ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS:

UTILIZING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 SCHOOLS

by

Rachel A. Weppler

A Paper

Presented to the Gordon Albright School of Education

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Education

EEA 650 Leadership Project

July 2021

On the Path to Success for Indigenous Students: Utilizing Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices in K-12 Schools

APPROVED:

_____ Dr. Gloria Antifaiff, Faculty Supervisor

_____ Dr. Heather Henderson, Canadian Director,

Master of Education in Leadership Program

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by saying that without a strong support system of family, friends and colleagues, none of this would have been possible.

I wish to dedicate this capstone to my mother. You supported me from the very start of my educational journey and it has meant so much to me. From an early age, you instilled the importance of education, a desire to continually improve and showed me the value of hard work. It is because of these values that I have been able to achieve this accomplishment.

To my husband, I want to say a special thank you for your unwavering support throughout. From watching our children, to proofreading my papers, or listening to me talk through each of the assignments, words can do little to express my gratitude and appreciation. It has been quite the journey and I could not have done it without you.

To my children, although you are still small, thank you for understanding in the best way that you could that mommy had to do schoolwork. I love you both more than you will ever know!

To Wendy, thank you for being the first to give me a chance at leadership opportunities and encouraging me to pursue a master's degree. Your guidance and support were invaluable and I cannot thank you enough!

To Andrew, thank you for always treating me as an equal, believing in me and valuing my input. I am appreciative of your support and collaboration, as I have pursued this path.

To Lenore, I know we have not worked together long, but your example of authenticity, as a leader has been a powerful example of what it means to be true to yourself and stand for what you believe in.

To my master's colleagues, thank you for the laughter and support throughout. It was a rollercoaster of emotions as we progressed through this journey and I cannot thank each of you enough for helping me keep my sanity during this process.

Finally, to my professors, thank you for the feedback and knowledge you imparted throughout this journey. It has been very timely and pertinent to the experiences I have encountered on my own leadership journey and has made me a better educator.

Abstract

For many Indigenous students, education can be difficult as they are met with numerous barriers inhibiting their ability to connect and engage with the curriculum. Unfortunately, this is in large part due to the intergenerational legacy of Residential Schools. In order to begin to affect change on a school level, educational leaders play a significant role in fostering a school environment that is welcoming and accepting of Indigenous worldviews and epistemologies. In order to achieve this, researchers have identified that educational leaders who implement and support culturally responsive practices are more successful at supporting Indigenous students and helping them achieve greater success in educational settings. This capstone study provides a review of the literature related to culturally responsive leadership and teaching practices that can be utilized when working with Indigenous students. Implementation of these practices can be used to increase connection and engagement with the curriculum and help Indigenous students feel a sense of belonging and significance. Following the literature review, recommendations are provided outlining strategies educational leaders can use to increase their personal leadership capacity surrounding culturally responsive practices, as well as supporting teachers on this journey.

Keywords: First Nation educational leadership, Indigenous education, Indigenous school leadership, Aboriginal education, Indigenous educational leadership, First Nation education, educational leadership, culturally responsive teaching, culturally responsive school leadership, culturally responsive pedagogy, principal leadership, culturally relevant education

Table of Contents

On the Path to Success for Indigenous Students: Utilizing Culturally Responsive Leadership Practices in Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

"Aboriginal culture, ways of knowing, and history must be accurately represented and taught, not as an 'add-on' but independent from the regular curriculum and under consultation from Aboriginal peoples" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 342). When there is a lack of Aboriginal content in the classroom and schools as a whole, it provides little opportunity for Aboriginal students to be able to reflect on their histories and cultures or be able to engage with their peers, which can result in Aboriginal students feeling isolated, unheard and invisible (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 52). Consequently, educators, administration and system leadership need to ensure that Aboriginal students are given opportunities to see themselves reflected in their learning as a way to help them feel connected and foster a sense of belonging.

Unfortunately, since the inception of formalized education, "the history of education for Indigenous peoples in Canada has structural and societal roots mired in marginalization and subjugation" (Toulouse, 2016, p. 1). Much of this marginalization has stemmed from the legacy of the residential schools and the foundational idea that "educational institutions that were built and continue to operate on colonial structures pose problems for Indigenous children" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 583). Within a school setting, this responsibility largely rests on the role and vision of the principal within the school, as "the principal's leadership actions and style are highly influential in creating a supportive learning environment that directly influences student success within the school" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 2). Additionally, "educational leadership . . . play[s] a critical role in improving student outcomes, especially those of minoritized and Indigenous students" (Hohepa, 2013, p. 617) by creating a school environment that is a "culturally

responsive system, growing, evolving and adapting to meet the needs of the students and families they serve" (Davy, 2016, p. 3). When an educational leader is able to support the school community in these endeavours of applying foundational knowledge, about First Nations, Metis and Inuit students it works to the benefit of all students (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 6).

Background to the Problem

"In Alberta, the need to create a more conducive learning environment for FNMI [First Nation, Metis and Inuit] students is urgent. Given the levels of available expertise and economic prosperity, Aboriginal students in this province are not reaching acceptable educational attainment levels" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 342). Unfortunately, "culturally diverse and marginalized students are often not included in schools, and as a result many of them find it difficult to become engaged within an educational system that does not reflect their experiences or reality" (Davy, 2016, p.4).

With the state of affairs in the world extremely impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, many First Nation students have become even more disengaged with their learning. Many First Nation schools have been closed to students for months as a precautionary measure to limit the spread in their communities. With many Indigenous communities heavily impacted by poverty, equitable access to technology including the internet is not a viable option. Consequently, for some, learning has had to take the form of paper learning packages aimed at delivering literacy and numeracy content to students. Unfortunately, these measures have been met with limited success. Many parents and guardians do not see a clear and immediate connection to their current world and circumstances exist which take precedence over schoolwork (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 22). As such, the need for educational practices within the school that are more culturally responsive, relevant and sensitive is imperative. If "optimum

learning for all students" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3) is the goal, then alternative measures

need to be taken to make this a reality for Aboriginal children and youth to help them achieve

greater success in educational settings.

Statement of the Problem

From the inception of formalized education, "when Europeans settled North America,

Aboriginal education began a long road of paternalistic and racist practices" (Gallagher-Hayashi,

2004, p. 20) which left many Indigenous students marginalized. Within Alberta, much of this

marginalization is due to the emphasis placed on westernized education and curriculum designed

for mainstream society. This has resulted in Indigenous culture and values being seldom

represented or reflected in what is taught in Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) provincial

classrooms. For example, in the Alberta K-12 social studies curriculum, there is no mention of

Residential Schools and Indigenous history within the curriculum is largely based on ". . .

constructing the pioneer narrative as the only story worth telling" (Tupper & Cappello, 2008, p.

562). "The telling of other stories, particularly from the perspective of nonwhites, is necessary if

we are to interrupt the commonsense understandings" (Tupper & Cappello, 2008, p. 570).

"Students need stories both to make sense of their world and to enable them to contribute to their

world; they need to both understand and have places from which to stand" (Tupper & Cappello,

2008, p. 577). Through this, we can see that "mainstream education [continues to embrace]

principles of Western Europe and its concepts of racial superiority over the colonized. Within

this dichotomous relationship, Aboriginal peoples are encouraged to conform to their own

subjugated status within main stream society" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). Littlebear (2009) suggested

that the "curriculum [continues to be] infused with colonial interpretations of the past and

attempts [continue to be made] by the educational establishment to present this infusion in a

positive light unclouded by 'dispirited facts' of colonial history as sanitization" (p. 21). As a

result of this,

> Aboriginal students do not see reflected in the curricula of most schools the history,
>
> traditions, customs, language, philosophy, beliefs, and ways of being of their people. For
>
> Aboriginal people, the school is not a place for cultural affirmation and empowerment.
>
> (Littlebear, 2009, p. 21)

Unfortunately, "for countless Aboriginal students in Western Canada, there exists little chance to

develop a non-Eurocentric understanding of their own history and culture, contributing to

feelings of alienation and inadequacy" (Julien, 2016, p. 134). Consequently, many Indigenous

students have difficulty connecting and engaging with the curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this capstone study will be to research strategies focused on effective

culturally responsive practices that can be utilized by educational leaders to ensure Aboriginal

youth are successful in an educational setting. It will also look at necessary attributes that a

principal needs to embody and emulate as "the principal plays a pivotal role in the school by

affecting the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement and the

degree of efficiency in school functioning" (du Plessis, 2013, p. 80). Furthermore,

> . . . educational leadership that authentically values the culture, agency and beliefs of
>
> Indigenous people; that places Indigenous students' physical, mental, cultural and
>
> spiritual wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities; that actively develops
>
> collaborative relationships and networks based on reciprocity, trust, cooperation and
>
> civility; that is guided and sustained by humanistic endeavour, makes a significant

contribution towards the participation and achievements of Indigenous students. (Davies

& Halsey, 2019, p. 101)

Therefore, schools must become a culturally responsive place that is "welcoming, inclusive, and

accepting of minoritized students" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1272) to ensure that "Aboriginal

students are provided with excellence in education" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 343).

Research Questions

This capstone study will address the following research questions:

1. What are culturally responsive leadership practices, and how can they be utilized to

   engage Indigenous students with their education?

2. What supports can educational leaders provide teachers in utilizing culturally responsive

   practices?

3. How can educational leaders model culturally responsive leadership practices to create a

   shared vision in K-12 schools to help Indigenous students connect with the curriculum

   and their culture?

Significance of the Study

According to the 2016 Census by Statistics Canada, the Aboriginal population in Canada

consisted of 1.6 million people (Statistics Canada, 2020). Within Alberta, Aboriginal people

living on reserve in the province of Alberta, as of 2016, was 50,945 with 34% being children

under the age of 15 (Statistics Canada, 2020). This equates to a significant number of Aboriginal

students within the education system that need to be supported in ways that are meaningful and

pertinent to them. Their education has been significantly tainted as a result of the residential

schools and consequently educators need to work harder to acknowledge these wrong doings and

give way to a holistic experience focused on a "student's overall growth and wellbeing within intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual realms of life" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 2).

"Canada's Aboriginal youth have traditionally lagged behind non-Aboriginal students in terms of educational achievement" (Julien, 2016, p. 129). Regrettably, this is a trend that will continue until meaningful change is implemented as "eurocentric education provides little opportunity for Aboriginal learners to develop positive interpretation of Aboriginal identity and culture" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). This is due to "conventional models of education [being] based on foreign values, which function to disconnect the students from their communities and their identity" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). "Without an intense pursuit of better education outcomes, Canadian governments - Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal - will serve the next generation of Aboriginal students as inadequately as they have the current one" (Richards, 2008, p. 9). It is time to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (2012a) and develop "culturally appropriate curricula" (p. 2) to help our Indigenous students in "creating a sense of belonging and instilling cultural pride [which is] more conducive to learning" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 342).

By gathering research focused specifically on addressing Aboriginal students in the education system in Canada and how to effectively help them be successful, it can provide guidance in aiding administrators with implementing changes within their school to bridge the achievement gap and ensure meaningful learning opportunities are taking place. There is a great deal of research surrounding why Aboriginal students have been met with limited success in the education system, but less so pertaining to how to effectively make changes to establish a culturally responsive school as it relates to Aboriginal students in Canada. This capstone study will provide recommendations and contribute to changing the narrative about the lack of Aboriginal student success in educational settings.

Scope of the Study

This capstone study will aim to establish a framework of strategies that can be implemented by principals in K-12 schools, consisting of a significant Indigenous student demographic. From these strategies, it will outline recommendations for increased Indigenous student success, based on culturally responsive leadership and teaching methodologies and the importance of effective principal practices and qualities. Although teachers, educational assistants, support staff and others working within the school can also have a significant impact on the success of Indigenous students, this capstone study is focused on the impact of the principal. It should also be mentioned that parents and guardians also play a significant role in their child's success and a partnership between the school and home is of the utmost importance.

It is also important to note that for the purpose of this study, the terms Aboriginal, First Nation and Indigenous may be used interchangeably to refer to First Peoples of Canada, with whom this study is focused on. Each of the research articles consulted varied in the acceptance of the terms used. Much of the Canadian government documentation and disclosures reference the term *Indigenous* and as such it will be used predominantly within the paper.

Summary

"Quality leadership occurs when the leader's ongoing analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). The principal in any given school plays a crucial role when it comes to improving student outcomes, especially when working with First Nation students. It is imperative to be considerate of their specific needs and ways of learning in order to help them be successful in the educational system. "School leaders who serve Indigenous youth must empower students and families by embracing collective,

mutual, and community-based communication" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 598) and "create spaces that are welcoming to community and Indigenous knowledge" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 594).

"Aboriginal youth are at a far greater risk of failing to complete elementary/secondary school on time, and further, are enrolling in post-secondary institutions at a far lesser rate, than their non-Aboriginal counterparts" (Julien, 2016, p. 130). This failure often comes as a result of the system failing them by "not empowering them to connect with others and with their learning in ways that are meaningful to them" (Doige, 2003, p. 153).

The time for change is now. We need to "redress the legacy of the residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012a, p. 1) by "developing culturally appropriate curricula" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012a, p. 2) and embedding this into the current education system. In doing so, it can help ensure that Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging through the promotion of relationships so they can have a chance at an overall positive school experience (Preston et al., 2016, p. 6).

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

This capstone study will focus on culturally responsive leadership practices that can be utilized to help Aboriginal students be more successful in an educational setting by providing them with opportunities to connect and engage with the curriculum in meaningful ways. Chapter 2 will review pertinent literature defining culturally responsive leadership, while also outlining specific leadership practices and teaching strategies that have proven effective when working with Aboriginal students. Finally, Chapter 3 will provide recommendations on how principals can utilize culturally responsive practices to increase their leadership abilities and build teacher capacities in a manner conducive to supporting the needs of Aboriginal students.

Chapter 2: Extended Literature Review

Introduction

"Today, North America's aboriginal children (those of native and Inuit descent) walk through our schools like strangers" (Gallagher-Hayashi, 2004, p. 20). Unfortunately, in many classrooms and schools, there tends to be a lack of Indigenous content. As a result, there is little opportunity for Indigenous students to be able to reflect on their histories, cultures, or engage with their peers, which can result in them feeling isolated, unheard and invisible (Alberta Education, 2005). "The shared history between Aboriginal peoples and European settlers is one of cultural disruption" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 2) that brought oppressive educational measures that have continued to affect First Nation students' schooling. There is a long road of reconciliation ahead. However,

> education is a key to this change. Aboriginal people are building bridges and working to create educational communities where their children are respected and their cultures are reflected. They are rebuilding their Aboriginal cultures and hope to right the relations of the past. (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 2)

As such, there is a need to shift the learning experiences of these students to encompass a more holistic approach to education that addresses their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual capabilities which can be accomplished utilizing culturally responsive leadership and teaching practices in schools. This will be to the benefit of all students, but especially those of Indigenous descent.

Definition of Terms

Aboriginal - Refers to the original peoples of North America and their descendants (Alberta Education, 2005).

Colonization - Refers to the act of settling among, imposing worldviews and establishing control over the Indigenous people of a particular area (University of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

Culturally Responsive Leadership - Refers to the broadened understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy as it moves beyond the classroom to the larger school context and decision making within the school (Hollowell, 2019).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy - Refers to conceptual understanding and thinking that "embraces Indigenous ways of knowing . . . [and is] fostered by approaches to teaching and learning that include purposeful thinking about people, places and processes" (Empowering the Spirit, n.d., para. 1).

Culturally Responsive Teaching - Refers to the use of "cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002).

Decolonization - Refers to the "process by which Indigenous peoples refute historical and current colonialistic stories about themselves, and reclaim their languages, cultures, knowledge systems, political and social worldviews" (University of Saskatchewan, n.d., para. 1).

Educational Leader - Refers to the leader of the school. This term is often used interchangeably with 'principal' throughout this capstone study.

First Nation - Refers to the various first peoples of Canada and is often the preferred term over "Indian" (Alberta Education, 2005).

Indigenous - Refers to the inhabitants originating in a particular country and their descendants, in context of this capstone study, it is used to refer to the original first peoples of Canada (Alberta Education, 2005).

Principal - Refers to the leader of the school as assigned by the school board. This individual is responsible and accountable for the demonstration of the leadership quality competencies as described in the Leadership Quality Standard by Alberta Education (Alberta Education, 2020). This word is often used interchangeably with 'educational leader' throughout this capstone study.

Professional Development - Refers to the ongoing learning that takes place on behalf of educators to improve the way they teach and can be done in both formal and informal ways (Bullock & Sator, 2015).

Background Information

In order to gain a greater understanding of the significance and need for culturally responsive practices in K-12 schools, it is important to briefly consider the systematic attempt by the Government of Canada to eradicate Indigenous culture through the use of Residential Schools. As Gallagher-Hayashi, (2004) claimed in their research "when Europeans settled North America, aboriginal education began a long road of paternalistic and racist practices" (p. 20). "Colonial powers vanquished entire Indigenous populations through oppressive means, from genocide and epistemicide to moving subaltern subjects into nonfamiliar spaces" (Khalifa et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, "the introduction of residential schools in 19th century Canada established the dominance of European languages, customs and traditions over the Aboriginal tradition, while deconstructing important Aboriginal kinship and community ties" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). Elise Charland, a residential school survivor, recounted her experiences dealing with both her own loneliness and that of her younger brother from her time at Onion Lake School. She stated, "there was no one there to help us, to love us, to take us in their arms and take the hurt and tears

away. That loneliness was unbearable. No one cared whether we lived or died." (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012b, p. 24).

"Residential schools were government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture" (Miller, 2020, para. 1) and were the ". . . mainstay of Indian education during the period of 1867 and 1969" (Wildcat, 1995, p. 16). However, "the last federally administered residential school closed in 1996" (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2014, p. 4). These schools were largely based on the assumption that Whites were inherently superior to the 'Indians' of which they considered to be savage and uncivilized (Bombay et al., 2014). This belief was asserted by Clifford Sifton, the Minister of Indian Affairs when he stated, "the Indian cannot go out from school, making his own way and compete with the white man.… He has not the physical, mental or moral get-up to enable him to compete" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012b, p. 25). According to Menzies (2020),

> Under the guise of educating and preparing Indigenous children for their participation in Canadian society, the federal government and other administrators of the residential school system committed what has since been described as an act of cultural genocide. As generations of students left these institutions, they returned to their home communities without the knowledge, skills or tools to cope in either world. (para. 1)

"Moreover, the attempted assimilation of Indigenous students left them disoriented and insecure, with the feeling that they belonged to neither Indigenous nor settler society" (Miller, 2020, para. 18). According to John Tootoosis', a former residential school student who attended the Delmas School in Saskatchewan from 1912 to 1916,

> when an Indian comes out of these places it is like being put between two walls in a room and left hanging in the middle. On one side are all the things he learned from his people

and their way of life that was being wiped out, and on the other side are the white man's

ways which he could never fully understand since he never had the right amount of

education and could not be part of it. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,

2012b, p. 79)

Unfortunately, "many of the values and morals of this culture were in conflict with traditional

Aboriginal values and customs" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 3). McCue's (2011) research

furthered this by stating,

Before contact with Europeans, Indigenous peoples educated their youth through

traditional means — demonstration, group socialization, participation in cultural and

spiritual rituals, skill development and oral teachings. The introduction of European

classroom-style education as part of a larger goal of assimilation disrupted traditional

methods and resulted in cultural trauma and dislocation. Reformers of Indigenous

education policies are attempting to reintegrate traditional teachings and provide more

cultural and language-based support to enhance and improve the outcomes of Indigenous

children in the education system. (para. 1)

"Despite the closure of residential schools, Aboriginal peoples have suffered psychologically and

culturally" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 327). Sadly, "the consequences of this Eurocentric approach to

education and cultural sanitation have outlasted the residential schools themselves" (Gunn et al.,

2011, p. 327). Based on the aforementioned research, it is evident that there is a significant gap

in the way that Indigenous students were traditionally taught and how their learning has been

impacted after the imposition of the Westernized curriculum.

Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in making reparations for the Residential

School era. "Education in general and the everyday meanings of the curriculum in schools . . .

can be seen as essential elements of the existing social privilege, interest and knowledge of one element of the population at the expense of the less powerful groups (cited in Witt, 1993)" (Maina, 1997, p. 301). Julien's (2016) research suggested, "since Aboriginal peoples are not of the dominant norm, but are minorities within a colonial state, they are encouraged to embrace the colonizers' conceptual notions" (p. 133). Consequently "mainstream education [continues to] embrace the principles of Western Europe and its concepts of racial superiority over the colonized. Within this dichotomous relationship, Aboriginal people are encouraged to conform to their own subjugated statues within main stream society" (Julien, 2016, p. 133) due to "conventional modes of education [continuing to be] based on foreign values, which function to disconnect the students from their communities and their identity" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). Julien (2016) further argued, "for countless Aboriginal students in Western Canada, there exists little chance to develop a non-Eurocentric understanding of their own history and culture, contributing to feelings of alienation and inadequacy" (p. 134). As such, "it is important, therefore, that educators employ a pedagogy that facilitates the alternative learning styles of Aboriginal youth" (Julien, 2016, p. 134) in order to change the perceptions surrounding Eurocentric hegemony in education. As Deer (2013) pointed out in Julien's (2016) research, "as long as teachers insist upon teaching - or are forced to teach - the Eurocentric curriculum rather than one that incorporates Aboriginal learning, knowledge, and perspectives, then the system of assimilation and cultural genocide will continue" (p. 136).

Based on the research, it is evident that Residential School intergenerational trauma still exists today "and can be seen in the continuing legacy of dysfunctional families and anti-social behavior that it has left behind in many Aboriginal communities (Miller, 1996, p. 434)" (Julien, 2016, p. 1330). Consequently, the impact cannot be ignored, particularly as educators endeavour

to meaningfully connect and engage with Indigenous students. Part of this connection lies in attempts to engage with Indigenous students in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their experiences and context. As part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (2012a), there is a need to develop culturally appropriate curricula, "in order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (p. 2). In addition, "make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012a, p. 7) as a means to close the learning gaps and disparities for Indigenous students. As it currently stands, "Eurocentric education provides little opportunity for Aboriginal learners to develop a positive interpretation of Aboriginal identity and culture" (Julien, 2016, p. 133). Henceforth, by endeavouring to infuse our schools with the very things that the Government of Canada and Catholic churches sought to eradicate, may we begin seeing systematic change in the way Indigenous students are educated (Hinks, 2011). Perhaps through these measures, they may begin to feel a sense of connection to the curriculum, be proud of their cultural backgrounds and learn more about themselves (Hinks, 2011).

Culturally Responsive Educational Practices

Culturally responsive practices are those that require one to be in-tune with their own personal biases and perspectives so they can be cognizant of how this affects their views surrounding other cultures and race. It "recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills of diverse learners" (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017, p. 23) and "recognizes students' differences, validates students' cultures, and asserts that cultural congruence of classroom practices increase students success in schools" (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017, p. 24).

In Khalifa et al.'s (2016) research, it is suggested that the emphasis behind the term *responsive* captures an action-based approach with a sense of urgency to have school leaders create school contexts and curriculum that effectively responds to the educational, social, political and cultural needs of the students (p. 1278). Furthermore, Khalifa et al. (2016) indicated that regardless of the exact terminology you use when discussing culturally responsive practices, they all share a central point:

> The need for children's educators and educational contexts to understand, respond, incorporate, accommodate, and ultimately celebrate the entirety of the children they serve - including their languages and literacies, spiritual universes, cultures, racial proclivities, behaviors, knowledges, critical thought, and appearances. (p. 1277)

This process and understanding becomes more about stepping into the world of the child and valuing their experiences as important steps in the learning journey.

Castagno & Brayboy (2008) indicated in their research that despite culturally responsive schooling being advocated for the past 40 years, we still see schools and classrooms that are failing to meet the needs of Indigenous students (p. 942). This coincides with McCue's (2011) research, which suggested that "improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous youth in Canada has been an ongoing challenge for more than a century" (McCue, 2011, para. 27). The education gap still exists, which is enough evidence to suggest that change is needed and ". . . major reforms will be required before substantive positive changes in the Indigenous graduation rates and outcomes at the secondary and post-secondary education levels will emerge" (McCue, 2011, para. 27). "Without [these changes] and an intense pursuit of better education outcomes, Canadian governments - Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal - will serve the next generation of Aboriginal students as inadequately as they have the current one" (Richards, 2008, p. 9).

Additionally as stated by a research participant in Wildcat's (1995) research:

> If we are not careful, we are going to be absorbed into the white world, where basically
>
> we'll say we're Indian but we truly are not because our system will be exactly the same.
>
> And that's the contradiction. We know today that the Canadian education system is not
>
> working for us and because it isn't working a lot of our educational institutions are
>
> failing. What other models are out there? Because we are forced to follow their standards
>
> we are forced basically to send our children to their post-secondary institutions. We're
>
> caught in this dilemma. There is potential that our systems may just get swallowed up by
>
> the provincial process. (p. 79)

Hence, we can see that an integrated curriculum focused on implementing, supporting and

modeling the use of culturally responsive practices in schools is essential in order to see a culture

shift in how teachers and the curriculum work together to support Indigenous students. As

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) found in their research,

> When teachers, curricula, and schools provide a challenging and high-quality education
>
> that is intimately connected and relevant to tribal communities, they will be far more
>
> likely to graduate youth who are academically prepared, connected to and active
>
> members of their home cultures. (p. 961)

Therefore, through a review of the literature, the problem addressed in this capstone will look at

how culturally responsive practices can be implemented into schools to help Indigenous students

connect with the curriculum and achieve academic success.

Culturally Responsive Leadership

Within the school environment, a principal can have a significant impact on student

learning and achievement, teacher instruction and the overall functioning and culture of the

school. Their leadership actions and style are highly influential in creating a supportive learning environment conducive to supporting student success and learning (Preston et al., 2016). "The fundamental purpose of educational leadership is to nurture the growth and well being of children in their care . . . [and ensure] that every decision made in the school system . . . is in the best interests of the child" (Wildcat, 1995, p. 71). Additionally, "principals' belief in students, emphasis on ensuring student belonging, promotion of relationships and promotion of culturally relevant school experiences [are] seminal for Aboriginal [students] to have a positive school experience" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 6). In Alberta, this is achieved as principals follow the Leadership Quality Standard (2020) which suggests that "quality leadership occurs when the leader's ongoing analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students" (p. 3). When working with Indigenous students specifically, based on their educational history and "widespread mistrust of the education system [largely stemming from the Residential School legacy] . . ." (Crooks et al., 2015, p. 217), it is imperative that a principal both acknowledges and recognizes the need to find specific strategies that are pertinent to Indigenous youth. These strategies can then be utilized to help Indigenous students achieve their greatest potential and meet their learning aspirations (Alberta Education, 2020).

In order to make the necessary shifts to become culturally responsive as an educational leader; Davy's (2016) research outlined some strategies that can be used to accomplish this: "(a) foster cultural responsiveness, (b) promote culturally responsive pedagogy, and (c) create a welcoming school environment focused on building relationships" (p. 32). When schools become places where programs, activities and services are connected to their home cultures and cultural backgrounds, students are more apt to engage in these experiences as they are pertinent

to their contextual understandings and frame of reference. Unfortunately, many "Aboriginal peoples in Canada continue to attend schools (both on and off reserve) that continue to remain mired in a system deeply entrenched in Eurocentric pedagogy and colonizing philosophies" (Julien, 2016, p. 129) causing a disconnect as "their home culture is at odds with the culture and expectations of schools" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 946). Similarly, Khalifa et al.'s (2019) research suggested that leadership and administrative practices continue to carry characteristics of colonization through means of: single, authoritative top-down leadership, prioritization of school-based perspectives and policies over community, understanding of knowledge and its conveyance as opposed to experiences, inferiority and dislodging of educative processes from elders and oral community traditions and the use of schools and curriculum as a way to monitor and control Indigenous populations. Culturally responsive educational leaders must be mindful of these lasting colonial measures and "be vigilant in identifying and resisting schooling practices that continue to dislodge indigeneity and oppress Indigenous and minoritized students" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 586). As educational leaders actively look to make a difference in the way Indigenous students connect with the curriculum and their overall school experiences, it is important to explore these strategies of cultural responsiveness in order to effectively meet the needs of our Indigenous students.

Self-Awareness for Cultural Responsiveness

Similar to Davy's (2016) research, Khalifa et al. (2016) identified four leadership behaviors that are crucial to being a culturally responsive school leader: critical self-reflection, contributing to culturally responsive teaching and curricula, promoting culturally responsive school environments and engaging the community in culturally responsive ways. Khalifa et al. (2016) further suggested that in order to adequately appreciate and value another culture, an

educational leader must have ". . . an awareness of self and [an understanding of] his/her values, beliefs, and/or dispositions . . ." (p. 1280), in order to adequately ". . . identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, "the principal's critical consciousness of culture and race really serves as a foundation to establish beliefs and undergird [their] practice" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1281). Thus, it is essential that educational leaders ". . . constantly challenge their own inadvertent, or even acknowledged oppressive understandings and performatives" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1296) to ensure their actions are in the best interest of the staff and students they serve. Davy (2016) furthered this by stating "cultural responsiveness is a personal journey of growth and development individuals embark on that enables them to respond to differences in order to facilitate change" (p. 32). This process involves having administrators challenge their own personal and cultural assumptions in order to move beyond the "superficial knowledge of cultural groups in order to understand the social realities and histories that shape their lived experiences and intervening to enact policies and programs to level the playing field on their behalf" (Davy, 2016, p. 33). "Educational leaders must take time to reflect on their values, what is working and not working in their schools and on what they desire for the future" (Wildcat, 1995, p. 121).

As educational leaders endeavour to be culturally responsive, Khalifa et al. (2019) identified in their research three points school leaders must consider as they critically self-reflect:

1. Whether they are enacting a colonizing form of school leadership that leads to the oppression or marginalization of Indigenous students and students of color in their schools.

2. How their behaviors are informed by Eurocentric worldviews, values, and goals.

3. Consider leading with expressions of decolonization for Indigenous communities.

As an educational leader, it is imperative to be a reflective practitioner as it provides

"opportunities for improving leadership, teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3).

Furthermore, ". . . leaders must understand their own multiple identities (individual

characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, social and political contexts, and other

elements) before they can help build cultural responsiveness within their teachers and school

staff" (National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), n.d., p. 6). As

evidenced, continually engaging in self-reflective practices is a necessary component in

becoming a culturally responsive educational leader.

Promotion of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Educational leaders play an important role in promoting culturally responsive pedagogy

as part of their vision in a school. They must recognize that "it involves careful

acknowledgement, respect and an understanding of difference and its complexities" (Ontario

Education, 2013, p. 2). It must be at the forefront of decision-making, be a contributing factor

when hiring staff members, be present when engaging with community members and all who

enter the school, be interwoven into instructional practices, and be part of the school culture.

Essentially, it must be embedded into every aspect of the school in order for it to be successful.

Ontario Education (2013) suggested culturally responsive pedagogy has three dimensions:

institutional, personal and instructional (p. 2). The dimensions are outlined as such:

- The *institutional dimension* refers to the administration and leadership of school systems,

     including the values developed and reflected in school board policies and practices. It

     highlights the need to critically examine the formal processes of schooling which may

     reproduce particular patterns of marginalization. Educators need to consider which

     patterns need to be intentionally interrupted and changed. (p. 2)

- The *personal dimension* encompasses the mindset of culturally responsive educators and the practices they engage in, in order to support the development of all students. Not only are culturally responsive educators self-aware, but they also have a deep knowledge of their students and how they learn best. (p. 2)

- The *instructional dimension* includes knowing learners well and considering the classroom practices which lead to a culturally responsive classroom. (p. 2)

These dimensions provide a thorough overview into understanding the complexities and varying dynamics associated with culturally responsive pedagogy and the need for strong educational leadership to ensure that this is a primary focus in the school.

Present day schooling not only needs to validate traditional cultural contributions of First Nations, but also contemporary cultural contributions that First Nations people have made in shaping the larger Canadian multicultural society (Maina, 1997, p. 295). This means, "educators of First Nations children in Canada face the tasks of recovering the cultural heritage of First Nations and providing skills for successful participation in a culturally diverse society" (Maina, 1997, p. 293). This can be accomplished as educators and school leaders ensure that the "education of First Nations students be built around the rich cultural heritage they bring with them to the classroom in order to develop the sense of pride that is critical to personal and cultural identity and academic success (Hamme, 1996)" (Maina, 1997, p. 301). Utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy "builds on the premise that learning may differ across cultures and teachers can enhance students' success by acquiring knowledge of their cultural backgrounds and translating this knowledge into instructional practice" (Irvine, 2010, p. 57). As it pertains specifically to Indigenous students, Irvine (2010) indicated that "culture is an important survival strategy that is passed down from one generation to another through enculturalization and

socialization, a type of road map that guides and shapes behavior" (p. 58). Therefore, if new

information is not relevant to their framework of culture and cognition, they will never

remember it (Irvine, 2010). However, when teachers find pertinent examples within the students'

experiences and make it relevant and meaningful, students will never forget it (Irvine, 2010).

These learning opportunities create opportunities for students' voices to emerge, and knowledge

and meaning can be constructed from the students' perspectives (Irvine, 2010). It is through

these practices that culturally responsive pedagogy can successfully be promoted and embedded

into the school culture and help engage Indigenous students with their education. .

Creation of a Welcoming School Environment and Building Positive Relationships

Within the Leadership Quality Standard (2020), leaders are responsible for "creating a

welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment" (p. 3) and does so by building

"positive working relationships with members of the school community and local community"

(Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). As leaders in the school, principals must strive to help educators

in their building understand the need for additional skills and different perspectives in order to

effectively meet the needs of those they serve (Davy, 2016, p. 3). This means that "effective

leaders must be capable of promoting and sustaining an environment stable enough to attract,

maintain, and support the further development of good teachers" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1273).

They must work with their teachers to advance their knowledge and understandings of the

Indigenous cultures and histories framed in a local context (Davies & Halsey, 2019). In doing so,

learning experiences aligned with local Indigenous beliefs and cultural heritage can be supported

and the cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous students recognized (Davies & Halsey,

2019). As a culturally responsive school leader endeavours to accomplish this, the responsibility

of creating a culturally responsive school learning environment can be shared and extended to

the promotion of inclusive school climates for marginalized or minoritized students within a

school context (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1274). This includes creating a welcoming, caring,

respectful, accepting and safe learning environment (Alberta Education, 2020; Khalifa et al.,

2016; Davy, 2016, Crooks et al., 2015) respectful of First Nations cultures.

     "Responsive leaders are those who are aware of their communities' colonial history and

current opportunities and challenges, but continue to advance student teaching and learning by

honoring students' ancestral teachings and values (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Gay, 2002;

Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Khalifa, 2018)" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 594). School

community leaders must be mindful that they can either further marginalize the communities

they serve or help liberate them by employing authentic and meaningful partnerships (Khalifa et

al., 2019). Stockdale et al. (2013), discovered in their research that "understanding the

community is critical for successful leadership. It cannot be underestimated how important it is

to understand the community and people which the school serves. Such understanding is

necessary to create and build the relationships pertinent to any successful school" (p. 101).

Similarly, Davy (2016) suggested that "culturally responsive leaders seek to know their school

communities and put strategies in place to level the playing field for the marginalized

communities they serve" (p. 21). Davy (2016) furthered this by indicating that "schools must

become culturally responsive systems, growing, evolving, and adapting to meet the needs of the

students and families they serve" (p. 3). "FNMI [First Nation, Metis, and Inuit] students must

know that they are valued in the school and that they have much to contribute to the school

environment" (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 335). Gunn, et al. (2011) found in their research that when

"Aboriginal students and their families reported a sense of belonging and care . . . this feeling

cultivated a commitment to educational attainment and a greater understanding of its value" (p.

329). Establishing this sense of belonging and care when working with Indigenous students means recognizing the connection between home life, community and the school. Oskineegish (2015) emphasized this point by suggesting that "active communication and engagement in the community [is] an essential method of learning relevant and appropriate pedagogical practices" (p. 13). "The ways that leaders communicate is directly linked to their cultural backgrounds and community relationships . . . [and] reflects what [they] value and that which [they] prioritize" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 597). Additionally, "meaningful teacher-student relationships that build on the emotional, physical, and intellectual facets, among many others, of the learner facilitate the development of a safe, respectful context" (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017, p. 35).

Khalifa et al. (2019) indicated in their research that the responsibility of ensuring that relationships are being upheld and maintained as a cultural norm and reflection of the school values and priorities rests largely on the principal. Khalifa et al. (2019) further suggested that "school leaders who serve Indigenous youth must empower students and families by embracing collective, mutual, and community-based communication" (p. 598) and "create spaces that are welcoming to community and Indigenous knowledge" (p. 594). As principals work towards building these communication links and collaborative relationships, students will feel more connected to their school and their academic futures (Gunn et al., 2011). Getting to know the community, and forging relationships with the students, parents and community members, can help the school become part of the community (Dugan et al., 2012, p. 57). As this happens, the community and school can become intertwined and more accurately reflect and represent the cultural beliefs of the Indigenous community wherein the school is situated. Stockdale et al. (2013) suggested in their research that "the principal's job is to ensure trust is built between the community and the school. Trust fuels the school's directions. Without trust, the school will

never reach the level of success to which it aspires" (p. 97). As evidenced earlier, due to the

complicated educational history that Indigenous people have endured, a trusting relationship is

essential in making educational gains. "When strong relationships are built upon trust, school

leaders can push [the] status quo or 'shake things up' and still maintain the support of the

community" (Stockdale et al., 2013, p. 97). Minkos et al's. (2017) research suggested,

> When school administrators demonstrate a genuine interest in learning about students,
>
> families, and staff in their school communities, not only do they communicate an
>
> appreciation of diversity but they actively convey the belief that an acknowledgement and
>
> celebration of differences holds the promise of teaching us about our commonalities. (p.
>
> 1265)

As educational leaders endeavour to create "inclusive environments in which diversity is

respected and members of the school community are welcomed, cared for, respected and safe,"

effective relationships grounded on trust can begin to be established as well as the "conditions

under which the learning aspirations and the potential of First Nation, Metis and Inuit students . .

. realized" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3).

Principal Supports for Building Teacher Capacity

When educational leaders foster and support their educators as they work towards

becoming culturally responsive, it can begin to establish an environment where "educators honor

[students] different ways of knowing, focus on caring for them, as well as support[ing] their

academic achievement" (Davy, 2016, p. 26). Saifer and Barton (2007) recommended that in

order to strengthen family and community partnerships as a means for successful student

learning, instructional and curricular practices need to be changed to become more culturally

responsive. They suggested that doing so sends a strong message to the families within the

school that the school as a whole values who they are. Additionally, according to Oskineegish (2015), "teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching are committing themselves to engage in acts of ongoing learning to determine what appropriate and meaningful teaching practices are for the students they are teaching" (p. 7). As outlined in the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard (2020), principals "play a fundamental role in establishing and supporting the conditions under which the learning aspirations and the potential of First Nations, Metis and Inuits will be realized" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, it is imperative that "culturally responsive leaders encourage teachers to build positive, constructive, trustful relationships with their students involving honoring students' home cultures while emphasizing student achievement" (Davy, 2016, p. 35). According to Gay's (2002) research, culturally responsive teaching is defined as:

> Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (p. 106)

As educational leaders, encouraging staff to use ". . . their students cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement" (Gay, 2002, p. 109) is crucial to the success of culturally responsive practices.

Additionally, characteristics of culturally responsive teaching according to Gay (2000) as cited in Griner and Stewart's (2012) research highlighted the following:

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to

learning and as worthy content to be taught in formal curriculum.

- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well
  as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.

- It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different
  learning styles.

- It teaches students to know and praise their own and each others' cultural
  heritages.

- It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects
  and skills routinely taught in schools. (p. 589)

Based on the research outlined above, if these are the ideals that educators should be striving for

in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, then as educational leaders, support

needs to be provided in a variety of ways to ensure that these practices are embedded effectively

into instructional practices and the school culture.

Professional Development

"Of all leadership expressions, the principal is most knowledgeable about resources, and

he/she is best positioned to promote and support school-level reforms (Leithwood & Jantzi,

1990)" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1274). When working towards implementing culturally

responsive practices in the school, educational leaders need to "lead professional developments

to ensure their teachers and staff, and the curriculum, are *continuously* responsive to minoritized

students" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1274). Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that "principals must play a

leading role in maintaining culturally responsive resources and curriculum, mentoring and

modeling culturally responsive teaching, or offering professional developments around CRSL

[Culturally Responsive School Leadership]" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1281). Educational leaders

have an important role in helping teachers understand that if they are not changing their practice then they are beginning to become dated and are no longer an effective teacher (Wildcat, 1995). Therefore, an educational leader needs to be willing to work alongside teachers, supporting them to develop and continually refine their craft through culturally responsive measures in order to improve student outcomes. This includes "discuss[ing] issues in Aboriginal education with their academic staff and work[ing] towards improving the delivery of Aboriginal education" (Hinks, 2011, p. 120). It is important to have these on-going discussions to ensure measures are taken to continually improve and reflect on the learning experiences of the students. As members of the school learn more about the intricacies of Aboriginal worldviews, they are more equipped to "understand and respect each other, which, in turn, enhances trust, generates synergy and promotes productivity in these relationships" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 9). Additionally educational leaders need to help "teachers understand that culturally responsive caring is *action oriented* in that it demonstrates high expectations and uses imaginative strategies to ensure academic success for ethnically diverse students" (Gay, 2002, p. 110). Gunn et al.'s (2011) research suggested that by making a concerted effort to educate staff and non-Aboriginal students about First Nation, Metis, and Inuit cultures, history and language, they would receive instruction more tailored to their needs and experience an enhanced sense of belonging (p. 335).

"The culture and climate of each school varies and therefore the needs of each school varies to one degree or another" (Hinks, 2011, p. 120). "Teachers need to be encouraged to question the curriculum and pedagogy" (Irvine, 2010, p. 60) in order to begin "approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens" (Irvine, 2010, p. 60). Additionally, to be successful in culturally responsive teaching, educators need to acquire detailed and factual information about the specific ethnic group they serve in order to make their schooling more interesting,

stimulating, representative of and responsive to their students (Gay, 2002, p. 107). Unfortunately,

more often than not, what teachers think they know about a specific cultural group is often based

on superficial or distorted information that has been conveyed through popular culture, mass

media or other critics (Gay, 2002, p. 107). Therefore, by encouraging teachers to participate in

culturally relevant professional development opportunities, "these inadequacies can be corrected

by . . . acquiring more knowledge about the contributions of different ethnic groups to a wide

variety of disciplines and a deeper understanding of multicultural education theory, research and

scholarship" (Gay, 2002, p. 107).

As teachers are encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development

surrounding culturally responsive practices, they need to be encouraged to successfully "convert

it into culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies" (Gay, 2002, p. 108).

Gay (2002) suggested that as teachers become more comfortable with this conversion process

they will be better equipped to "determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of

curriculum designs and instructional materials and make the changes necessary to improve their

overall quality" (p. 108). Teachers can develop their repertoire of multicultural instructional

examples by:

> Understanding the role and prominence of examples in the instructional process, knowing
>
> the cultures and experiences of different ethnic groups, harvesting teaching examples
>
> from these critical sources, and learning how to apply multicultural examples in teaching
>
> other knowledge and skills . . . (Gay, 2002, p. 113)

In doing so, teachers will be better prepared to meet the needs of their students and help them

feel connected to the curriculum.

Encouraging Self-Awareness

In Alberta, teachers are expected to participate in "ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 4). Educational leaders can assist in this process by working alongside their teachers to ensure that they are aware of their personal biases and help them understand "that they need to be open to different perspectives if they are to work effectively with culturally diverse communities" (Davy, 2016, p. 75). Saifer and Barton (2007) suggested that the first step in becoming a culturally responsive educator is to understand that everyone views the world through different cultural lenses. As such, it is important to have each staff member examine how their cultural perspectives affect the way that they view their students' families. "After probing their personal beliefs, staff members must think about what additional information they need to learn about their students . . . [and] how they can show students, families, and community members that their cultural framing and knowledge are valuable" (Saifer & Barton, 2007, p. 26). Once staff members have taken the time to explore their own cultural lenses, they can begin to build relationships and community within the classroom, utilizing activities to get to know one another and be able to learn from one another (Saifer & Barton, 2007, p. 26).

Unfortunately, due to unresolved personal issues, or racism and ethnocentrism, some educators have difficulty recognizing the extent to which education is culturally bound and are often hostile in their views of First Nations culture (Maina, 1997, p. 301). While educational leaders can significantly influence the overall school culture, the teachers and support staff are the individuals that relay this vision to the students. Doige (2003) reinforced this belief by stating, "the responsibility lies with the classroom teacher to accept and accommodate Aboriginal students in the pedagogy" (p. 151). Furthermore, Doige (2003) suggested that the extent to which the curriculum will be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal students largely

depends on the steps that teachers take in including Aboriginal epistemology within the curriculum (p. 151). Doige's (2003) research also cited Cajete (1994) which stated, "by co-creating a learning experience, everyone involved generates a critical consciousness and enters into a process of empowering one another. With such empowerment, Indian people become enabled to alter a negative relationship with their learning process" (p. 151). As teachers become more culturally sensitive, they are able to recognize that "they do not instruct culturally homogenized, generic students in generic school settings" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61), but rather they become "systemic reformers, members of caring communities, reflective practitioners and researchers, pedagogical content specialists, and anti-racist" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61). All of which are necessary components in being a self-reflective practitioner.

"Teachers must possess a particular set of dispositions, attitudes, values, and knowledges to be successful with Indigenous students" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 969). As this happens, and the culture within the school begins to shift towards showing respect for diversity and valuing differences, students are more likely to feel accepted and (as a result) flourish and succeed (Davy, 2016, p. 79). Additionally, Oskineegish (2015) suggested that "successful teaching manifests from a teacher's willingness to reflect and adjust their own understanding of teaching and learning; to make connections with community members through communication and community participation; and to nurture an attitude that encourages positive interactions" (p. 18). As educators become aware of and in-tune with their personal ethnographies and ontologies, they will be better equipped to deliver an "education that provides for personal development and understanding" (Doige, 2003, p. 152). This helps students make sense of their worlds, live contentedly, and help them grapple with their own values while also encompassing their culture (Doige, 2003).

Additionally, "teachers must make a determined, conscious effort to create and maintain a non-manipulative, trusting environment that fosters meaningful relationships and learning. This effect is key to the concept of the classroom as a critical environment where culturally appropriate education for Aboriginal students can occur" (Doige, 2003, p. 154). Ultimately, in order for a culturally appropriate education to be established, educators must be willing to engage students in elements of discussion focused on the importance of who they are in order to establish an emotionally safe environment (Doige, 2003, p. 158). "The teacher remains as the facilitator of learning and guides students to resources and through assignments while monitoring and directing the interpersonal dynamics between students. Each student in the class is as important as the lesson content" (Doige, 2003, p. 154). This process requires teachers to be able to continually reflect on their classroom experiences and examine their actions, instructional goals, methods and materials as it relates to their students' cultural experiences and preferred learning environments (Irvine, 2010, p. 61).

Ongoing "reflection assists teachers in confronting their misunderstandings, prejudices, and beliefs about race that impede the development of caring classroom climates, positive relationships with students and families, and ultimately their students' academic success" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61). Allowing for opportunities of continual reflection can help enable teachers to become action researchers that are focused on continual improvement for the betterment of their students. As teachers become action researchers they are able "to identify an area of concern, develop a plan for improvement, implement the plan, observe its effects, and reflect on the procedures and consequences" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61). When educators come from this frame of mind, they are able to "assist students in changing our society" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61) and "lead the call for whole school reform" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61).

Relationships and Community Involvement

Another key component to help teachers become more in-tune with their students, and utilizing culturally responsive practices is by encouraging teachers to become involved in the community. Stockdale et al. (2013) indicated in their research that for those working with First Nation students, a shared community vision is a crucial asset as it provides teachers, support staff and students with a clear direction (p. 96). Castagno and Brayboy's (2008) research reinforced this as they recommended that teachers get to know and understand the community where the school is situated by going out of their way to interact with community members and support the community agendas (p. 971).

When working with Indigenous students, the school should be a place where community members are invited and welcomed into the school (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). When this is done, relationships built on trust can begin to be established. This is imperative as "relationships are a First Nations focal point - relationships between administrators and teachers; between teachers and school staff, and between teachers, parents, and children" (Stockdale et al., 2013, p. 101). This in turn provides the community opportunities to connect with the school and work with educators in the building to support the learning needs of the students. These practices can be encouraged and supported by the principal. By "getting to know them [the students] as an individual, what their home life is like, who their families are, finding out what they are interested in and learning more about their culture . . ." (Hinks, 2011, p. 35), you can begin to contextualize their worldviews and understandings. As well, this works towards building a trusting relationship and helps teachers become more aware of (and able to recognize) cultural influences that affect learning (Hinks, 2011, p. 35). Additionally, as leaders work collaboratively with Aboriginal stakeholders by actively seeking input and collaboration from Elders and the

Aboriginal community, parents, and students, there lies a greater chance of authentic support that

is necessary for success (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 338).

It is important as educators to become familiar with the contextual make-up of the

community and school environment to better understand what is happening in the community

and determine specific strategies that will be meaningful and relevant to the Indigenous

demographic you are working with. "Engagement in [the] community can help to build positive

relationships between teacher and community which then supports a trust between student and

teacher" (Oskineegish, 2015, p. 15). Furthermore, "through community engagement, students

and teachers begin to have shared experiences with which to build positive interactions in the

classroom" (Oskineegish, 2015, p. 19). Ultimately, as educators make a concerted effort to step

out of their world and into their students' perspectives, they are able to gain valuable insight and

build relationships founded on trust both with their students and in the community.

Modelling Culturally Responsive Practices to Create a Shared Vision

Effective leaders need to develop a successful mission and vision for all staff and

students within the school setting but also one that is inclusive of the contextual environment the

school is situated in (Morin, 2016). For leaders serving a large Indigenous demographic, it is

imperative to advocate for the community, parents, stakeholders, teachers, and students to be

involved in the process of what should be inscribed in the mission and vision statement for the

schools (Morin, 2016). Educational leaders need to recognize that this must be a collaborative

process. Only as "a leader collaborates with the school community to create and implement a

shared vision for student success, engagement, learning and well-being" (Alberta Education,

2020, p. 3) will paradigms and school culture shift. Additionally, they must be able to "articulate

a vision that supports the development and sustaining of culturally responsive teaching" (Khalifa

et al., 2016, p. 1281). "The goals and objectives outlined by a mission or vision statement set the stage for a conceptual framework that promotes culturally responsive practice" (Minkos et al., 2017, p. 1264). When educational leaders are able to articulate their vision for the future (and work collaboratively to achieve this), a common purpose and collective culture can begin to be established in a school.

Promote Culturally Responsive Practices

Educational leaders within a school have a "fundamental role in establishing and supporting the conditions under which the learning aspirations and the potential of First Nations, Metis and Inuit students will be realized" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 1). Because of this responsibility, "unless promoted by the principal, implementation of cultural responsiveness can run the risk of being disjoined or short-lived in a school . . ." (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1274). Therefore, according to Preston et al. (2016) it is important for the principal to "have both self and experiential knowledge of Aboriginal worldviews, to promote school-communities relationship with Aboriginal peoples, and to embody culturally compatible instructional leadership" (p. 11). Additionally, their research indicated that a principal's perceptions and philosophical beliefs of education (and how those beliefs pertain to Aboriginal student success) are important to consider as they seek to promote culturally responsive practices within their school due to the impact it can have. Therefore, it is crucial that educational leaders within the school ensure that they themselves are modelling the practices that they want to see within their school as well as ". . . ensuring that teachers are and remain culturally responsive" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1281).

Develop Culturally Responsive Curricula

Once educational leaders have provided opportunities for professional growth for staff,

there needs to be a degree of accountability and action to ensure that this new found knowledge

is put into practical application. As educators prepare to teach indigenous knowledge and

languages within the school, Battiste and Henderson's (2009) research suggested that teachers

will need to:

> Decolonize educational practices, a process that includes raising and legitimizing the
>
> collective voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, exposing the
>
> injustices of colonial history and deconstructing the past by critically examining the
>
> social, political, economic, and historical reasons for silencing Aboriginal voices (past
>
> and present). By recognizing the dynamic context of knowledge and knowing, and by
>
> communicating the emotional journey that such explorations will generate, teachers and
>
> learners can create positive spaces where they can both learn and grow. (p. 14)

A strong commitment and understanding of the purpose of teaching and leading in these

culturally responsive ways is imperative in helping Indigenous students change their paradigms

surrounding education and provide them with a positive educational experience. As schools

endeavour to develop culturally responsive curriculum and make the shift to becoming a

culturally responsive school as a whole, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (1998)

developed cultural standards that schools can utilize and strive for as they seek to become

culturally responsive:

1. A culturally-responsive school fosters the on-going participation of Elders in all aspects
   of the schooling process.
2. A culturally-responsive school provides multiple avenues for students to access the
   learning that is offered, as well as multiple forms of assessment to demonstrate what they
   have learned

3. A culturally-responsive school provides opportunities for students to learn in and/or about their heritage language.

4. A culturally-responsive school has a high level of involvement of professional staff who are of the same cultural background as the students with whom they are working.

5. A culturally-responsive school consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.

6. A culturally-responsive school fosters extensive on-going participation, communication, and interaction between the school and community personnel.

Similarly, Maina's (1997) research outlined specific measures that could be taken by educators when implementing culturally responsive practices and they included the following:

1. The use of teaching methods and curricula that are congruent with individual and cultural learning and communication styles,

2. The direct integration of First Nations cultural concepts with curricular areas designed for competence in the larger society,

3. Teaching about First Nations achievements and their historical contributions to the overall culture of this country, and

4. Inclusions of materials relating to the participation and contributions of First Nations both to their communities and to Canadian society at large in the contemporary world. (p. 302)

Within the school, in order to make many of these standards a possibility, a key component is to have a strong supportive administrator who shares in and believes in making culturally responsive schooling a reality (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

As educational leaders move forward on this culturally responsive journey, it is important to change not only their perceptions, but others as well. It is time to shift the paradigm of

thinking that Aboriginal students fail in the Western school system because they are less

intelligent than non-Aboriginal students, and instead come to realize that "Aboriginal students

often fail because the system fails them by not empowering them to connect with others and with

their learning in ways that are meaningful to them" (Doige, 2003, p. 153). Battiste and

Henderson (2009) cautioned in their research that it is important to remember that as educators

are creating and implementing culturally responsive curriculum that it should not simply be an

add on, "but rather a foundational learning process that draws on a particular perspective of

holism, recognizing the interrelated and holistic nature of one's place in the universe and the

historical links to Indigenous peoples" (p. 15). "Haunted by their loss of erosion of Aboriginal

languages, traditions, and cultures, Aboriginal people need IK [Indigenous knowledge] to be

acknowledged, affirmed, and animated in their programs to give learners a place where they can

be nourished and can learn and develop" (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 16). Cultivating a

school environment that embraces cultural diversity and truly contextualizes the student's

learning will begin to shift the educational paradigm surrounding Indigenous education and aid

in reconciliation efforts.

Foster Effective Relationships

Finally, as educational leaders strive to model effective culturally responsive leadership

practices and create a shared vision, they must do so by establishing and fostering effective

relationships. Strong relationships must exist "between educators, students, parents and

community members . . . [in order] to build upon an Aboriginal students' sense of belonging to

their school" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 12). Educational leaders are responsible for not only

establishing relationships within the school, but with those in the community as well. According

to the Leadership Quality Standard (2020), "a leader builds positive working relationships with

members of the school community and local community" (p. 3). This includes "establishing

relationships with First Nations, Metis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders/knowledge keepers,

local leaders and community members . . . [and] acting consistently in the best interests of

students" (p. 3). According to research by Miranda (2014) as cited in Minkos et al. (2017),

"building relationships with students and families is essential to effective collaboration and

increasing student outcomes" (p.1262). Minkos et al. (2017) also referred to Grassi and Barker's

(2010) research which suggested that "families can provide important information regarding the

child's educational history, exposure to language, strengths and challenges in the child's

acquisition of language, culturally appropriate behaviors and differences between home and

school expectations" (p. 1262). "Principals whose leadership style is grounded in relationships,

reciprocity, responsibility and relevancy (traits valued via Aboriginal leadership) are individuals

who work toward improving the educational experience for all students, regardless of ethnicity"

(Preston et al., 2016, p. 13). This can be achieved as school administrators "identify, encourage,

and maintain behaviors that are associated with modeling and nurturing of interpersonal

relationships that encourage student success" (Weber, 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, as the National

Association of Elementary School Principals (n.d.) outlined in their principal's guide, as

educational leaders nurture positive relationships within the school and community,

> Stronger partnerships and collaboration between schools and communities [can lead to]
>
> improve[d] family engagement, which is critical to bridging home and school cultures.
>
> Additionally, these partnerships increase the sense of trust between students, families and
>
> schools, which in turn improves student connectedness to school and feelings of
>
> inclusiveness (Wilson, 2004, Khalifa, 2010, Epstein, 2010). (p. 6)

The benefits of fostering effective relationships cannot be overstated. As educational leaders

dedicate their efforts to incorporate culturally responsive leadership practices and build

relationships with all stakeholders, they will be able to achieve greater levels of success.

Summary

Based on the research throughout this literature review, it is clear that there is a strong

need for the development of educational strategies that effectively build on the cultural strengths

of First Nation children. Unfortunately, as it stands, "eurocentric education provides little

opportunity for Aboriginal learners to develop a positive interpretation of Aboriginal identity and

culture" (Julien, 2016, p. 133), and continues to be based on foreign values, which function on

the basis of disconnecting students from their communities and their identities, and contributes to

feelings of alienation and inadequacy (Julien, 2016). Thus, as educators and educational leaders

strive to incorporate culturally responsive practices and strategies in K-12 schools, they will be

able to provide learning opportunities that are in line with reconciliation efforts, and begin

shifting the educational paradigm for Indigenous students to help them engage with their

education.

In order to support this shift in teaching pedagogy and understanding, educational leaders

must work alongside their teachers and help them become critically self-aware, promote

culturally responsive teaching practices and establish a welcoming, caring and safe learning

environment. As educational leaders support their teachers on "integrating conceptual elements

of traditional and contemporary First Nations culture into the curriculum [it] validates the First

Nations culture in the daily activities in the classroom" (Maina, 1997, p. 305). This journey is not

without its challenges. It requires a commitment to continuous learning and the need to adopt

practices that recognize, embrace and celebrate differences, and views these as opportunities for

growth amongst all learners (Minkos et al., 2017). Given the historical mistrust of the education

system caused by the Residential School system, positive, trusting relationships with schools is necessary to rebuild and "establish relationships with First Nations, Metis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders/knowledge keepers, local leaders and community members" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3).

It is clear that when school personnel recognize the barriers inhibiting Indigenous student success and seek to eliminate those barriers by incorporating culturally responsive practices, and a shared vision, optimal learning experiences can take place. This creates new opportunities for connections both academically and culturally as educational leaders work hand-in-hand with Indigenous communities, families and students on this reconciliation journey.

In Chapter 1, a brief overview of why there is a need for culturally responsive practices in K-12 schools was outlined. Much of the research to support the need for culturally responsive leadership practices stemmed from the lasting legacy of the Residential Schools, and the continued negative impact they have on Indigenous education today. This was supported by Gunn et al. (2011) and Davy's (2016) research which identified Aboriginal students as not reaching acceptable educational attainment levels because many of them find it difficult to be engaged in an educational system that does not reflect their experiences or reality.

Chapter 2 is an extended review of the literature related to culturally responsive practices and includes a focus on both teaching and leadership. It examines the intergenerational impact Residential Schools have on Indigenous education and the need to change educational practices in order to connect and engage with Indigenous students. This chapter also focuses on important culturally responsive leadership practices that can be utilized on a personal basis to refine leadership practices, support educators in utilizing culturally responsive teaching methods, and actions that an educational leader can take to create a shared vision within a school by modelling

culturally responsive leadership practices.

In Chapter 3, these overarching themes will be disseminated into 11 recommendations that educational leaders can implement and utilize to engage Indigenous students with their education by creating culturally responsive K-12 schools.

Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this capstone study was to review culturally responsive practices that educational leaders can implement and utilize within a K-12 school setting to help Indigenous students connect and engage with the curriculum. "When principals are culturally responsive to the needs of students and families, they are able to shape the school environment in a way that enhances students' experiences, performance, and academic achievement" (Davy, 2016, p. 98). Educational leaders play a critical role in establishing supportive learning environments and improving student outcomes within the school, especially when working with Indigenous students (Preston et al., 2016; Hohepa, 2013). As educational leaders endeavour to lead school change by embedding Aboriginal culture, ways of knowing, and history (Gunn et al., 2011) through the implementation of culturally responsive practices, conditions can be established where optimum learning can occur and be sustained (Alberta Education, 2020) for Aboriginal students. As Preston et al.'s (2016) research concluded, "principals whose leadership style is grounded in relationships, reciprocity, responsibility and relevancy (traits valued via Aboriginal leadership) are individuals who work toward improving the educational experience for all students, regardless of ethnicity" (p. 13). As educational leaders strive to incorporate culturally responsive practices and build relationships with stakeholders, they will be better equipped to help Indigenous students achieve greater levels of success in educational contexts.

Implications of the Research

The predominant purpose of this capstone study is to provide context as to why culturally responsive practices are necessary when working with Indigenous students. As well, this capstone study sought to identify specific culturally responsive practices that can be utilized

within a K-12 school setting by teachers and administrators. For educational leaders, this is

significant as they impact the mission, vision and culture of the school. Their fundamental

purpose is to nurture the growth and well-being of the students in their care and ensure that every

decision is done so in the best interests of the students (Wildcat, 1995). A ". . . leader's ongoing

analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply,

result[s] in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students" (Alberta Education,

2020, p. 3).

It is important for educational leaders to work and learn alongside their teachers as they

integrate culturally responsive practices. Educators need to feel supported as they go through this

shift in their paradigms and ways of teaching. Teachers can become more confident in

developing a repertoire of multicultural instructional strategies by:

> Understanding the role and prominence of examples in the instructional process, knowing
>
> the cultures and experiences of different . . . [Indigenous] groups, harvesting teaching
>
> examples from these critical sources, and learning how to apply multicultural examples in
>
> teaching other knowledge and skills . . . (Gay, 2002, p. 11)

By utilizing these multicultural instructional strategies, they will be more equipped to meet the

needs of their students and help them feel connected to not only the curriculum, but school as

well.

In order to provide an optimal learning experience for Indigenous students, the principal

needs to ensure that an environment conducive to their learning needs is established. This means

understanding that their educational history has been negatively impacted and as such, their

learning needs will be different from many mainstream students. Educational leaders need to

ensure their teachers contextualize academic knowledge and skills within their students' lived

experiences and frames of reference so that "they are more personally meaningful, have higher

interest appeal and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). If these

measures are implemented, it can assist Indigenous students in shifting their paradigms

surrounding education and can make a meaningful attempt at closing the achievement gap. As

educational practices become more reflective of the needs of Indigenous students, by means of

embracing a more holistic approach to learning and instilling cultural pride by means of creating

a welcoming classroom environment, students can be empowered to connect with their learning.

Recommendations

As educational leaders endeavour to create learning environments that are conducive to

supporting student success and learning (Preston et al., 2016), by focusing on nurturing the

growth and well being of children in their care, fostering effective relationships and utilizing

culturally responsive measures, they can ensure that every decision made in the school system is

done with the best interests of the child (Wildcat, 1995). The recommendations that follow are

designed to assist educational leaders in implementing culturally responsive leadership practices

within K-12 schools to help Indigenous students make connections with the curriculum and

achieve greater success in educational settings. In order to achieve these goals, educational

leaders must focus on increasing their knowledge, skills and understandings on both an

intrapersonal and interpersonal basis. Given the high levels of influence that educational leaders

have in creating inclusive learning environments, supporting student success and prompting

relationships and culturally responsive school experiences for Indigenous students, there are 11

recommendations identified. Recommendations 1 through 7 will focus on intrapersonal actions

for culturally responsive educational leaders to embody. While recommendations 8 through 11

will focus on interpersonal actions focused on supporting others.

Intrapersonal Recommendations

The following recommendations are focused on qualities and actions that an educational leader needs to embody on a personal basis to ensure they understand culturally responsive practices and pedagogy before being able to assist others in this journey.

Recommendation #1 Critical Self-Reflection and Awareness. Educational leaders need to ensure that they take time on a regular basis to self-reflect, challenge and confront ". . . their own inadvertent, or even acknowledged oppressive understandings and performatives" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1296). This is necessary as "the principal's critical consciousness of culture and race really serves as a foundation to establish beliefs and undergird [their] practice" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1281). Additionally, this allows them to move beyond superficial knowledge of cultural groups and come to a greater understanding of the social realities and histories that shape their lived experiences (Davy, 2016). To help educational leaders become critically self-reflective, Khalifa et al.'s (2019) research suggested considering the following:

1. Whether the educational leader was enacting forms of colonization and practices within their leadership practices and school, which could lead to oppression, or marginalization of Indigenous students and students of colour in their schools. For example, characteristics of colonizing school leadership practices are evident in areas such as prioritizing school-based perspectives and policies over community-based perspectives and practices; the inferiorizing and subsequent dislodging of the educative process from elders and oral community traditions; and, the use of schools and the curriculum as a means to monitor and control Indigenous and minoritized populations.

2. How their behaviours are informed by Eurocentric worldviews, values, and goals. For example, leadership within colonizing Eurocentric contexts is often characterized by

individualistic practices with dominating information flowing unidirectionally. Within

Indigenous epistemologies, leadership practices are characterized by collectivist practices

that seek consensus through mutual dialogue and understanding.

3. Identify ways to lead with expressions of decolonization for Indigenous communities. For

example, this can be achieved through prioritization of self-knowledge and self-

reflection, empowerment of community, centering community voices and values, and

approaching collectivism through inclusive communication practices.

Through these practices, educational leaders can become reflective practitioners by challenging

themselves to confront their personal bias and assumptions and act in the best interests of those

they serve.

     Recommendation #2: Promote Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Promoting culturally

responsive pedagogy is a critical component for educational leaders to factor in when: making

decisions, hiring staff, engaging with the community, establishing an inclusive school culture

and reflecting on instructional practices. This needs to be at the forefront of an educational

leader's mind to ensure that decisions are filtered through this lens. Irvine's (2010) research

indicated that culturally responsive pedagogy "builds on the premise that learning may differ

across cultures and teachers can enhance students' success by acquiring knowledge of their

cultural backgrounds and translating this knowledge into instructional practice" (p. 57). Ontario

Education (2013) indicated that one dimension of culturally responsive pedagogy should focus

intentionally on the personal aspect of being in-tune with culturally responsive pedagogy.

     The personal dimension encompasses the mindset of culturally responsive educators and

     the practices they engage in, in order to support the development of all students. Not only

are culturally responsive educators self-aware, but they also have a deep knowledge of

their students and how they learn best. (Ontario Education, 2013, p. 2)

Being able to promote culturally responsive pedagogy requires the educational leader to

continually reflect and ensure their practices are aligned for not only how students learn best, but

in meaningful, culturally responsive ways that allow them to make purposeful connections. In

turn, these experiences can create opportunities for students' voices to emerge and knowledge

and meaning can be constructed from the students' perspectives in relevant and meaningful ways

in which students will never forget (Irvine, 2010). However, this is only possible if educational

leaders have a deeper understanding of how culturally responsive pedagogy supports student

learning.

Recommendation #3: Establish a Welcoming School Environment Through

Community Involvement. The Leadership Quality Standard (2020), states that educational

leaders are responsible for "creating a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning

environment" (p. 3). This develops as educational leaders become aware of the environment in

which their school is situated and how this influences the dynamics between the school and the

community. It is important to be aware of a community's colonial history, as well as the current

opportunities and challenges it faces while continuing to work with stakeholders to honour

students' ancestral teachings and values (Khalifa et al., 2019). Davy (2016) suggested, "schools

must become culturally responsive systems, growing, evolving, and adapting to meet the needs

of the students and families they serve" (p. 3). This means that an educational leader must have

an active presence, not only in the school, but also in the community because when Aboriginal

students and their families feel a sense of belonging and care, these feelings can be cultivated

into a commitment to educational attainment and a greater understanding of its value (Gunn et

al., 2011). Furthermore, establishing this sense of belonging and care also means recognizing the importance and value of the connection between home, school and community.

Recommendation #4: Communicate, Communicate, Communicate. According to the Leadership Quality Standard (2020), educational leaders are responsible for "communicating, facilitating and solving problems effectively" (p. 3). However, this extends beyond just 'solving problems' and encompasses the entire scope of an educational leader's role. "School leaders who serve Indigenous youth must empower students and families by embracing collective, mutual, and community-based communication" (Khalifa et al., 2019, p. 598). This works hand in hand with creating welcoming, inclusive learning environments as on-going communication is essential to ensure that all stakeholders involved have a voice and can be heard. Gunn et al.'s (2011) research indicated that as principal's work towards establishing open communication and collaborative relationships, students feel more connected to their school and their academic futures. Minkos et al.'s (2017) research furthered this by stating,

> When school administrators demonstrate a genuine interest in learning about students, families, and staff in their school communities, not only do they communicate an appreciation of diversity but they actively convey the belief that an acknowledgement and celebration of differences hold the promise of teaching us about our commonalities. (p. 1265)

"Active communication and engagement in the community [is] an essential method of learning relevant and appropriate pedagogical practices" (Oskineegish, 2015, p. 13). Therefore, as educational leaders strive to have on-going, open communication, they will be able to help the community and school become intertwined and more accurately reflect the cultural values and beliefs of Indigenous communities.

Recommendation #5: Create a Shared Vision. In order to be able to lead effectively, educational leaders need to have a clear vision for why they are heading in that direction, how they wish to accomplish it, and what they are hoping to achieve. It is important that the community, parents, stakeholders, teachers and students be involved in this process to continue to ensure the alignment of goals and priorities between the school and community (Morin, 2016; Stockdale et al., 2013). Additionally, as educational leaders work collaboratively with Aboriginal stakeholders by actively seeking input and collaboration from Elders and the Aboriginal community, parents, and students, there lies a greater chance of authentic support that is necessary for success (Gunn et al., 2011, p. 338). Only as "a leader collaborates with the school community to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning and well-being" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3), will effective change be able to take place.

Recommendation #6: Model and Support Culturally Responsive Practices. Given the impact that an educational leader can have on a school, it is imperative that they are willing to take part and lead by example. When trying to implement change initiatives such as culturally responsive practices, "unless promoted by the principal, implementation of cultural responsiveness can run the risk of being disjoined or short-lived in a school . . ." (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1274). Principals need to embody the qualities they wish to see emulated and ensure that teachers become, and continue to be, culturally responsive (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1281). How a principal's perceptions and philosophical beliefs of education pertain to Aboriginal student success, are important to consider as they can have a significant impact on student success (Preston et al., 2016). Therefore, an educational leader must make conscious efforts to continually model the desired behaviors and outcomes to effectively embed them into the school culture.

Recommendation #7: Foster Effective Relationships. Fostering effective relationships is a pillar of becoming a culturally responsive leader. Educational leaders have an extremely important role as they work towards building "positive working relationships with members of the school community and local community" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). As Preston et al. (2016) emphasized in their research, the need for strong relationships between educators, students, parents and community members must exist in order to build an Aboriginal student's sense of belonging to the school. Principals who understand the importance of relationships and actively dedicate their efforts to identify, encourage and maintain behaviors conducive to modeling and nurturing relationships can help encourage student success (Weber, 2007). The way that a principal builds relationships within the school and community reflects their values and priorities (Khalifa et al., 2019). Since many Indigenous students have had significantly negative experiences in the education system, largely because of the intergenerational effects of the Residential Schools, and the lack of connections to the curriculum and their culture within schools, relationships built on trust are essential for them to be successful. "Principals whose leadership style is grounded in relationships, reciprocity, responsibility and relevancy (traits valued via Aboriginal leadership) are individuals who work toward improving the educational experience for all students, regardless of ethnicity" (Preston et al., 2016, p. 13).

Interpersonal Recommendations

The above recommendations were focused on intrapersonal areas that an educational leader needs to ensure they devote significant time towards as a basis for culturally responsive practices to be implemented school wide. The following recommendations are structured around interpersonal recommendations that require an educational leader to support others and build their capacity for cultural responsiveness.

Recommendation #8: Encourage and Build Positive Relationships. Not only do

educational leaders need to foster effective relationships, but they must also encourage their

teachers to do the same. "Culturally responsive leaders encourage teachers to build positive,

constructive, trustful relationships with their students involving honoring students' home cultures

while emphasizing student achievement" (Davy, 2016, p. 35). Teachers need to get to know and

understand the community where their school is situated and go out of their way to interact with

community members (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). In doing so, it builds trusting relationships

and helps teachers become more aware of cultural influences that may affect student learning

(Hinks, 2011; Oskineegish, 2015). "Through community engagement, students and teachers

begin to have shared experiences with which to build positive interactions in the classroom"

(Oskineegish, 2015, p. 19). This is imperative as "relationships are a First Nations focal point -

relationships between administrators and teachers; between teachers and school staff, and

between teachers, parents, and children" (Stockdale et al., 2013, p. 101). Furthermore, by

"getting to know them [the student] as an individual, what their home life is like, who their

families are, finding out what they are interested in and learning more about their culture . . ."

(Hinks, 2011, p. 35), teachers can begin to contextualize their worldviews and understandings.

Recommendation #9: Professional Development. A leader is expected to engage in

"career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for

improving leadership, teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3), while also

"engaging with others such as teachers, principals and other leaders to build personal and

collective professional capacities and expertise" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). According to

Khalifa et al. (2016) this means that "principals must play a leading role in maintaining culturally

responsive resources and curriculum, mentoring and modeling culturally responsive teaching

[and] offering professional developments around CRSL [Culturally Responsive School Leadership]" (p. 1281). Educational leaders must ensure that teachers understand the importance of continually changing their practice to remain an effective teacher (Wildcat, 1995) and remain continuously responsive to Indigenous students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Gunn et al.'s (2011) suggested making a concerted effort to educate staff and non-Aboriginal students about First Nation, Metis and Inuit cultures, history and language, First Nation, Metis and Inuit students would receive instruction more tailored to their needs and experience an enhanced sense of belonging (p. 335). As teachers become more confident in their abilities to integrate culturally responsive practices, they will become more comfortable with questioning the curriculum and their pedagogy in order to approach instruction through a cultural lens (Irvine, 2010). In turn, they will be better prepared to meet the learning needs of their students and help them engage with the curriculum and feel a sense of belonging.

  Recommendation #10: Encourage Self-Awareness. The Alberta Teaching Quality Standard outlines the responsibilities expected of teachers. When it comes to self-awareness, teachers are expected to participate in "ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 4). Educational leaders can assist teachers in this reflection process by creating opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful, safe, open discussions where they can confront their personal biases and understand the need to be open to differing perspectives when working with culturally diverse communities (Davy, 2016). Saifer and Barton (2007) indicated the first step in becoming a culturally responsive educator is to understand that everyone views the world through different cultural lens. Therefore, it is important to have ongoing opportunities for staff members to engage in self-reflection and awareness practices to carefully examine how their own cultural perspectives may be affecting

the way they view their students' families. Only once staff have carefully explored their own

cultural lens will they be able to build trusting relationships with the students and communities

and begin to implement learning activities conducive to their students' needs (Saifer & Barton,

2007). Doige (2003) indicated the extent to which the curriculum will be culturally appropriate

for Aboriginal students greatly depends on the steps teachers take in including Aboriginal

epistemology within the curriculum. This process happens as a teacher demonstrates their

willingness to reflect and adjust their personal understandings of teaching and learning in order

to make connections with community members through communication, community

participation and an attitude that encourages positive interactions (Oskineegish, 2015, p. 18).

Therefore, by encouraging and facilitating opportunities for continual self-awareness and

reflection, it can assist "teachers in confronting their misunderstandings, prejudices, and beliefs

about race that impede the development of caring classroom climates, positive relationships with

students and families, and ultimately their students' academic success" (Irvine, 2010, p. 61).

Recommendation #11: Support the Development of Culturally Responsive

Curricula. Once teachers' capacity has been increased surrounding culturally responsive

practices, there needs to be a degree of accountability to put these strategies into practical

application. Battiste and Henderson (2009) recommended looking at teaching practice and

curriculum, and making efforts to decolonize educational practices by raising and legitimizing

the collective voices and experiences of Aboriginal people in the curriculum, exposing the

injustices of colonial history and deconstructing the past by examining social, political, economic

and historical reasons for silencing Aboriginal voices. Through these measures, a safe place

where teachers and learners can grow and learn together can be established. It is important to

note that throughout this process, educational leaders should be present and support their

teachers in this work. In doing so, it can help ensure that implementation of this curriculum is not done simply as an add on, "but rather a foundational learning process that draws on a particular perspective of holism, recognizing the interrelated and holistic nature of one's place in the universe and the historical links to Indigenous peoples" (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 15). By actively seeking to cultivate a school environment that embraces cultural diversity and an appreciation and value for Indigenous epistemology and ways of knowing, we can begin to shift the educational paradigm surrounding Indigenous education as we honour the teachings of the past to guide our actions for the future.

Through this work, it is essential that educational leaders understand their role and the significance of the impact they can have on creating a culturally responsive school environment. By focusing on intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics, such as: critical self-reflection and awareness, promotion of culturally responsive pedagogy, establishing a welcoming school environment, community engagement, communication, creating a shared vision, modeling and supporting culturally responsive practices, fostering and encouraging positive effective relationships, providing professional development, encouraging self-awareness, and supporting the development of culturally responsive curriculum, schools can ensure the academic success of Indigenous students in the education system. The time is now for actionable change to "redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012a, p. 1) This can be done by actively engaging in efforts to implement culturally responsive practices to help, not only Indigenous students, but ALL students to be successful.

Suggested Research for the Future

The findings of this capstone study were focused primarily on educational leaders in K-12 schools that have a significant Indigenous student population, however more research is needed. Much of the research gathered was not always specific to working with Indigenous students, but rather minoritized groups within the education system. While many strategies can overlap, it is important to recognize that different minorities and subcultures will have strategies that work better for them. Being able to identify specific strategies for the groups you are working with is key. Another area for consideration would be to compare principals working on reservations to those working in neighbouring communities with Indigenous students to compare and contrast what is working in each of these demographics to identify effective strategies for both. Additionally, a suggested area for future research is to look specifically at schools within Alberta. Unfortunately, at present there is limited research even within a Canadian context. As such, research was largely based on findings in the United States or Australia. Once again, although overlap exists, if recommendations were more specific to a geographical area, tailored to the specific needs of the communities, and demographic groupings within that area, change that is more actionable might be possible.

Conclusion

Although there are many principals working with Indigenous students who are successful in the education system, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Unfortunately, Indigenous youth continue to face challenges in educational contexts. Identifying this as an on-going issue that needs to be resolved led to the research outlined in this capstone study. The implementation of culturally responsive practices shows promise for helping Indigenous students connect with and engage in the education system and curriculum. The research highlighted common themes throughout the literature review, and it is clear there is a strong need for

implementation of educational strategies that are culturally responsive and build on the cultural

strengths of First Nation students, as well the need for strong educational leaders that can lead

these changes. By compiling the findings of the research into common themes and strategies, the

recommendations put forth provide direction to educational leaders to successfully implement

culturally responsive practices on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal basis. Due to the

impact educational leaders have on the culture, environment, and academic success of students in

a school, it is important that educational leaders continually take steps to engage in critical self-

reflection to ensure that their decisions and practices are always aligned with culturally

responsive measures. As educational leaders, we need to embrace the idea that education is a

journey of life, and by prioritizing Indigenous students physical, mental, cultural, spiritual, and

emotional well-being, we can establish a school ethos and culture that is fully inclusive of

Indigenous students (Davies & Halsey, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016). Through this cultural lens,

educational leaders can become culturally responsive both in thought and action and able to lead

a K-12 school conducive to meeting the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike.

References

Alaska Native Knowledge Network. (1998). *Alaska standards for culturally responsive schools.*

http://ankn.uaf.edu/Publications/CulturalStandards.pdf

Alberta Education. (2005). *Our words, our ways: Teaching first nations, metis and inuit*

learners.

https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/elders/documents/welcoming_elders.pdf

Alberta Education. (2018). *Teaching quality standard.* https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4596e0e5-

bcad-4e93-a1fb-dad8e2b800d6/resource/75e96af5-8fad-4807-b99a-

f12e26d15d9f/download/edc-alberta-education-teaching-quality-standard-2018-01-17.pdf

Alberta Education. (2020). *Leadership quality standard.*

https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/ed-leadership-quality-standard-english.pdf

Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. (2009). Naturalizing indigenous knowledge in eurocentric

education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 32*(1), 5-18.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-

journals/naturalizing-indigenous-knowledge-eurocentric/docview/755262421/se-

2?accountid=1230

Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2014). The intergenerational effects of Indian

residential schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural*

Psychiatry, 51(3), 320–338. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461513503380

Bullock, S., & Sator, A. (2015, March 10). What is effective teacher professional development?

EdCan Network. https://www.edcan.ca/articles/the-facts-on-education-what-is-effective-

teacher-professional-development/

Castagno, A. & Brayboy, B. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for indigenous youth: A

review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(4), 941– 993.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308323036

Crooks, C., Burleigh, D., Snowshoe, A., Lapp, A., Hughes, R., & Sisco, A. (2015). A case study

of culturally relevant school-based programming for first nations youth: Improved

relationships, confidence and leadership, and school success. *Advances in School Mental

Health Promotion, 8*(4), 216-230. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2015.1064775

Davies, J., & Halsey, J. (2019). Principals as protagonists: Practices beneficent for indigenous

education in rural schools. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education,

29*(1), 101-118. https://journal.spera.asn.au/index.php/AIJRE/article/view/190

Davy, E. (2016). Culturally responsive leadership: How principals employ culturally responsive

leadership to shape the school experiences of marginalized students (Publication No.

1884617528) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. ProQuest Dissertations and

Theses Global.

Doige, L. (2003). A missing link: Between traditional aboriginal education and the western

system of education. *A Canadian Journal of Native Education 27*(2), 144-160.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/missing-

link-between-traditional-aboriginal/docview/230304290/se-2?accountid=1230

Dugan, T., Ylimaki, R., & Bennett, J. (2012). Funds of knowledge and culturally responsive

leadership: Transforming a failing school in a postcolonial border context. *Journal of

Cases in Educational Leadership 15*(3), 56-65. DOI:10.1177/1555458912461317

du Plessis, P. (2013). The principal as instructional leader: Guiding schools to improve

instruction. *Education as Change 17*(1), S79-S92.

https://doiorg.proxy.cityu.edu/10.1080/16823206.2014.865992

Empowering the Spirit. (n.d.). *First nation, metis and inuit professional learning processes*.

Alberta Regional Consortia. https://empoweringthespirit.ca/pedagogy/

Gallagher-Hayashi, D. (2004). Connecting with aboriginal students. *Teacher Librarian, 31*(5),

20-24.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/connecting-with-

aboriginal-students/docview/224877309/se-2?accountid=1230

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education,*

53(2), 106-116. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003

Griner, A., & Stewart, M. (2012). Addressing the achievement gap and disproportionality

through the use of culturally responsive teaching practices. *Urban Education, 48*(4), 585-

621. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912456847

Gunn, T., Pomahac, G., Striker, E., & Tailfeathers, J. (2011). First nations, metis, and inuit

education: The Alberta initiative for school improvement approach to improve

indigenous education in Alberta. *Journal of Educational Change, 12*(3), 323-345.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10833-010-9148-4

Hinks, D. (2011). *Educational leaders' perspectives on issues and concerns in aboriginal*

education in Alberta (Order No. MR80802) [Master's thesis, Memorial University of

Newfoundland]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Hohepa, N. (2013). Educational leadership and indigeneity: Doing things the same, differently.

American Journal of Education, 119(4), 617-631.

https://doiorg.proxy.cityu.edu/10.1086/670964

Hollowell, C. (2019). *Culturally responsive school leadership: How principals use culturally*

responsive leadership strategies to develop engaging and inclusive school environments

for all students (Publication No. 13810734) [Doctoral dissertation, Brandman

University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Irvine, J. (2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy. *The Education Digest, 75,* 57-61.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-

com.proxy.cityu.edu/magazines/culturally-relevant-pedagogy/docview/218195982/se-

2?accountid=1230

Julien, R., (2016). Change now! A call to reform education for Canada's aboriginal youth. *The

Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 36*(2), 129-148.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/change-

now-call-reform-education-canadas/docview/1938071920/se-2?accountid=1230

Khalifa, M., Gooden, M., & Davis, J. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A

synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(4), 1272– 1311.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316630383

Khalifa, M., Khalil, D., Marsh, T., & Halloran, C. (2019). Toward an indigenous, decolonizing

school leadership: A literature review. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 55*(4),

571–614. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18809348

Legacy of Hope Foundation. (2014). *100 years of loss: The residential school system in Canada.*

https://ied.sd61.bc.ca/wp-

content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/100_Years_of_Loss_Teacher_Guide.pdf

Littlebear, L. (2009). *Naturalizing indigenous knowledge, synthesis paper.* University of

Saskatchewan, Aboriginal Education Research Centre and First Nations and Adult

Higher Education Consortium. http://neatoeco.com/iwise3/wp-

content/uploads/2015/08/NaturalizingIndigenousKnowledge_LeroyLittlebear.pdf

Maina, F. (1997). Culturally relevant pedagogy: First nations education in Canada. *The*

    Canadian Journal of Native Studies 17(2), 293-314.

    https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.476.6517&rep=rep1&type=pd

    f

McCue, H. (2011). *Education of indigenous peoples in Canada* (2018 ed.). The Canadian

    Encyclopedia. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-

    education

Menzies, P. (2020). *Intergenerational trauma and residential schools* (2020 ed.). The Canadian

    Encyclopedia. https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/intergenerational-trauma-

    and-residential-schools

Miller, J. (2020). *Residential schools in Canada* (2021 ed.). The Canadian Encyclopedia.

    https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools

Minkos, M., Sassu, K., Gregory, J., Patwa, S., Theodore, L., & Femc-Bagwell, M. (2017).

    Culturally responsive practice and the role of school administrators. *Psychology in the*

    Schools, 54(10), 1260-1266. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22072

Morin, R. (2016). First nations instructional leadership for the twenty-first century. *SELU*

    Research Review Journal, 1(2), 61-72. https://selu.usask.ca/documents/research-and-

    publications/srrj/SRRJ-1-2-Morin.pdf

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). (n.d.). *The principal's guide to*

    building culturally responsive schools.

    https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/NAESP_Culturally_Responsive_Schools_Guide

    .pdf

Ontario Education. (2013). Culturally responsive pedagogy: Towards equity and inclusivity in

    ontario schools [Special edition]. *Capacity Building Series,* 1-8.

    http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/cbs_responsivepedagog

    y.pdf

Oskineegish, M. (2015). Are you providing an education that is worth caring about? Advice to

    non-native teachers in northern first nations communities. *Canadian Journal of*

    Education, 38(3), 1-25.

    https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/are-you-

    providing-education-that-is-worth-caring/docview/1719260885/se-2?accountid=1230

Preston, J., Claypool, T., Rowluck, W., & Green, B. (2016). Perceptions and practices of

    principals: Supporting positive educational experiences for aboriginal learners.

    International Journal of Leadership in Education, 20(3), 1-17.

    http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2015.1124926

Ragoonaden, K., & Mueller, L. (2017). Culturally responsive pedagogy: Indigenizing

    curriculum. *The Canadian Journal of High Education, 47*(2), 22-46.

    https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.cityu.edu/scholarly-

    journals/culturally-responsive-pedagogy-indigenizing/docview/1947019629/se-

    2?accountid=1230

Richards, J. (2008). Closing the aboriginal/non-aboriginal education gaps. *Backgrounder - C.D.*

    Howe Institute, 116, 1-11.

    https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/closing-

    aboriginal-non-education-gaps/docview/231193915/se-2?accountid=1230

Saifer, S., & Barton, R. (2007). Promoting culturally responsive standards-based teaching.

Principal Leadership, 8(1), 24-28.

https://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/promoting-

culturally-responsive-standards-based/docview/233339837/se-2?accountid=1230

Statistics Canada. (2020). *2016 census aboriginal community portrait - Alberta.*

https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-

pd/abpopprof/infogrph/infgrph.cfm?LANG=E&DGUID=2016A000248_OnR&PR=48

Stockdale, D., Parsons, J., & Beauchamp, L. (2013). Instructional leadership in first nations

schools. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 36*(1), 95-112,148-149.

http://proxy.cityu.edu/login?url=https://search-

proquestcom.proxy.cityu.edu/docview/1523947066?accountid=1230

Toulouse, P. (2016). *What matters in Indigenous education: Implementing a vision committed to*

holism, diversity and engagement. Measuring What Matters, People for Education.

https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MWM-What-Matters-in-

Indigenous-Education.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012a). *Calls to action.*

http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2012b). *They came for the children.*

http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/resources_2039_T&R_eng_web[1].pdf

Tupper, J. & Cappello, M. (2008). Teaching treaties as un(usual) narratives: Disrupting the

curricular commonsense. *Curriculum Inquiry, 38*(5), 559-578. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-

873X.2008.00436.X

University of Saskatchewan. (n.d.). *Colonization and privilege.*

    https://teaching.usask.ca/curriculum/indigenous_voices/power-and-privilege/table-of-

    contents.php

Weber, M. (2007). The importance of interpersonal relationships. *International Journal of*

    Educational Leadership 2(1), 1-5. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066719.pdf

Wildcat, B. (1995). *Successful leaders of first nations schools in Alberta* (Publication No.

    304261142) [Master's thesis, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses

    Global.