree granting authority as authorized by Nisga'a Lisims Government and the British Columbia Provincial Government. WWN agrees to hold its degree granting authority in abeyance in those areas in which UNBC offers degree programs and which UNBC makes available to WWN. Notwithstanding the right of WWN to offer its own degrees, the remainder of this document deals with the offering of UNBC degrees.

- 2.3 Whereas UNBC confers the same academic degree on a student who graduates through WWN as it does on a student who graduates through UNBC, the academic standards of teaching, course content and examinations for degree programs and courses offered by WWN must be equal to those of UNBC.
- 2.4 UNBC shall have the right to set such academic standards in full consultation with WWN through such procedures as are approved from time to time by Senate.
- 2.5 A mechanism appropriate to serve the needs of planning and academic accountability to Senate will be established in keeping with 37 (w) of the University Act.
- 2.6 In respect of 37 (u) of the University Act it is recognized that Senate will be asked to approve of the terms and conditions of this agreement.
- 2.7 WWN as established under the authority of Nisga'a Lisims, Government has the right and responsibility for education of Nisga'a citizens at the post-secondary level and is the final authority in all matters related to the offering of courses and programs in Nisga'a language and culture.
- 2.8 All financial arrangements will be deemed to be agreements between the Board of Directors (WWN) and the Board of Governors (UNBC).
- 2.9 Where UNBC provides funds to WWN, the Board of Directors (WWN) will be responsible to the Board of Governors (UNBC) for the expenditure of those funds.
- 2.10 All WWN students registered in degree programs are UNBC students with all of the rights and privileges of UNBC students except as those rights and privileges are modified by approved WWN policies.
- 2.11 A student registered at either UNBC or at WWN shall receive preferential treatment over the general public for registration in courses offered by either UNBC or WWN.
- 2.12 Through common experience in the implementation of the WWN/UNBC Protocol Agreement, both institutions recognize the value of consultation and establish it as a fundamental principle of all elements of this agreement.
- 2.13 Section 35 (2) (k) of the University Act allows for the WWN Board of Directors to elect a sitting member to Senate.
- 2.14 While it is recognized that WWN may develop separate policies in various areas, where no policies are in place, established UNBC Senate policies shall apply.

3 COURSES AND PROGRAMS OF STUDY

- 3.1 WWN may plan and develop courses and programs of study for consideration and approval of Senate.
- 3.2 WWN may plan and develop courses and programs of study in Nisga'a language and culture for consideration and approval by UNBC.
- 3.3 WWN may establish its own deadlines and course timetables.
- 3.4 Consultation and joint planning, course and program approval will be facilitated through appropriate mechanisms at the Program, Department, College and Senate levels.
- 3.5 WWN will establish a regular program review process. The criteria and process for review will be established in consultation with UNBC Program, Department and College review processes.

4 FACULTY

- 4.1 All faculty teaching university courses at WWN will be selected by WWN and must be approved by the Vice-President, Academic & Provost at UNBC through the relevant Department or Program Chair and Dean of College.
- 4.2 All staff and faculty employed at WWN will be employees of WWN and will be the sole responsibility of WWN. Staff and faculty of WWN are not employees of UNBC, and the terms of conditions of their employment will be set by WWN.
- 4.3 WWN will establish means for evaluation of WWN faculty in consultation with UNBC.
- 4.4 WWN will establish policies governing working conditions, rates of pay, tenure and promotion for WWN faculty and staff.
- 4.5 WWN will be the final authority in the approval of faculty to teach Nisga'a language and culture courses.
- 4.6 WWN may engage UNBC faculty as part time instructors at WWN.

5 STUDENTS

- 5.1 WWN Board of Directors in consultation with UNBC will have the right to determine all tuition and fees.
- 5.2 WWN will collect all WWN student fees and tuition.
- 5.3 In respect of the University Act 37 (c) admission requirements are set by Senate. It is recognized that WWN may have reason to request that admission requirements to WWN be different than the general UNBC requirements.
- 5.4 WWN will be responsible for all student services, student life and student discipline matters. WWN may establish equivalent policies to those at UNBC concerning its faculty, harassment, etc.
- 5.5 Established UNBC policies and procedures concerning continuance, probation, suspension and dismissal of students will apply at WWN. Any exceptions must be approved by Senate.
- 5.6 WWN will establish an academic appeals process for students that identify Senate as having final authority.
- 5.7 WWN students will be given access to all UNBC services available on the World Wide Web.
- 5.8 UNBC students will be given access to all WWN services available on the World Wide Web.
- 5.9 WWN may establish library services for WWN students beyond those normally provided to UNBC students at Regional Campuses.
- 5.10 WWN students and UNBC students will have reciprocal library privileges.
- 5.11 WWN will in cooperation with UNBC create and maintain its own registrarial function.
- 5.12 WWN will provide the UNBC Registrar with regular and detailed reports in accordance with requirements established through consultation by the UNBC Registrar.
- 5.13 WWN will provide annual lists and degree audit of students who expect to graduate in that year.
- 5.14 UNBC Student Association fees will not be charged to WWN students.

- 5.15 WWN students may establish a WWN Student's Association and set fees for membership in consultation with the WWN Board of Directors.
- 5.16 WWN may seek inclusion in UNBC international agreements.
- 5.17 WWN will be free to establish separate international agreements and will notify UNBC of any such arrangements.
- 5.18 WWN students will be eligible for all UNBC international exchange programs. UNBC will notify WWN as new agreements are added.

6 PUBLIC PROFILE

- 6.1 For the duration of this agreement, WWN will have the right but not the obligation to use the official UNBC logo in all of its documents including electronic materials.
- 6.2 WWN will abide by all UNBC policies when the UNBC logo is used.
- 6.3 For the duration of this agreement, UNBC will have the right, but not the obligation to use the official WWN logo in all of its documents including electronic materials.
- 6.4 UNBC will abide by all WWN policies when the WWN logo is used.

7 FUNDRAISING

- 7.1 WWN may raise funds independent of UNBC. Where the funds raised relate to UNBC activities, the amounts raised will be reported to UNBC.
- 7.2 UNBC may raise funds independent of WWN. Where the funds raised relate to the university component of WWN activities, the amounts raised will be reported to WWN.
- 7.3 UNBC and WWN will seek opportunities for joint fundraising and will establish a joint committee for these purposes.
- 7.4 Where either UNBC or WWN intends to make a major proposal for funds relating to areas of joint activity, they will undertake to advise each other of such solicitations.
- 7.5 All funds raised under 7.3 will be received and held by UNBC or as determined by agreement between UNBC and WWN.
- 7.6 WWN will not raise monies as an affiliate of UNBC as if it were raising funds for UNBC.

8 FINANCIAL

- 8.1 WWN will keep its own accounts and provide annual audited financial reports to UNBC.
- 8.2 Where specific financial arrangements are created between UNBC and WWN, a separate agreement will be struck for each such arrangement.
- 8.3 Monies provided to UNBC to support activities in the NASS will be so identified to WWN and subsequently spent in consultation with WWN or in a manner consistent with specific agreements between UNBC and WWN.

9 REVIEW OF AGREEMENT

- 9.1 This Agreement of Federation will remain in effect from the date established in 2.2 above until and including August 31, 2024.
- 9.2 The agreement may be reopened at any time by agreement of both parties.
- 9.3 In any case, one year prior to maturity, by August 31, 2023 each party will serve notice of intent to renegotiate or discontinue the agreement.
- 9.4 WWN and UNBC will each name three members to a review committee whose terms of reference will include interpretation and clarification of the agreement and resolution of any points of dispute.

Dated this 3rd day of June, 2014